

## **Revelation 21a – The New Earth and Heaven**

Revelation 21:1 *“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.”*

***New heaven and a new earth*** - Greek *kainos* - Meaning “new” in quality as opposed to that which is worn or marred. Both occurrences of “new” in this verse are translations of *kainos*. *Neos*, which is also translated “new” in the NT, (Matthew 9:17; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 3:10; etc) refers to newness in point of time. By using the word *kainos*, John is probably emphasizing the fact that the new heavens and earth will be created from the purified elements of the old and thus be new in quality. The new heaven and the new earth are therefore a recreation and forming a new of existing elements and not a creation. Compare 2 Peter 3:13.

***Were passed away*** - In so far as their former state is concerned. That which was perfect as it came from the hand of the Creator, which He pronounced as “very good,” (Genesis 1:31) had become terribly marred by sin and could not be allowed to continue throughout eternity.

***No more sea*** - The clause reads literally “and the sea is not any longer.” The seas as we now know them will not exist in the new creation. Some have insisted that this “sea” is symbolic of peoples, nations and tongues (cf. Revelation 17:15) but if so, the heavens and the earth would be symbolic also. John simply affirms that the heavens, the earth and the seas will no longer exist as we know them now.

Revelation 21:2 *“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

***Holy city*** - Ancient Jerusalem is where the Temple was that God could manifest His presence to His people, (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:2-3) even as He had done at the door of the tabernacle in the desert. (Exodus 29:43-46; 40:34-38) The city was described as “holy,” (Daniel 9:24; Matthew 27:53) but in the course of time the spiritual degradation of God's people became so great that Jesus pronounced the Temple a “den of thieves,” (Matthew 21:13) and predicted the fall of the city. (Matthew 22:7; Luke 21:20) Now God promises a new kind of Jerusalem, which John describes as the “new Jerusalem.”

***New*** - Greek *kainos* - Meaning new in kind and quality. ( verse 1) Compare Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22; 13:14.

***Coming down*** - In vision John beheld the city as it descended.

***Out of heaven*** - Its place of origin. (cf. Revelation 3:12; 21:10)

***Prepared*** - The form of the word translated suggests that the preparation had been initiated in the past, so that the city now stands fully prepared.

**Bride** - The city is here represented as the bride. ( Revelation 19:7)

**Adorned** - Greek *kosmeo* - Meaning “to arrange,” “to furnish,” “to adorn.” The English word “cosmetics” is derived from *kosmeo*. The form of the Greek verb suggests that the adorning had begun in the past and had by now been brought to completion.

**Husband** - The Lamb being Christ. (Revelation 19:7)

Revelation 21:3 “*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.*”

**Great voice** - The speaker is not identified. It is presumably not God as He is spoken of in the third person.

**Tabernacle** - Greek *skene* - Meaning “tent,” “booth,” “tabernacle.” The verb *skenoo*, “to tent,” “to dwell,” appears in John 1:14: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” This visible presence of God was made plain by the Shekinah in the days of the theocracy and later by the personal appearance of Jesus Christ as a member of the human family dwelling among men. The great voice from heaven now stresses the wonderful fact of a new creation and of God dwelling personally with His people.

**With men** - Later in the verse the phrase “with them” appears twice. Three times in this verse the apostle uses the preposition “with,” thereby stressing the fact of God keeping company with men throughout eternity making His home with them.

**Dwell** - Greek *skenoo*. (see above on “tabernacle”) Compare with Ezekiel 37:27. Ezekiel describes conditions as they might have been. John describes conditions as they will be fulfilled.

Revelation 21:4 “*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.*”

**All tears** - Literally “every tear.” Revelation 7:17; cf. Isaiah 25:8; 65:19.

**Death** - The clause reads literally “the death shall be no longer.” The definite article is significant. John speaks of “the death,” the principle of death that came in as a result of sin. The definite article here has the force of a demonstrative. John says in effect, “this death, the one we know so well and fear so much shall be destroyed.” Compare the language of Paul: “Death is swallowed up in victory,” literally, “The death was swallowed down in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:54) “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. [literally “the death”]” (verse 26)

**Sorrow** - Grief such as accompanies bereavement. The causes for sorrow will be completely removed. Compare Isaiah 35:10.

**Pain** - Much of life's misery and anguish is the result of harassing pain. Pain will be completely banished in that beautiful world of tomorrow.

