

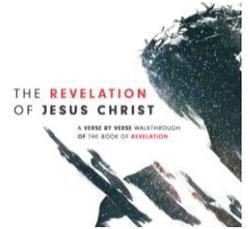
Title: Revelation, Part 29: The New Creation

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Rev. 21.9 – 22.6

Big Idea: What awaits Christ-followers in the next life will be amazing.

Memory verse of the month: Rev 21.4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.



Believe it or not we are getting close to the end of our study in Revelation. We'll wrap things up in early January and then begin a study of the book of Ephesians.

In this study we've seen some lots of sobering visions that picture how bad things will get as the world continues to march toward its final days. We can't really attach specific dates to these end time events because the Bible is not clear when Jesus will return. But, I've said all along that we do know how things turn out. Jesus wins!

So, we now will see, after satan and evil have been vanquished, a phenomenal picture of how God will bring about a new heaven and a new earth, a re-creation, a restoration of Eden.

Today is going to be a bit different. I'm going to explain more what this passage means with a bit less practical application, but you'll have a lot to consider about what awaits us.

Some guidelines:

1. There will be some words you may not know but don't get hung up on them. I will come back to them.
2. Remember that Revelation is filled with figurative language that symbolize deeper spiritual truths yet also refers to actual physical realities. After I read it I will come back and try to explain some of these figurative and physical realities the images point to. Here is how one biblical scholar said it.

John's visions come with two levels of meaning.

On one level, he sees visions composed of earthly pictures which he can understand, whether it be lions, human figures, books, or someone measuring a wall in an ordinary manner.

However, the purpose of the visionary images is to reveal to John the deeper meaning or heavenly truths which the earthly images symbolize¹ (G. K. Beale)

3. I want you get a sense of the grandeur of this new creation, the new heaven and earth that God will bring about after the final days of earth, this new creation that God promises to His faithful.

So, close your eyes and visualize what he has written.

Rev. 21:9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.¹⁵ The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.¹⁶ The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in

¹ Beale, G. K., & Campbell, D. H. (2015). *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (p. 484). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷ He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Rev. 22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

Pretty amazing, huh? So one of these angels that has appeared in a prior vision appears again,

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.



This is an old artist's perspective of this vision. This is not a vision like a city coming down from above like on a space platform. Rather, he has this high perspective on this mountain because this new city is so large and it is coming from above.

Whereas throughout history humanity has tried to ascend to God with their works to merit favor with him, God has descended to us, like this city is shown descending, by sending Jesus who came from heaven to earth to go to a cross.

This holy city represents an amalgamation of what heaven and earth joined and renewed will be like after the final judgment. And it will be perfect in every way that this vision illustrates in several ways.

¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Jasper was a very popular and prized stone in antiquity and could be red, green or yellow. But he records a new quality, as clear as crystal. This is how John often records aspects of this new creation. He starts with something we know and then adds something new and outstanding to it so that stretches our thinking. His goal is to emphasize its dazzling beauty and God's glory that will be there in all its majesty, radiance, and purity²

This new heaven and earth, this new creation, this holy city will be a place of such phenomenal beauty and wonder than human language can't really describe it and the human mind couldn't comprehend it.

As he describes this new creation, it's akin to seeing an out of focus black and white image of some beautiful place in the world versus actually being there, like a beautiful beach. Often when you go to such a place you say, oh my, it's so much more beautiful than I thought.



² Osborne, G. R. (2016). *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (p. 346). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Paul wrote in *1 Corinthians 2.9* this.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

He brings together the OT 12 tribes of Israel and the NT 12 apostles, which represent the church built on the foundation of Christ. He gives a continuity with the biblical story of the OT with the NT.

The combination of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles is a way of saying that Israel of old and the Christian church are united in God’s final scheme of things³

Peter uses this stone idea when he writes this,

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.

Since the city is gold, a gold measuring tool would seem to be the appropriate measuring tool. In antiquity, measuring something implied security and protection.

Here it indicates God’s final and eternal presence, guaranteeing the absence of all tears, pain, and suffering for his people.⁴

He next gives dimensions, which are figurative, though they point to a real place this new creation will be.

