

# CHAPTER 21

The last two chapters of Revelation contain some of the most beautiful writings known to man. We often hear passages quoted from these chapters in sermons. We also use them to reassure and comfort those who have lost loved ones. As we study these beautiful symbols, let us keep in mind that these symbols have figurative meanings, not literal. We have searched for figurative meanings throughout the book and should not change our method of interpretation for these last two chapters.

Before studying these chapters, it is important to recognize a division in chapter 21 between verses 8 and 9. The beautiful description of the holy city of God, the Lamb's wife, begins with verse 9. Further introductory remarks concerning chapters 21 and 22 are given at this division in a section titled "The Holy Jerusalem." We believe that 21:1-8 is much more understandable after 21:9 - 22:21 has been studied; therefore, we encourage you to begin your studies of these last two chapters with verse 9. Once the symbols in that section are understood, we are certain that the proper interpretation of verses 1 through 8 will become clear.

**Verse 1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea.**

Assuming you have studied verses 21:9 through 22:21, you will recognize that this verse does not fit the time frame of the remainder of this vision. This verse introduces a new heaven and a new earth. If we interpret this verse in light of 2Pet. 3:13, which says, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," we must assume that this verse is speaking of our final eternal abode called heaven. Since the bride, the Lamb's wife (v. 9), is a symbolic description of God's church, which is in existence today, this places a description of heaven before the

description of the church. There can be little doubt that the placement of this verse causes many to interpret the remainder of Revelation as a description of heaven. We recognize this fact, but believe there are some logical explanations concerning the placement of this verse.

To begin with, we must recognize that the subjects of verse 1 and 2 are different. Verse 1 is referring to a new heaven, but verse 2 is speaking of the holy city of God that came down out of heaven. That holy city that came down from heaven is the church of our Lord. Heaven is the final dwelling place for those who have been faithful members of his church during their lives on this earth. Since the subjects of verse 1 and 2 are different, we must be dealing with two different visions. Verse 2 is the beginning of the vision of the new Jerusalem or the church. Since verse 2 is the beginning of a new vision, then verse 1 must be the concluding verse to the previous vision.

Considering the subject of chapter 20, not only is it possible that this verse concludes that vision, but it serves that purpose extremely well. In fact, without this verse the vision of chapter 20 almost seems to be incomplete. To understand this, consider the last section of that vision (20:11-15), which is a description of the Judgment scene. Verse 11 describes a great white throne from which God is about to judge the world. Also, notice that the earth and the heavens have fled away at this time. In the last two verses of the chapter, a description of the final abode of those who have followed the devil is given, but a description of the final dwelling place for those who have followed Christ is not given. This is the purpose of verse 1. At the time of Judgment, the heavens and earth as we know them will have been destroyed; however, God will make a new heaven and earth in which his people will dwell forever. We should not expect this “new heaven and new earth” to be anything like what we have today. This shows us that those who have followed Christ will live in a totally new place designed by God. It will be the Christian's final dwelling place forever. This present heaven and earth will flee away at Christ's second coming (20:11), and a new heaven and earth will come into existence (21:1). This

completes the vision of chapter 20.

This interpretation also aids in understanding the meaning of the phrase “and there was no more sea.” Throughout Revelation the “sea” is symbolic of the masses of people dwelling upon this earth who are not Christians. (See comments on 12:16.) After Judgment there will be no more sea. Only those people who have been faithful to Christ will be residents of the new heaven and new earth.

## THE HOLY CITY: NEW JERUSALEM

**Verse 2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

This verse introduces the last section of the book of Revelation, which describes the holy city of God. Here John sees the holy city as a bride adorned for her husband. It is almost impossible to even imagine how this vision may have appeared because it is hard to comprehend how a city could be dressed as a bride. This is truly figurative language, and it must be interpreted by letting the Bible define the symbols.

The first symbol that must be defined is the “holy city” or, as it is also called, the “new Jerusalem.” Many commentators today believe that the “new Jerusalem” refers to heaven or that eternal abode of the saints. However, we must interpret the symbol according to how it is used in Scripture. In Heb. 12:22-23 we read, “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn.” This verse defines the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, as the church of the firstborn. The writer of Hebrews also tells these people that they “are come” unto this city. Therefore, Christians are presently in the “new Jerusalem.” This must be the intended meaning of this holy city because it is also referred to as “a bride adorned for her husband.” Rom. 7:4 says that we are “become dead to the

law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.” The church is married to Christ today; it is the bride of Christ. We do not have to wait until Judgment to be the bride of Christ or to be married to him; we are Christ’s bride today. Therefore, the holy city, which John saw in this vision, was the spiritual city of God, the church. (For more information, see the section entitled “The Holy Jerusalem” at the conclusion of v. 8.)

Also notice that this holy city is pictured as coming down from God out of heaven. This should serve to show that the holy city and heaven are two different places. The bride of Christ (the church) has already descended from God out of heaven. This took place on the first Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection. Since John performed such a major part in the establishment of the church, certainly he would have recognized that it would be symbolically described as a holy city, a new Jerusalem, or as a bride adorned for her husband. This spiritual city, the new Jerusalem, replaced the physical city of Jerusalem as man’s place of worship to God. When this took place, God’s chosen people would no longer dwell in a physical, earthly kingdom (Israel), but rather in a spiritual heavenly kingdom (the church).

**Verse 3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.**

The great voice out of heaven proclaims that the “tabernacle of God is with men.” This is a reference to the church. During the forty years the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, the High Priest communicated with God by entering into the Holy of Holies located in the tabernacle. Today, when one becomes a member of the church, he becomes a priest of God and can communicate directly with God through the avenue of prayer. The tabernacle of the Old Testament was a likeness of the church today. When Christ died on the cross, he did away with the old law and established the new (Heb. 10:9-10).

He gave us the church, which is the tabernacle of God, and it is with men today.

