

# THE LAMB IS THE LORD

## A journey through the Book of Revelation

### Seven ► The Bridal City of God

#### Introduction and Questions



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John writes, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2).

#### The new Heaven and Earth

The great and final judgment of the world has come. All sin, and all the devastation caused by sin, has been dealt with. Now John sees "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, . . ." (21:1). A new and perfect world comes into being.

Paul writes: "the creation . . . will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). And that's what's happened now. In that new creation, "the former things have passed away" (21:4). God "will wipe away every tear from" [our] "eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more" (21:4). No longer will there be "anything accursed" (22:3).

#### A Bride adorned for her Husband

John sees "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2). In 19:7 we saw that "the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready". Now we know who His Bride is—she's a city, New Jerusalem. She's prepared "as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2).

At its heart, the Bible story is a romance! Jesus gave Himself up for His beloved Church "that he might present the church to himself in splendour, . . . that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). And that's the Church we see now. Now, in the new creation, we see her in her final splendour, holy and without blemish.

#### "I will be their God, and they shall be My people"

John hears "a loud voice from the throne" proclaiming "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (21:3 NIV). The

holy God, creator and sustainer of all that exists, delights in our presence! He wants to live with us. And God wants to lavish on us all the countless and unspeakably wonderful blessings of life in His presence.

“Those who are victorious will inherit all this” (21:7 NIV)—“all this” being the blessings of living in the New Earth and Heaven. That includes all the blessings promised to overcomers in the seven churches (2:7,11,17,26-28, 3:5,12,21). Children inherit—and this word “inherit” leads naturally to the wonderful blessing God mentions next. These victors are God’s precious children. He declares “I will be their God and they will be my children” (21:7 NIV).

But outside the city are “the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, . . . murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars” (21:8, see also 22:15). Their fate is to remain outside the city—outside God’s presence, outside His blessing, outside the warmth of human friendship, outside everything that gave meaning to life. This is indeed the “second death” (21:8).

### “The bride, the wife of the Lamb”

One of “the seven angels who had the seven bowls . . .” says to John, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9). He sees “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God” (21:11). The city has “the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal” (21:11); it is “pure gold, like clear glass” (21:18, see also 21:21). The city glows with the resplendent beauty and glory of God. It’s saturated with God’s presence. The vision of it is almost beyond imagination.

The city has “a great, high wall” (21:12). Each of its twelve gates is “made of a single pearl” (21:21). On them are inscribed “the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel” (21:12). This is doubtless to show who can enter the city. These “twelve tribes” are God’s faithful people “from every nation” (7:9). They’re citizens of New Jerusalem; they have the right to enter the city.

The wall of the city has “twelve foundations”, each “adorned” with a different jewel (21:19-20). On them are “the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (21:14). The apostolic gospel—the gospel that the apostles preached and taught—is foundational to God’s people. By believing it, people are brought to faith in Christ; by feeding on it, they grow to maturity.

The city’s length, width and height are equal (21:16)—in other words, it’s a cube. It’s the same shape as the Most Holy Place in the Temple (1 Kings 6:20) and in the Tabernacle (calculated from Exodus 26:1-37). The Most Holy Place was the special room where God lived on Earth (see Exodus 25:22, Numbers 7:89). The *whole city* is a Most Holy Place. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and only under the strictest conditions. Now God’s people—every one of them—*live there!* They live in the presence of God.

And the city seems to fill the whole new Earth. *The whole Earth is God’s dwelling-place.* The whole Earth is saturated with His presence and glory.

### Salvation for the nations and their kings

The nations will walk by the city’s “light”—the light of God’s glory (21:24). And the “kings of the earth will bring their glory” into the city; into it will be brought “the glory and the honour of the nations” (21:24,26). This is an act of worship; the kings and nations are laying down their glory and honour before God.

Earlier, we saw, for example, that “all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of” Babylon’s “sexual immorality” (18:3), and “the kings of the earth” had committed “sexual immorality” with Babylon (17:1-2, see also 18:3,9). So how did “the nations” and “the kings of the earth” get into the new creation? They got in the only way *anyone* can get in—by repenting of sin and receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord. By His blood, the Lamb “ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation” (5:9).

## A new Garden of Eden



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John saw “the river of the water of life . . . flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life” (22:1-2).

In this city is a throne—“the throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:1,3). Flowing from it is “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal”. It flows “through the middle of the street of the city” (22:1). This river here in 22:1 reminds us of the river that “flowed out of Eden to water the garden” (Genesis 2:10-12). The river pictures *eternal life*—life in fellowship with God, life in His presence, abundant life (see John 10:10). It is the life that the Holy Spirit gives us (see 21:6).

On either side of the river is “the tree of life” with “twelve kinds of fruit” (22:2). Like the river, the tree of life first appears in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). When Adam and Eve sinned, God had to “guard the way to the tree of life”, to prevent them eating from it. Now *everyone has full access to the tree of life!* It yields fruit every month. And it bears leaves “for the healing of the nations” (22:2).