¹⁶ The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

12,000 stadia is equivalent to the distance between NYC and London, England, the size of the known world at that time. That is massive. It’s actually a cube because he talks about its height as well.

A cube symbolized perfection. In Solomon’s temple, the Holy of Holies, where God was seen to dwell, was also a perfect cube.

These are standards and measurements and materials that we understand. This new heaven and earth will be new and the standards and measurements and materials will be exponentially more amazing than what we can comprehend now. As the size of this cube is mind blowing, what this new creation will actually be, will be far beyond our understanding.

¹⁷ He measured its’ wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man’s measurement, which the angel was using.

A cubit was the length from your middle finger to your elbow in ancient times. So, 144 cubits would be 216 feet or 66 meters, a thick wall.

Earlier in Revelation John mentions 144,000 people which is not the number who will be in heaven but reflects the complete, whole number of God’s people. This 144 echoes that 144,000.

³ Morris, L. (1987). *Revelation: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 20, p. 238). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Osborne, G. R. (2016). *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (p. 348). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

Jasper, here again, was used something of a symbol of God so we could say that the wall is from God and reveals God. Here is another mind stretch, especially for the believers in biblical times and afterwards. Their glass was not like our glass that is pure and clear. It was filled impurities and dark. So, something like pure glass would be beyond their understanding of glass, something rare and costly.



He talks about gemstones next. One of the things that I love are gemstones. Have you ever gone into stores in tourist areas and seen displays with bunches of smooth gemstones like those pictured? I love to just sick my hands in them. Well, the next part of the vision is a visual feast, especially if you like gemstones.

19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.



These various kinds of stones may connect back to the OT when the high priest wore this chest plate with 12 stones representing the twelve tribes, so that when he entered the temple, he was representing all the tribes, all the Hebrew people.

8 of these stones John writes about perfectly match up with 8 on the high priest's breastplate and there is evidence that the other four are equivalent stones under different names. In the OT the jewels represent the 12 tribes and here the 12 apostles.

Since the names of the apostles were on the foundations along with these precious stones, it reminds us of the various facets of the character of God that we learn through the apostles' teaching and writing.

They also portray this new creation because some of the same stones were found in the garden of Eden that the prophet Ezekiel referred to in Ezekiel 28.13).

This next one is mind blowing.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl.



Pearls were considered the most valued stones, and in the Gospels, Jesus referred to merchants who would consider selling all their possessions for a pearl of great price.

These 12 pearls, which had to span the length of the gateway from the outside to the inside would have to each be 66 meters long. That would have required a mighty big oyster. I am being facetious. The vision again is meant to drop our jaw with figurative language to describe its majesty.

The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

Another mind-blowing image here. This main thoroughfare, and probably all the streets, is made of gold. But not everyday gold, transparent gold. How is gold like transparent glass? This reminds us again of the impossibility of human language to describe its beauty. The streets (there are multiple gates which require multiple streets) are like pure gold that you could see through.

This is possible because the glory of God will permeate everything in the new heaven and earth.

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The temple was where the Hebrew people understood God to dwell and you went to the temple to meet God. Now, there is no temple building because God Himself and Jesus are the new temple and the city's light source.

In the Bible the idea of a temple morphs from a physical building to Jesus who refers to his body as a new temple, to believers as the temple of the Holy Spirit, to here where the temple as seen as the presence of God in the midst of his people from all nations.

23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

That does not mean that there is no more sun or moon, but that they pale in comparison to the light from the glory of God. His resplendent light is sufficient enough to light up the place.

25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

Since satan and his demons have been forever vanquished into what is called the lake of fire and can't leave it, there is no fear of enemies encroaching on heaven, so, unlike ancient cities that would raise their gates at night for protection from their enemies, there will be no need in heaven to do so because its inhabitants are perfectly safe.

27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This new heaven and earth will be open to all who had opened their hearts to Jesus. Those excluded, he emphasizes the impure and shameful and the deceitful, are fake Christians, those who are Christians in name only.