Just as the tabernacle was the dwelling place of God under the old law, the church is the dwelling place of God today. (See 2Cor. 6:16.) This is an extremely important point that all Christians need to fully understand. Nothing is more important than the church because God dwells in it, and if we become members of it, we come into contact with God and have our sins forgiven. We live under a much better law than the children of Israel lived under. We have God dwelling with us if we are members of his church. We do not need a “priest” to talk to God on our behalf; we can commune directly with him through our own prayers.

Understanding the importance of the church will also greatly assist in our understanding of the “holy city,” which is described beginning with verse 9. In that vision, we are given a beautiful description of the church, which helps us understand its value and importance.

**Verse 4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.**

The key to this verse is understanding the meaning of the “former things” that have passed away. There can be little doubt that this is referring to the Law of Moses. This is an important point in the interpretation of this vision. For many years, we in the church have believed that this refers to this present physical world which will pass away at the end of time. It is understandable that many have interpreted this passage in this manner because of the type of figurative language being used, and especially in light of the fact that in verse 1 a new heaven and a new earth appear after the old passes away. This makes it important to understand that verse 1 is the concluding verse of the vision of chapter 20. Once the correct placement of verse 1 is understood, it becomes much easier to interpret this entire vision.

The context of verse 4 demands that the phrase “former things” refers to the old Law of Moses. The announcement is made that former things are passed away, and God says

in verse 5 that he has “made all things new.” In verse 6, he announces, “it is done,” and because of this we can partake of the “water of life.” Rev. 22:17 explains that we can drink of that water of life today. We are able to drink of that water of life because these “former things” have passed away. The water of life refers to the gospel, and we have that gospel because Christ did away with the old Law of Moses and “made all things new” through his death on the cross. The Law of Moses has been abolished; the former things are passed away. The Law of Christ is now in effect; all things are made new. “It is done,” and because of this we have access to the “water of life,” which is the gospel.

The obvious question to ask now is: If the “former things” refer to the Law of Moses, then what is meant by the statement, “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”? Without any doubt this causes many to believe that this vision refers to heaven. We also believe that this situation will literally exist in heaven, but we must remember that Revelation is written in figurative language. These statements figuratively describe our spiritual situation today under the Law of Christ as compared to the situation of those who lived under the Law of Moses. Under the Law of Moses, the children of Israel experienced the pain and sorrow of sin. The Law of Moses was a law of spiritual death because it could not provide the forgiveness of sins. There are many passages in the New Testament that confirm this. Rom. 3:20 says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Rom. 5:12 states, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Rom. 5:21 states, “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” The people who lived under the Law of Moses did not have the opportunity to have their sins forgiven under that law. Therefore, they lived with the spiritual pain and sorrow of sin. Because of the pain and sorrow of sin, they are figuratively described as weeping and crying and having

tears in their eyes. This is situation is described in Isa. 59:11-12, which states, "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our iniquities, we know them."

Today, under the law of Christ, we have forgiveness of our sins. The tears of our spiritual sorrow for sin have been wiped away.

Since this verse is so important in determining how these last two chapters of Revelation are interpreted, we are going to deal more extensively with some Old Testament passages that relate to this subject. As we study these passages, it must be remembered that the main emphasis of the prophecies made by the Old Testament prophets concerned the coming of Christ and the church. Many today would have us believe that the Old Testament prophecies are dealing with events leading up to the end of time or the second coming of Christ. These same people will take passages such as Dan. 9:24-27, which deals with the prophetic seventy weeks of Daniel, and equate them to certain passages in Revelation, thereby coming up with some predictions concerning the end of time that are totally contrary to other teachings in the New Testament. These Old Testament passages do deal with the end of a "time" and the coming of Christ. But the "end time" referred to is the end of the Mosaic dispensation, and the coming of Christ is referring to his first coming. Let us keep these concepts firmly in mind as we examine these Old Testament passages.

The book of Isaiah contains several passages that definitely should be studied in connection with these last two chapters of Revelation. Isaiah uses many of the same symbols to prophesy the coming of the church as is used in these two chapters of Revelation to describe the church. It is not feasible to include a complete study of these passages, but we would like to point out some specific verses that should help to understand how these same symbols are used in Revelation to describe the holy city of

God, the church.

Isa. 25:7-8 states, "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." Notice that the tears are to be wiped away at the same time the veil that is cast over the people is destroyed. In order to know when these tears are wiped away, all we have to do is determine when this covering was destroyed. The answer to this is found in 2Cor. 3:14-16 which states, "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." This veil was destroyed when Christ did away with the old law and established the new. Therefore, this is also when he wiped away tears. He wiped away the spiritual tears of being unable to receive forgiveness of sins. This meaning is confirmed in Isa. 25:9, which says that in that day "he will save us" and "we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." When Christ made salvation possible for all men, he wiped away spiritual tears from our eyes. This is exactly what is meant by this verse in Revelation. Because the "former things" (the old law) have passed away, God will now wipe away the spiritual tears from the eyes of those who enter into his spiritual city, which is the new tabernacle or church. Our tears are wiped away because we have obtained salvation. We should be glad and rejoice.

Isa. 60:20 states, "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isa. 65:19 states, "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." One way we may be sure that these passages are prophesying the coming of the church is given in Isa. 60:3. It says, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the



brightness of thy rising.” We know that the Gentiles “came to the light” when they received the gospel of Christ. Eph. 3:6 says, “That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” The gospel is for all men, not just the Jewish nation. The Gentiles could “come to the light” at the same time the weeping and crying ceased. (See also Isa. 60:11.) Another way we may be sure that these passages refer to the establishment of the church is given in Isa. 61:8b, which says, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” We know that this everlasting covenant was established by Christ after his death on the cross. (See Heb. chapters 8-10; 13:20.)

Other passages could be studied concerning these symbols, but this should be sufficient to show that this verse is teaching that God wiped away the tears of spiritual sorrow from our eyes when he made the new covenant with mankind. This covenant provided for forgiveness of sins, which was not attainable under the old Law of Moses until Christ died on the cross.