**Former things** - Conditions as we know today will pass away. There will be nothing that bears the mark of the curse. (Revelation 22:3)

Revelation 21:5 *“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.”*

**He that sat** - Or “the one sitting.” He is not identified. (cf. Revelation 20:11) In Revelation 4:2 the Father is represented as seated on the throne and the same may here be implied. Some point to Matthew 25:31 as evidence that the reference may be to Jesus Christ.

**Behold** - The speaker calls attention to something important about to be disclosed.

**All things** - Nothing of the curse is to remain. (cf. Revelation 22:3)

**New** - verse 1.

**Write** - Revelation 1:11. At different points in John's experience in vision the command to write is repeated. (Revelation 1:19; 2:1; 14:13; etc)

**True and faithful** - Genuine and trustworthy. The words and promises of God are altogether trustworthy and may therefore be depended upon. (Revelation 22:6)

Revelation 21:6 *“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.”*

**It is done** - Rather “It has come to pass.” Textual evidence may be cited for the reading “They have come to pass,” or “They have occurred.” Important textual evidence may also be cited for the reading “I have become the Alpha and the Omega” What God had promised through His holy prophets and which His righteous people have looked forward with eager anticipation will finally become an accomplished fact. The preview given to John is a guarantee of the final accomplishment yet to be carried out.

**Alpha and Omega** - Revelation 1:8.

**Athirst** - The true believer is not eager to amass the things of this world, to be rich in worldly goods. Rather he is eager to drink deeply of the spiritual riches from God.

**Fountain** - Or “spring.” Compare John 4:14; Revelation 7:17; 22:17.

**Of life** - The passage may be translated, “out of the spring of that water which is life itself.” This is the promise of immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53)

**Freely** - “Gratuitously.” The gift of immortality may be purchased “without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

Revelation 21:7 *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*

**Overcometh** - According to the Greek it means continually conquers or habitually conquers. The Christian lives the victorious life by the power of the Holy Spirit. He may make mistakes, (1 John 2:1) but his normal life presents a picture of spiritual growth. (cf. Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)

**All things** - Textual evidence attests the reading “these things” being the promises given in the Revelation and particularly the things mentioned in this chapter.

**His God, my son** - Compare Genesis 17:7; 2 Samuel 7:14. The promise of intimate family connection is set forth here. The sinner saved by grace will be received into the family of God and be brought into a relation as close as if he had never sinned. The inhabitants of unfallen worlds cannot be closer to God and Christ than will be the redeemed sinner.

Revelation 21:8 *“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.”*

**But** - A strong contrast is now presented.

**Fearful** - Greek *deiloi* - Meaning “cowardly,” “fearful.” The word is always used in the sense of cowardice or unwarranted timidity. Compare its use in Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:40, the related verb in John 14:27 and the related abstract noun in 2 Timothy 1:7. In each instance cowardice is the basic meaning. Owing to cowardice, moral faintheartedness, many fail to overcome in the Christian warfare. They give up in the time of trial. Compare Matthew 24:13.

**Unbelieving** - Those who lack faith in the sense of not remaining faithful. They do not trust God to the end. They prove to be untrustworthy.

**Abominable** - Greek *bdelusso* - Meaning “to make foul,” “to turn away in disgust from,” “to detest,” related to the verb *bdeo*, “to stink.” The noun *bdelugma* occurs in Luke 16:15; Revelation 17:4-5; 21:27.

**Murderers** - These include the persecutors and murderers of God's faithful children throughout history.

**Whoremongers** - Greek *porno* - Meaning “fornicators.” (1 Corinthians 5:9-10 etc) The feminine form is translated “harlots” in Matthew 21:31-32; Luke 15:30. Compare Ephesians 5:3, 5.

**Sorcerers** - Greek *pharmakoi* - Meaning “practicers of magical arts.” The root refers to magic, enchantment, sorcery and to the use of drugs to produce a stupefied condition. A modern counterpart of the ancient practice of sorcery is spiritism.

**Idolaters** - A reference to heathen peoples as well as to Christians who practice heathenish rites. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:9; 10:7.