This lamb's book of life is like a heavenly registry of all those who have opened their hearts to Jesus.

He next describes more detail of this new heaven and earth, Eden restored. It tells of the incredible blessings awaiting us, regaining access to the tree of life that Adam and Eve had no access to after they sinned, permanent healing, and the dispelling of all darkness and the fears that come from darkness and the unknown.

Whereas the Holy of Holies in the OT temple was God's dwelling place (he was seen as being localized) and only the high priest could go in once a year. Now the entire city of God, the new heaven and earth is the functional temple as God is now directly dwelling among his people so that the entire city has become the holy of holies where God makes his home with his people. The final Eden returns. In fact, the word Eden means '*garden of delight*' in Hebrew.

Adam and Eve, the first humans, were placed in the garden not only to enjoy it but to care for it with joyful, not-stressful service to God. So it seems that that kind of joyful activity and enjoyable work will be in heaven as well.

So here this new city of God has become one with the new Eden.

22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

John is reminding us again the God and the Lamb are one, reminding us of the deity of Jesus. 45 times the word throne is used to center on God's sovereignty as protector of His people

2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

We see another 12 here, in addition to the 12 tribes, and the 12 apostles, and 12 gates, and 12 foundations. 12 indicates completeness.

So, the main features include a main street, the primary thoroughfare, a superhighway of sorts, a great pure river that flows from God's throne, and multiple trees (the singular tree is a collective reference to multiply trees) all bearing fruit all in a park like/oasis setting.

It's not just one park but a massive city full of parks. The fruit, the leaves, the clean water all point to the abundant provision of our salvation.

The healing leaves symbolize that healing has already taken place. There is no continued further healing necessary since there is no more crying or pain in heaven. Some scholars believe that to see these leaves as health giving better explains what they do. Somehow, they promote the enjoyment we will experience in the new heaven and new earth. They aren't correcting ills that don't exist.

Here the Garden of Eden is reestablished and is part of the new heaven and new earth.

Thinking about trees, I remember the first time I saw an orange tree in California. Tiffany was getting specialized treatment for her brain tumor in Loma Linda, CA and we had rented a small apartment that had a tree out back. Early on during those 6 weeks I walked in the back yard and I saw oranges that filled the tree. It was so amazing because I had only seen oranges in the grocery store. The same thing I felt the first time I saw a cherry tree filled with cherries in Michigan.

Now, in heaven everyone (all the nations) has access to the blessings of this tree (physical and spiritual) and have been healed (the leaves of the tree).

³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ... (5) And they will reign for ever and ever.

We will joyfully accomplish things in service God and the curse of sin will be no more.

Remember that the big picture purpose of these visions is to motivate us to resist compromise in a world that will become increasingly hostile to Christianity, to be faithful until we go to join him in heaven or until he comes if we are still alive and we are simply taken up to this new heaven and earth.

So this new heaven and new earth and new city of Jerusalem and new garden all merge into the all-encompassing nature of what God will do and where we will spend eternity after the final judgment.

Four simple takeaways.

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This new heaven and earth

1. will be big enough for everyone who believes.
2. will stun you with its beauty.
3. will bless you with infinite and eternal satisfaction in God's presence.
4. beckons those far from God to turn to him so they can spend eternity in that place.

This new heaven and earth...

1. will be big enough for everyone who believes.

The angels will be our next-door neighbors. The Old Testament heroes as well as the apostles will live down the street⁵

2. will stun you with its beauty.



Imagine spending eternity in a garden that combines Keukenhof, the tulip garden of Holland, with Butchart Gardens on Vancouver Island in Canada, with the Queen's royal garden on the grounds of Buckingham Palace. Take all the beautiful gardens in the world, put them together, and still, they won't hold a candle to the new garden of Eden in heaven.⁶



3. will bless you with infinite and eternal satisfaction in God's presence.

4. beckons those far from God to turn to him so they can spend eternity in that place.

Why not trust Christ today?

⁵ Osborne, G. R. (2016). *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (p. 355). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁶ Osborne, G. R. (2016). *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (pp. 360–361). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.