Verse 4 also says, “There shall be no more death.” This is referring to spiritual death. Rev. 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” When one obeys the gospel, he obtains everlasting life. He will never die again spiritually, providing he remains faithful to Christ.

**Verse 5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.**

There may be some question as to who is speaking in this verse, God or Christ. Some say it is God because he is sitting upon the throne and in verse 7 he says, “I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Possibly this is true, but according to Heb. 1:3, Jesus is also sitting on the throne in heaven, and he is also referred to as God in many passages. (See Jn. 1:1.) Verse 6 identifies him as Alpha and Omega. In 1:8 and 22:13, this phrase is used to identify Christ. Sometimes it becomes difficult to separate God and Jesus, and perhaps we should not even try. The one who made this

statement is also the one who “made all things new.” Since this statement is referring to the new Law of Christ, it becomes likely that Jesus is the one doing the speaking in this verse. On the other hand, Jesus came to earth to do the things his Father in heaven had commanded. Perhaps in this verse we should simply consider them as one.

The things that are made new are those things that took the place of the “former things,” which have passed away (v. 4). Since the “former things” refer to the Law of Moses, then “all things new” would refer to the new Law of Christ. Heb. 10:20 says that Christ has made for us “a new and living way.” This is in contrast to the old law that could never take away sins (Heb. 10:11). Christ has made a new way for us. He has given us a new law of grace whereby we have remission of sins through his blood.

**Verse 6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.**

This verse greatly strengthens the above interpretation because Jesus says, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” This must be a reference to the gospel. In Jn. 4:14, Jesus said, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” Also in Jn. 7:37, he said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” If we are thirsty for the truth of the gospel, Jesus will freely give it to us today! Rom. 1:16 says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. This is figuratively represented in this passage as the “water of life.” Obedience to the gospel will save us now and forevermore.

Therefore, “It is done,” must refer to the completing of God’s will by establishing the new law of faith. In Jn. 19:30, John quoted our Lord’s last words as he was dying on the cross: “It is finished.” Obviously, one thing that was finished was Christ’s physical life; however, there was probably much more meant by that statement. In Jn. 4:34, Jesus said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” Christ came to this earth to do his

Father's will, which was to fulfill the old Law of Moses and establish a new one. In Jn. 17:4, as Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father just prior to his crucifixion he said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Then in verse 8 of the same chapter, that work is defined as Jesus said, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." The work Jesus came to earth to do was to speak the commandments of God, which established the new law or the gospel. (Also see Jn. 12:48-50.) When he died on the cross, he finished that work. It was done! He had made all things new (v. 5), and the former things were passed away (v. 4).

**Verse 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.**

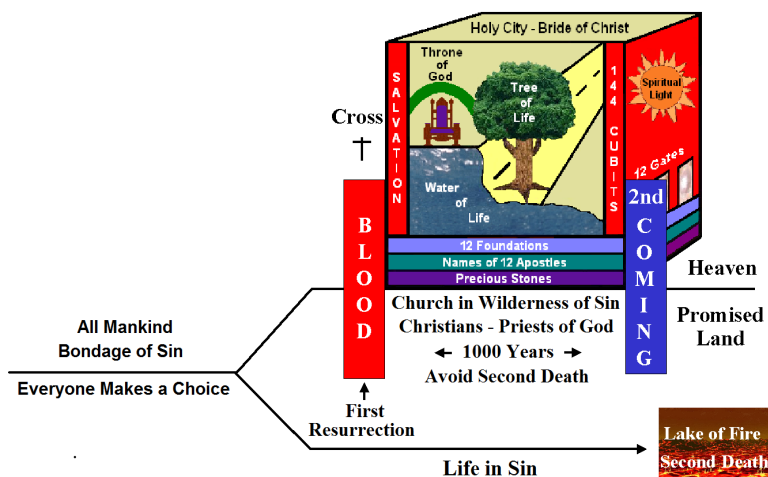
Each of the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 ends with a promise to those who "overcome." In 1Jn. 5:4, we read, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." We overcome by being born of God, which is to be obedient to his Word. (See 1Pet. 1:23.) When one becomes obedient to God's will, he overcomes this world of sin, and this enables him to inherit all things that God has promised. When we overcome, we become the sons of God. We are "now" the sons of God, according to 1Jn. 3:1-2. Therefore, verse 7 is referring to overcoming this present sinful world. When we do this, we inherit spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), as well as eternal life if we remain faithful (2:10).

Included in the introduction to chapters 2 and 3 is a section dealing with the meaning of "overcoming." It should be noted that the interpretation of "overcoming" in chapters 2 and 3 is in complete agreement with the interpretation of chapters 21 and 22. When we overcome this world of sin through obedience to the gospel, we enter into God's spiritual city, the church, and receive the promises revealed in chapters 2 and 3.

**Verse 8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and**

**sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**

This is a listing of those who have not overcome worldly things but have lived their lives committing acts that are sinful in the sight of God. Since they have not overcome these sinful acts, nor have they obtained forgiveness for them by being obedient to God's Word, they are not the children of God. They are the children of the devil. Therefore, they will have their place in the lake of fire and brimstone along with their master, the devil, the one who deceived them (20:10). (For more on the "second death," see comments on 20:14.)