**Liars** - Including those who preach false doctrines. See Exodus 20:16.

**Second death** - Revelation 20:6.

Revelation 21:9 “*And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.*”

**One of the seven angels** - One of the plague bearing angels had already shown John the judgment of the great harlot. (see Revelation 17:1) Now one of them (possibly the same angel as some suggest) directs John's attention to the New Jerusalem being the center and seat of the eternal kingdom. It is of interest to note that in the first instance it was a plague bearing angel that presented mystical Babylon to the prophet. Whereas now it is one of them who shows him the New Jerusalem. Historically, ancient Babylon and Jerusalem were traditional enemies and figuratively they represent the two sides of the great controversy between good and evil. The one is represented as a fallen woman, (Revelation 17:5) the other as an honorable woman. (Revelation 19:7; 21:2)

**The Lamb's wife** - Revelation 19:7; cf. Revelation 21:2.

Revelation 21:10 “*And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*”

**In the spirit** - In a trance and in vision. ( Revelation 1:10) The carrying away was “in a vision.” (cf. Ezekiel 8:3; Daniel 8:2)

**To a great** - In vision John seemed to be placed upon a “great” and high mountain. From this vantage point he beheld the details of the city. (cf. Ezekiel 40:2)

Revelation 21:11 “*Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal,*”

**Glory of God** - This probably refers to the abiding presence of God with His people throughout eternity. The glory that denotes His presence will never leave the New Jerusalem. Compare Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11.

**Light** - Greek *phoster* - Meaning “a luminary,” “a light-giving body.” The word occurs in Philippians 2:15 in the clause, “among whom ye shine as lights [luminaries] in the

world.” The “light” of the city is the “glory” of God mentioned in the preceding comment. (see Revelation 21:23)

**Jasper** - Greek *iaspis* ( Revelation 4:3) The passage reads literally, “having the glory of God, her luminary, like a stone most precious, as jasper, flashing forth.”

**Clear as crystal** - Greek *krustallizo* - Meaning “to flash forth light,” “to scintillate.” The English term “crystal” is derived from *krustallizo*.

Revelation 21:12 *“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:”*

**Wall great and high** - Such walls were built around ancient cities for protection against enemies. John's imagery is borrowed in part from the description of the city Ezekiel saw. (Ezekiel 48:35) The picture is that of an ancient city with walls and gates. These were terms with which the apostle was familiar, and Inspiration chose to reveal the glories of the eternal city to him in terms that he understood. Human language and human portrayals cannot adequately represent the grandeur of that celestial city. In pictorial prophecy the degree of identity between the picture and the actual calls for careful interpretation. (Ezekiel 1:10; 40:1)

**Twelve gates** - Compare the city described by Ezekiel. (Revelation 48:31-34)

**Twelve angels** - The New Jerusalem is pictured as having angelic gatekeepers.

**Twelve tribes** - See Ezekiel 48:31-34. For the picture of spiritual Israel reckoned by tribes Revelation 7:4.

Revelation 21:13 *“On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.”*

**On the east three gates** - Ezekiel's enumeration is in the order, north, east, south and west. (Ezekiel 48:31-34) John's order is east, north, south and west. The difference is no doubt without significance.

Revelation 21:14 *“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*

**Twelve foundations** - The number “twelve” is given five times in verses 12-14. For twelve as a significant number, Revelation 7:4.

**Twelve apostles** - The New Testament church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. (Ephesians 2:20)

Revelation 21:15 *“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.”*

**Reed** - Compare Ezekiel 40:3; Revelation 11:1. Here the act of measuring and the stating of measurements are no doubt to give assurance of the adequacy and sufficiency of the heavenly home. (cf. John 14:2)

Revelation 21:16 *“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.”*

**Foursquare** - There is beauty inherent in right proportion, perfect balance and congruity. For various foursquare items, see Exodus 27:1; 28:16; 30:2; 39:9; 2 Chronicles 3:8; Ezekiel 41:21; 43:16; 45:2; 48:20.

**Twelve thousand furlongs** - A furlong (stadion) is about 606 feet, 6 inches or 185 metres. Thus 12,000 furlongs would be about 1,378.4 miles. (2,218 km) The text does not state whether this is a measure of the circumference or of one side. If the former, the city would measure about 344.6 miles (551.4 km) to a side. It should be noted that the English furlong is not identical with the stadion.