## A garden city

New Jerusalem is far more than just a restored Garden of Eden. Now it extends across the whole Earth. And it's transformed into *a garden-city*. The original garden was, in a way, a 'building site'. God planned that a garden-city should be built there—and that this garden-city should extend across the whole Earth. Now we see that city.

New Jerusalem symbolises God's perfect world—the Kingdom of God. Countless times, God's people have prayed “Our Father in heaven, . . . Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9-10). *Now God's kingdom has come!*

## God's royal priesthood

In this city, God's servants “will worship him” (22:3)—the pronoun “him” probably including *both* God and the Lamb. That word “worship” can also be translated “serve” (as, for example, in the NIV). This word is used for what priests do (see Hebrews 8:5, Revelation 7:15). It will be *priestly* service.

God's servants “will see his face” (22:4). Firstly, we'll see the glorified human face of Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus, the Son of God, is *also* a human being. He became a human being at His incarnation, and He'll remain a human being for ever. Secondly, we'll know the Triune God intimately, without mediation, without hindrance. We'll experience ever-increasing insight and understanding of who God is and of what He is like.<sup>[1]</sup> And His “face” also refers to His attitude toward us. His face will “shine upon” us (a phrase from Numbers 6:25); He will look upon us with love, pleasure and delight!

John continues: “his name will be on their foreheads” (22:4). Again “his” likely refers to both God and the Lamb. We'll bear the name of the Lamb and the Father because *we belong to them*.

And God's people “will reign for ever and ever” (22:5, and compare 3:21, 20:4, 2 Timothy 2:12). Jesus will rule the New Earth, and we'll reign with Him.

## Life in the city

What will life be like in the new creation? Think about what we humans really long for. That will surely tell us a lot about life in our eternal home.

We long to love and be loved. We long for ways to engage our talents and creativity, our intellect and imagination. Well, our life in glory won't disappoint!

And we long for a place to call home. We humans have never forgotten paradise. We're homesick. We long to return to paradise. And return we shall—to the transformed and eternal paradise that is the new creation!

## "I am coming soon"

The glorious vision of New Jerusalem fades from view. Three times in the closing verses, Jesus says "I am coming soon" (22:7,12,20). He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (22:13, see also 1:17). He is coming, because He is "the Omega", "the last", and "the end". Jesus is the Messiah, "the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star" (22:16).

In 21:6, God promises, "To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment" (21:6, see also 7:17). God invites everyone to drink of His living water—water that we saw flowing from the throne of God. Now that invitation is repeated: "let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price" (22:17).

Jesus is coming soon. John responds, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (22:20). That's the cry of *all* God's faithful people through the ages. Come, Lord Jesus!

All the great themes of the Bible converge and find their fulfilment in Revelation. God's people have been gathered from every tribe and language and people and nation and brought home—home to God's garden-city, home to live together in God's presence, home to serve as priests, home to reign with Christ. All the enemies of God and of His people have been thrown into the lake of fire. *And all this has been achieved by the Lamb who was slain.* All God's promises "find their Yes in him" (2 Corinthians 1:20). *To the Lamb be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**If you have time, please read Revelation chapters 21 and 22.**

### Question 1

If you asked people about their idea of heaven, they'd probably think of a beautiful countryside scene, not a city! So why is the new creation symbolised as a *city* – New Jerusalem?

### Question 2

In every one of the letters to the seven churches, Jesus promises blessings to the one "who conquers" (2:7,11,17,26, 3:5,12,21). Then in Revelation 21 we read, "The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son" (21:7). All the promises to the conquerors are fulfilled in this wonderful vision of the New Creation. But *how* do we conquer?

### Question 3

How might this wonderful vision that concludes Revelation impact our day-to-day lives now?

**CREDITS** [1] See *Our God Reigns: an Amillennial Commentary on Revelation*, page 520-521. Published by Mentor, an imprint of Christian Focus Publications Ltd., Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland, in 2024. ► Text 2022 © Robert Gordon Betts. ► Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Anglicized English Standard Version copyright © 2002 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language. ► Scripture quotations marked 'NIV' are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition) Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica (formerly International Bible Society). Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, an Hachette UK company All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica (formerly International Bible Society). UK trademark number 1448790. ► Illustration on page 1 © Steve Creitz [ProphesyArt.com](https://ProphesyArt.com). Image cropped. ► Image of waterfall on page 3 copyright © Basile Morin at [commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Basile_Morin) (whose profile is at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuang\\_Si\\_Falls\\_and\\_its\\_emerald\\_water\\_pools\\_in\\_Luang\\_Prabang\\_province\\_Laos.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuang_Si_Falls_and_its_emerald_water_pools_in_Luang_Prabang_province_Laos.jpg) and described as 'Kuang Si Falls and its emerald water pools, in Luang Prabang province, Laos.' Image published at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuang\\_Si\\_Falls\\_and\\_its\\_emerald\\_water\\_pools\\_in\\_Luang\\_Prabang\\_province\\_Laos.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuang_Si_Falls_and_its_emerald_water_pools_in_Luang_Prabang_province_Laos.jpg) and made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence (viewable at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>). Image cropped.