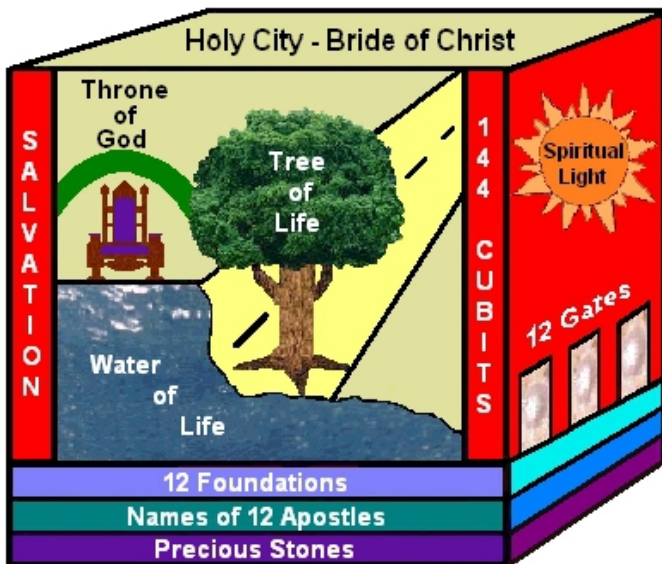


The first section of chapter 21 is a contrast between those who are obedient to the will of God and those who oppose him. Those who thirst, or seek to find and do the will of God, will be able to partake of the water of life (the gospel) freely. When we partake of this water of life, we overcome the sinful things of this world and become children of God. We shall inherit all things. We are the chosen people of God. We are the church. Those who do not overcome or partake of the water of life will not inherit these things but

will receive a place of eternal torment, completely separated from God where nothing good can exist.

## THE HOLY JERUSALEM

The drawing below is taken from the symbols describing the “holy city” in chapters 21 and 22. Please refer back to this drawing as you study these two chapters. Hopefully, it will be helpful in understanding how these symbols are used to describe the church that Jesus established.



This final section in Revelation gives a beautiful description of the holy city of God. This city is described by using items that man considers extremely valuable. For example, (1) there are twelve precious stones garnishing the foundation of the city; (2) the street is pure gold; (3) each of the twelve gates is one giant pearl; (4) the wall is jasper; (5) the entire city is built of gold so pure it is transparent; and (6) even the light of the city is crystal clear jasper. The wealth and value of such a city could never be

measured in monetary terms. The point of this description is to show man the great value of the city of God. No material place on this earth is even slightly comparable to the value of this spiritual city. God is telling us that living in his city is far more valuable than any wealth we could possibly acquire or imagine on this earth. If we desire to be rich beyond measure, we must do those things necessary to enter into this holy city.

Since the value of this city is so great and man should seek to enter into it at any cost, then it becomes extremely important to know exactly what this city represents. Many believe that it represents the eternal abode where the faithful will live throughout eternity with God. This is true to the extent that those who dwell in this city will be the ones who will inherit the things that God has prepared for them that love him (1Cor. 2:9). However, we are not told what God has prepared for us. Furthermore, it would most likely be impossible for man to understand such matters. In 1Jn. 3:2, we read, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." We do not know what heaven will be like, but we do know that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, and if we believe in him, he will come again and receive us unto himself to dwell with him forever in that eternal abode (Jn. 14:1-3).

Then what does this holy Jerusalem symbolize? A brief discussion of several key verses will be given here with more details in the verse by verse comments.

*Rev. 21:9.* This holy Jerusalem is defined in this verse. John was to be shown the bride of Christ. Without any doubt, the bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife, refers to the church. (See Rom. 7:4.) It is also referred to as that "great city" in verse 10 and the "holy city" in verse 2. This symbol stems directly from the Old Testament. In Isa. 52:1, Jerusalem is referred to as the "holy city." The temple, which was the designated place of worship to God, was located in this city. Jews from every nation would gather in Jerusalem to worship God. (See Acts 2:5.) God's chosen people of today do not worship in a physical, earthly city.

Instead, we worship in a spiritual, heavenly city designed by God. That spiritual city in which all of God's people live is the church. Christians are the spiritual Israel of God today, and we are living in the spiritual city of God, the church. (See Gal. 3:29; 6:16.)

*Rev. 21:14.* The names of the twelve apostles are in the twelve foundations. This indicates that the city is built upon foundations laid by the twelve apostles. In Eph. 2:20, Paul says that the church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."

*Rev. 21:24.* We are told that the saved shall walk in the light of it, and 1Jn. 1:5-7 says that if we "walk in the light," the blood of Jesus will cleanse us of our sins. The saved today are in the church, walking in the light. Verse 24 explains that the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. It is hard to imagine how kings of this earth could take their glory and honor into heaven. If kings of the earth are converted to Christianity, they bring their honor into the church. (See Isa. 60:11.)

*Rev. 21:25.* The gates of the city are never closed. We know that a person may be added to the church by our Lord at any time. Man neither has the means nor the right to refuse any believer admittance to the church, the holy Jerusalem.

*Rev. 21:27.* Nothing which defiles can enter into the city, but only those whose names are written in the book of life. (See 1Cor. 6:9-10.) Phil. 4:3 indicates that as Christians today our names are written in the book of life. Therefore, those whose names are written in the book of life are residents in the holy city of God, the church. Their sins have been forgiven. No sin (nothing which defiles) can enter the church.

*Rev. 22:1.* We find the water of life in the city, and in 22:17 we are bidden to partake of that water of life. It would be difficult, to say the least, to go to heaven to partake of that water. This water represents the gospel, which is located in the church. When we are obedient to that gospel, we partake of that water of life flowing in the city of God.

*Rev. 22:2.* The tree of life is described. It says that the leaves are for the healing of the nations. After judgment, when all people have received their final destiny, there will be no healing of the nations. Those who have received eternal punishment must remain in their eternal abode. The healing of the nations takes place today as people become obedient to God's laws and are added to his church.

*Rev. 22:14.* The requirement for entrance into the city is explained. We must do his commandments: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1Jn. 5:3); "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (Jn. 15:10). We are in Christ if we keep his commandments. We are living in his holy city. The next verse, 22:15, shows that all types of sinners are outside the city. This is not speaking of being outside the gates of heaven. It is speaking of sinners being outside church in the world today.

*Rev. 22:19.* The warning is given that our names will be taken out of the book of life, or away from the tree of life (ASV), and out of the holy city if we take away from the prophecy of God's book. This is speaking of this present time. If man takes away from the Word of God today, God will erase his name out of the book of life and remove him from the holy city. He would no longer be a part of the church or the saved. This must refer to the church because once we reach heaven, there will be no danger of losing our eternal inheritance.

In our opinion, this section of Revelation holds one of the most needed, and at the same time, most beautiful and reassuring lessons to be found in the entire Bible. It describes, in terms that we can understand, how God views his kingdom, the church. It is a spiritual city with value and beauty beyond comparison. Those who are residents of that city are the wealthiest people on earth. They have their treasures laid up in heaven (Mt. 6:19-20).

On the other hand, many times Christians fail to view the church in this manner. By their actions, some say they believe "church" is a meeting they are "required" to attend on Sunday morning. Others attend "church" if it is convenient. However, let us be thankful that there are still



many faithful Christians who attend church services and do the things commanded because they love the Lord. We must learn to view the church as God has described it in these last two chapters of Revelation. It should be more valuable to us than anything on this earth. We should desire to be a part of it more than any earthly club or organization. We must hold it in the highest regard and esteem. We should seek to show others its great value and help them to enter through the gates into the city. We must recognize the glorious beauty the church has in God's sight, and it should be equally beautiful and precious to us.

This city, the church, is the spiritual city built by Christ. It is the place where those people dwell who have their sins forgiven by the blood of Christ. Remember, Christ did not come to earth to set up an earthly kingdom. Instead, he came to establish a spiritual kingdom. He accomplished that with the establishment of the church, and if we desire to spend an eternity in heaven with him, we must be a part of that spiritual kingdom because that is where the tree of life is located. As long as we are in this beautiful city and partake of the tree of life, we shall live spiritually forever.

## **THE BRIDE: THE LAMB'S WIFE**

**Verse 9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.**

One of the seven angels, which had the seven vials containing the wrath of God, bids John to see a vision of the bride of Christ. There may be no specific reason why this vision is introduced by this particular angel, but it is significant that the vision which John is about to see is the method of avoiding the plagues that were poured out by this angel in chapter 16.

As has been previously discussed, the bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife, is a definite reference to the church. John is about to see a vision of the church as God describes it. This is the church that was established by Christ when he first

came to this earth, and we can be members of that church today. We do not have to wait until Christ comes again to set up some thousand-year kingdom. It is present in the world today. When Christ comes the second time, he will take those home with him who are members of this church, his bride, and they will spend an eternity with him.

**Verse 10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,**

As is the case in many of the visions in Revelation, this one covers the entire gospel age. This is a description of the church that Christ established while on earth. It is a description of the spiritual city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Heb. 11:10 says that Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Heb. 12:22 states, “But ye are come.., unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Abraham looked for this city or the church. We have come unto it. When we obey the gospel, we enter into that city which Abraham desired to see.

We see this great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. This marks the beginning point of the church here on earth. We know that the church was “sent from heaven” on the day of Pentecost when the apostles preached the first gospel sermon. In Acts 1:6-8, the apostles asked Christ, “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” They were told that it was not for them to know “the times or the seasons,” but “after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 2:1-4 describes this coming of the Holy Ghost and the preaching of the first gospel sermon. This is when the church descended out of heaven from God. Let us not be among those who make the mistake of believing that Christ will come again to set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem and reign here on earth for a thousand years. Christ has already set up his kingdom, and we who are members of his church are in that kingdom.

John was taken to a great high mountain to view this

city. At the time of the writing of Revelation, one would be required to go to a high point around a city in order to overlook the entire city. This is the type of symbolism being used in this verse. This mountain was great and high in order to show the vastness of this great city.

**Verse 11. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;**

This verse is the beginning of the detailed description of the holy Jerusalem, the spiritual city built by God. It is extremely important to keep in mind that the description is figurative. The numbers must be interpreted as descriptive, just as they are throughout the entire book.

There are many who believe this city describes heaven, and some even go so far as to take the dimensions of the city and figure how many people heaven could hold. This type of thinking is totally foreign to the proper interpretation of this book. This city is the spiritual city built by God and will hold all those people who are obedient to his will.

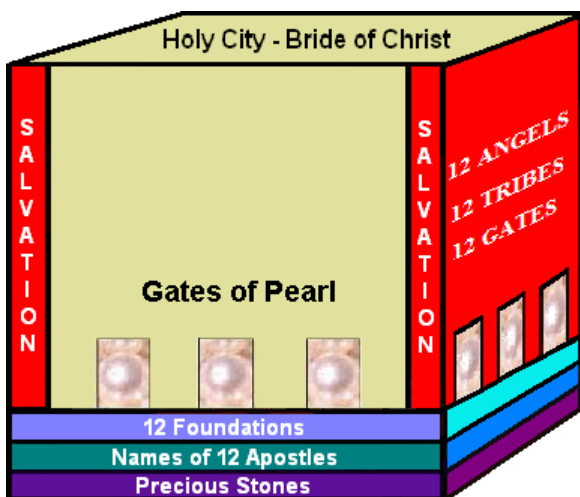
The city has the glory of God. This indicates that God is present in this city. This statement is similar to verse 3, which says that God shall dwell with men and be their God.

The light of this city is described as being like a precious jasper stone, which is clear as crystal. It is hard to understand how light could be compared to a stone, but most likely the intent of this symbol is to show the value of the light. We cannot even be certain what the jasper stone is. Some say it is diamond; others say it is a fiery red stone. We do know that the light of the church today is Jesus. He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12a). To walk in the light of Jesus means to be a member of his church. If we are members of his church, we are cleansed of all sins. In 1Jn. 1:7 we read, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light., the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Christ is also described as a stone in other places in the New Testament. For example, Eph. 2:20 describes Jesus as

the “chief cornerstone.” This jasper stone was clear as crystal indicating its purity. This again points to the fact that Jesus is the light of the church, and he is completely pure. There are no flaws or blemishes in our Lord. He has no sin (Heb. 4:15).

**Verse 12. And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:**



The city is pictured as having a great high wall with twelve gates. This type of description was common to people of the first century because many cities at that time had walls built around them for protection from enemies. The enemy that attacks this spiritual city is sin which exists in the world today. We are protected from sin by a great high wall or the law that God has given us to follow. If we are obedient to the Law of Christ, sin cannot harm us, and we are under God’s protection as long as we remain obedient. (See comments on v. 14-19.) We must remember that sin separates man from God (Is 59:2), but as long as we are living inside the walls of this city, our sins are

forgiven and we are in a close relationship with God.

We also note from 22:15 that all manner of sin is outside the wall of this city. Those inside the church are free from sin. They have forgiveness of their sins and will be the ones whom Christ will deliver up to God to live with him eternally (1Cor. 15:24).

This wall has twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them. Gal. 3:9, 16, 29 explains that the church is the seed of Abraham, or in other words the church is the Israel of God today. The number “12” is used in Revelation to identify organized religion. Therefore, the church is described as having twelve gates. Those who enter into the city through the gates are God’s chosen people or the Israel of today. They are Christians.

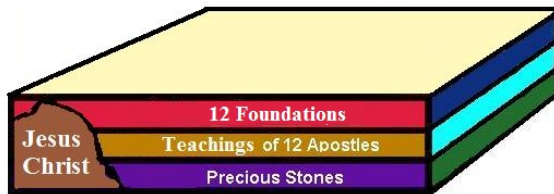
Symbolic language very similar to this is used in Isa. 60:18b to prophesy of the coming of the church. It states, “But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.” We know this is referring to the church because Isa. 60:3 says this is the time when the “Gentiles shall come to thy light.” The Gentiles had no part in the Law of Moses, but the Law of Christ brought all men, Jew and Gentile, under one law. (See Eph. 3:6; Gal. 3:28-29.) When we obey the gospel, we enter in through the gates of Praise. We pass through the wall of Salvation and receive forgiveness of our sins. This great wall of salvation protects us from the devil. He cannot control the destiny of our souls because our sins are forgiven. Christians are under the protection of God, and if we remain faithful, we will never die spiritually.

**Verse 13. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.**

The city has three gates on each of the four sides of the wall. Again, we are dealing with descriptive numbers. All four directions of the earth are mentioned. This indicates that a person may enter the church wherever he is located. There is no place on this earth where one would find it impossible to enter into the city. It is accessible to all. It is also interesting to note that the number “3” is the divine

number. Therefore, it would be a divine entrance into the holy city of God, which is located on this earth today in the form of a spiritual kingdom.

**Verse 14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**



The names of the twelve apostles of Christ are written in the twelve foundations of the wall of the city. Eph. 2:19-20, referring to the church, says that it was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*.” The apostles laid the foundation of the church as they proclaimed the gospel, which was given to them by inspiration of God. (See Gal. 1:12-13.) God gave man the law of Christ through the apostles. That law of Christ, the gospel, is the foundation of the church today. It is the basis of all practice in worship and life-style of Christians today. Again, the number “12” is used to refer to organized religion. The old nation of Israel was made up of the children of the 12 sons of Israel (Jacob). The church is made up of those people who choose to follow the ways of God given to mankind by the 12 apostles. In order for any building to be stable in construction, it must be built upon a solid foundation. In order for any local congregation of the church to be acceptable to God, it must be built upon the solid foundation of the gospel of Christ.

**Verse 15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.**

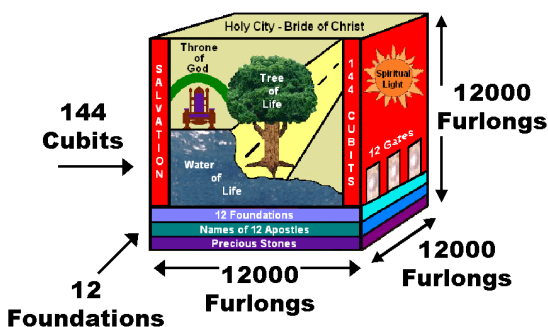
The one who talked with John must have been the angel in verse 9 who showed John this vision. This angel had a golden reed that he was to use to measure the city of God.

This reed is a figurative representation of the gospel. (See 11:1.) This measuring indicates the ability to determine who is in the temple and who is outside of it. That determination is made by the gospel. Those who are obedient to it are inside the temple and those who are not are outside. Interestingly, the temple in 11:1 is also referred to as the holy city in 11:2. This is one more reason why the interpretation of this holy city in chapters 21 and 22 as being the church is correct.

Let us remember that the dimensions which are to be given in the following verses are figurative. These measurements are going to describe some feature of this city, the church, and must not be interpreted literally. We might also note that the dimensions of the gates are never given although this verse indicates they were to be measured.

**Verse 16. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.**

### Measurements of the Church



The angel measures the city and finds it to be in the shape of a square with its length and width measuring 12,000 furlongs, The city is also 12,000 furlongs high. Using our present-day measurement of a furlong as 220 yards, 12,000 furlongs are equal to 1,500 miles. This makes the city 1,500 miles square and 1,500 miles tall. If these

numbers were literal, this city would almost be too large to comprehend. Attempts such as this by using literal measurements are futile in determining the meaning of these numbers. The number “12,000” is figurative. It is used to describe the church. The number “12” is descriptive of organized religion that has been set up by God. The old law was given to the twelve tribes of Israel, and the Law of Christ was given by the twelve apostles. If we take “1,000,” the number of ultimate completeness, and multiply it by “12,” the product is “12,000.” Therefore, the number 12,000 represents the complete law given by God. All who have ever lived and have been obedient to God’s commands are inside the wall of this city. This is a descriptive measurement of a spiritual city.

**Verse 17. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.**

There is some question as to whether the 144 cubits refers to the height of the wall or to its thickness. It seems reasonable to assume that the measurements given in the preceding verse are taken around the wall of the city because everything inside the wall would be considered part of the city. The height of the city also measured 12,000 furlongs, which would seemingly refer to the height of the wall. This would leave the 144 cubits as the thickness of the wall. The real key to this verse is in understanding why the number 144 is used as a measurement of the wall. Again, the number “12” refers to the laws given by God, and if we multiply “12” by “12” for the two laws, we get “144.” (For other comments, see v. 12.) This is the same way we arrive at the meaning of the 144,000 in 14:1. The number “144” represents the giving of the two laws, or the wall of the city, and the 144,000 represents all who have obeyed those laws and have entered in through the gates into the city. The “entering in through the gates” of verse 27 simply means that one has rendered obedience to the law set up by God. Those inside this wall are the redeemed of all ages, the 144,000.

The “measure of a man” establishes the measurements as



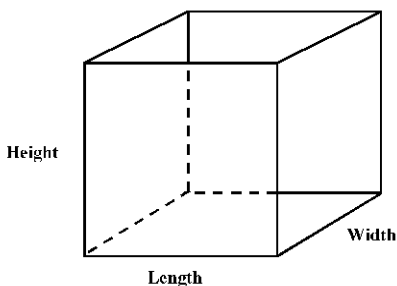
being those that man would understand.

## MEASUREMENTS OF THE CHURCH

There are some extraordinary relationships throughout the book of Revelation that can be understood by the measurements of the church given in the above verses. Although most of the numbers in Revelation are symbolic, some of them work together in mathematical relationships that are truly amazing, and because of this, we can begin to understand how several of the visions in Revelation work together. It would be impossible to discuss all of these relationships in the space available here; therefore, we will give some basic information with the hopes that you will explore this subject further.

All of these numbers have mathematical relationships to the number 144,000; therefore, it becomes very important to understand the symbolic meaning of this number. In chapter 14:1, the 144,000 are those who are standing around Mt. Zion with the Father's name written in their foreheads. This would define the 144,000 as Christians. In chapter 7:3-4, the 144,000 are those people who are sealed by God. Again, this would define these people as Christians. Since the number 144,000 symbolically represents Christians, then it would represent the people located in the Holy City (the church) pictured in these last 2 chapters of Revelation.

The first relationship we need to examine is the total measurement of the Holy city described in the above verses. We are told that the length, breadth, and height of the city are all equal measurements of 12,000 furlongs. That would make the city a perfect



cube with each measurement being 12,000 furlongs. In the drawing, notice that it takes 12 perfect measurements to form a perfect cube. Since each of the measurements is 12,000 and there are 12 measurements, the total measurement of the church would be  $12,000 \times 12$ , or 144,000. All Christians are part of the 144,000 and dwell in God's Holy City that has a total measurement of 144,000.

Again, in chapter 7:3-4, the 144,000 (Christians) are those who are sealed by God. In the following verses in that chapter, we are told that 12,000 are sealed from each tribe. It might be impossible to really understand that this is a symbolic description of all Christians, not the literal 12 tribes of Israel, if it were not for the following mathematical relationship. As discussed in that passage, Christians are the Israel of God today. In our description of the church in this passage in Revelation, the names of the 12 tribes are written over the gates. This would indicate who enters these gates. Now notice, there are 12 gates and 12,000 are sealed from each tribe in 7:5-8. Again, 12,000 times 12 gates equals 144,000. All those who enter the gates of the church are among the 144,000. They are Christians.

Next, the thickness of the wall of salvation is 144 cubits. The number 1000 is used in Revelation to symbolize completeness. ( $144 \times 1000 = 144,000$ ) Therefore, all those who pass through the great wall of salvation become a part of the 144,000.

**Verse 18. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.**

The symbol of the precious jasper stone was also used in verse 11 to describe the light of the church. We may not know exactly what this stone was, but that probably makes no difference in the interpretation. This enormous wall was built entirely of jasper, and the city itself was made of gold so pure you could see through it. This picture points to the value of the city. Nothing is more valuable or precious in the sight of God than his church. This is one of the most important lessons regarding the church in the entire book of

Revelation. Many times we fail to understand the importance and value of the church. On many occasions, members cannot get along and fight among themselves. Many ask, "How often do I 'have' to go to church?" We must learn to view the church in the same manner as God does. It is the most valuable thing on earth. The richest people on earth are those who live in this beautiful city of God, his church.

Concerning the color of the jasper stone, some say it is diamond and other believe it was some type of fiery red stone. Since the wall is a wall of salvation, diamond would show the extreme value of this wall. However, the wall of salvation is also well defined by the color red since Christ gave his blood in order to provide salvation. When we are baptized, we pass through the blood of Christ, which would also be the same as passing through the wall of salvation. Blood is always symbolized by the color red. For that reason we prefer the definition of jasper as a fiery red stone. That would also be the color of this great wall of salvation around the holy city of God.

**Verses 19, 20. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper, the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.**

Verse 14 states that the 12 foundations of this wall have the names of the apostles inscribed in them. The foundation of the church is the teachings of the 12 apostles. These two verses list twelve precious stones that garnish the twelve foundations of the wall. It would be hopeless to try to ascribe a meaning to each of these individual stones since we are not even sure what some of them look like. The meaning is derived from the beauty and value of these stones. The gospel is the foundation of the church, and its value is truly extraordinary because it will provide eternal

life to all who follow its teachings.

**Verse 21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.**

Each of the gates to this city is one enormous pearl. This illustrates that obedience to God's commandments and entrance into this city is priceless. This is comparable to the parable of the pearl of great price in Mt. 13:45-46. In this parable, a merchant finds one pearl of great price and proceeds to sell all he owns in order to buy it. This is how we should consider the church. It is priceless. We should be willing to give up all earthly goods in order to enter into God's kingdom.

The street of this city is pictured as pure transparent gold. This once again illustrates the enormous value of the city. It is far beyond comparison to any physical city that might exist. We might note that this city has only one street. To those who interpret these numbers literally, it would be hard to visualize how a city 1,500 miles square could have only one street. They would have us believe that the "street" includes all streets in the city, but this interpretation totally misses the point. This is a spiritual city with only one street. It is the street of righteousness! It is the way that leads to eternal life. Jesus said, "I am the way." The only street we can walk down, or the only way we can get to heaven, is by following Christ.

This street is defined in Isa. 35:8 as Isaiah prophesied of the coming of the church. He said, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The church is our place of righteousness on earth. No unclean thing shall enter into it. The only way anyone may enter the church is by being obedient to God's commands and receiving forgiveness of their sins. Therefore, the unclean shall not pass over this street of holiness.

Also, Isa. 35:9 says, "But the redeemed shall walk there." The street of gold, the way of holiness, is located in the

church today, and only the redeemed may walk there. This is the reason the street is described as pure gold. This figurative street, “the way of holiness,” located in the spiritual city of God, the church, is the most valuable street in existence. If we walk on it, we shall receive eternal life.

**Verse 22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.**

Under the old Law of Moses, the temple was the place of worship. Located in this temple was the Holy of Holies where the priest entered once each year to make atonement for the sins of the people. Today, as Christians in the church, we have no need of a priest to make atonement for us because Christ dwells with us. (See v. 3.) Christians are priests of God today. We have direct access to the Throne of God through prayer whereby we can receive forgiveness of our sins. Therefore, there is no need of a physical temple in the spiritual kingdom of God today.

In 2Cor. 6:16-17, Christians are admonished to come out from among those who practice sin. If we do this, God says, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” This was prophesied in Ezek. 37:26-27. Referring to the new law given by Christ, God says, “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them.” In Ezek. 37:27, God also says, “My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” We know this is referring to this present Christian dispensation because this was to take place when God made the everlasting covenant with his people. We know this everlasting covenant was put into effect by Christ’s death on the cross. (See Heb. 8.)

The church today has no need of a physical temple because God and Christ dwell with Christians in the church. They dwell in us and we dwell in them. To dwell in the church is to dwell in God and Christ. They are our temple. We do not have to go to some specific physical place in order to worship God because we are in a close relationship with him in the church, and we can worship him directly.

**Verse 23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.**

The church of our Lord needs nothing to light it except the glory of God. Jn. 8:12 says Jesus is the light of the world. Christians are spoken of as being the “children of light and the children of the day” (1Thess. 5:4-9). If we are in God’s holy city, we are walking in the light (1Jn. 1:7). Col. 1:12-13 refers to those in sin as being in darkness, and to those who are in the kingdom as being in the light. It states, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”

Language similar to this is used in Isa. 60:19-20 to prophesy the coming of the church. It states, “The sun shall be no more thy light by day neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.” The glory of God and Christ is the light of the church today. The spiritual kingdom of God has no need of the physical lights that illuminate this earth.

**Verse 24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.**

People from every nation upon the earth are in Christ’s church. This is in contrast to the old Law of Moses in which only those who were born of the seed of Abraham (the Israelite nation) were able to be among God’s chosen people. Today, all people, from the least to the greatest, have the opportunity to enter into the city of God and be one of his chosen. If there are kings on this earth who choose to follow Christ, they can bring their earthly honors into it by simply becoming members of the church. In 1Pet. 2:17 we are told to “honour the king.” Therefore, this must be speaking of this present time upon the earth. It is hard to believe that earthly honors of this kind will be of any value in heaven. Kings of the earth do not bring their glory and

honor into heaven; they bring it into the church when they become obedient to God's laws and enter in through the gates into the holy city. Isa. 60:11 is a prophecy of kings of the earth bringing their glory and honor into the church. This will be discussed in the next verse.

**Verse 25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day for there shall be no night there.**

There is no darkness (sin) in the church. Those who are in the church have had their sins forgiven. They are in the light. Christians are the "children of the day" (1Thess. 5:5). They are the light of the world.

The gates to the church are never closed. A person may obey the gospel and enter in through the gates into the spiritual city of God at any time, day or night. In ancient times, the gates to the cities were closed at night for protection from their enemies. Because of this, no one could enter into the city at night. This is not so with God's city because there is no night in this spiritual city. Therefore, the gates are never closed. Entrance into the church is possible at any time. Verse 23 stated that God and Christ are the light of this city. These spiritual lights never go out so there is no night in the church.

Prophesying the coming of the church, Isa. 60:11 says, "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring into thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." Hopefully, it is clear that the book of Revelation describes the church in terms similar to those used to prophesy its coming in the Old Testament.

**Verse 26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.**

The glory and honor of all nations are in the church. Today, people of all nations can be a part of God's chosen people, not just one nation as was the case under the Law of Moses.

**Verse 27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh**

**abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

The church, God's spiritual city, is a place where no sin can enter. When we become obedient to God's law and pass through the gates into the city, our sins are forgiven.

Today, all types of sins surround the church. Those who commit such sins are outside his city. They have refused to turn from these acts and receive forgiveness by obeying the commandments of God. This is illustrated by the drawing. The church exists today in a world of sin and is surrounded by spiritual darkness. The only people who can

enter into the city are those who have had their sins forgiven and have had their names added to the Lamb's book of life. Rev. 22:19 explains that it is possible for a person's name to be removed from the book of life. Therefore, this entrance is to the church, not heaven, because once we enter heaven, there will be no danger of losing that inheritance. Verse 19 also refers to the possibility of losing our part in the holy city. When we enter into the holy city, we must remain faithful in order to keep ourselves inside the walls of this spiritual city of God, his church.

As referred to in verse 21, Isa. 35:8a states, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." Only those who have had their sins forgiven will be allowed entrance into this spiritual city. They are the only ones who will be able to walk down the street of gold. Nothing that "defileth" shall enter into the church. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are part of the church. We know that Christians' names are





written in the book of life today because in Phil. 4:3 we find two people “whose names are in the book of life.”