**Equal** - Various attempts have been made to explain the dimensions of the city. It is difficult to envision a city reaching upward of 12,000 (or 3,000) furlongs. (see above on “twelve thousand furlongs”) Some though not denying the reality of the city believe that the measurements here like those of the wall, are “the measure ... of the angel.” (verse 17) They hold that it is therefore scarcely possible that human dimensions can here be intended. Others point to a similarity between the size of the city described here and that envisioned by the Jews.

Still others assign “equal” (*isos*) to meaning “proportion” and believe that although the length and breadth may well be equal, the height will be proportionate to the other dimensions. This is possible although it is difficult to demonstrate such a definition from either Biblical or classical sources. Another interpretation permits *isos* to retain its normal meaning but observes that the word here translated height (*hupsos*) may mean not only “height” but also “the high part,” “the top,” “the summit,” “the crown.” If *hupsos* is understood in this sense, John means that the distance around the top of the wall is the same as that around the bottom.

Whatever uncertainty there may be as to the exact proportion or size of the city, it is certain that the glories of that celestial city will far exceed the fondest imagination. No one should be concerned, for there will be room enough for all who desire residence. In the Father's house there are “many mansions.” (John 14:2)

Revelation 21:17 *“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.”*

**Measured the wall** - On the basis of the New Testament cubit, which was about 17 1/2 inches (44.5 cm), 144 cubits, would be about 210 ft. (64 metres) John does not say that this measurement represents the height of the wall. Some have conjectured that it may be that of its thickness.

**Of the angel** - In the Greek there is no definite article with “angel.” The passage reads, “of a man, even of an angel.” The meaning is somewhat obscure. So some urge we should refrain from dogmatically applying purely human standards of measurement to the New Jerusalem. Whatever the dimensions, we may rest assured that it is all perfection. The saints will understand the significance of John's figures when they see the city.

Revelation 21:18 *“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.”*

**Building** - Greek *endomesis* - Meaning “a building in,” from *domao*, “to build.” The word occurs only here in the NT. Here *endomesis* may refer to an inset in the wall as though the wall were inlaid or studded with jasper.

**Jasper** - Revelation 4:3.

**Pure gold** - The structure of the city appears to have the transparency of glass. Its flashing beauty no doubt changes with every ray of light that falls upon it.

Revelation 21:19 *“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;”*

**Garnished** - Greek *kosmeo* - Meaning “to adorn.” (cf. verse 2)

**Precious stones** - Twelve kinds of precious stones are listed as being in the foundation. Not all of these can be identified by the modern jeweler, nor is much to be gained by making a comparison with the jewels of the high priest's breastplate. (Exodus 28:17-20) Neither ancient sources nor modern scholars agree as to the identification of all the stones. Some of their suggestions are listed below under the respective stones.

**Jasper** - Revelation 4:3.

**Sapphire** - Azure or sky blue colour. It is transparent and exceedingly hard.

**Chalcedony** - A misty grey colour clouded with blue, yellow or purple. The best is that which has a pale cast of blue. It is very much like the common agate.

**Emerald** - A bright green coloured gem without any mixture and is one of the most beautiful of all the gems.

Revelation 21:20 *“The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”*

**Sardonyx** - Partly of the sardian and partly of the onyx stone, which resembles a man's nail from whence it has its name. It is reddish, bordering on white.

**Sardius** - The same with the sardine stone, (Revelation 4:3) of a blood colour and what is commonly called a cornelian. It is found in Sardinia from whence it has its name and in Bohemia and Silesia.

**Chrysolite** - Literally “golden stone.” It is of a dusky green with a cast of yellow. It is a species of the topaz.

**Beryl** - The beryl is a mineral of great hardness and is of a green or bluish-green color. It is identical with the emerald except in the color, the emerald having a purer and richer green color proceeding from a trace of oxide of chrome.

**Topaz** - The topaz is a very hard and transparent stone so called from “Topazos,” a small island in the Arabian Gulf. It is generally of a yellowish color and pellucid, but it is also found of greenish, bluish, or brownish shades.

**Chrysoprasus** - Its name is derived from *chrysos*, “gold,” and *lithos*, “stone” and means “golden stone” The name was applied by the ancients to all gems of a golden or yellow color. It is said that its prevalent color is green and is sometimes transparent. This is the “modern” chrysolite. The ancients understood by the name a “yellow” gem.

**Jacinth** - A stone of a purple or violet colour from whence it has its name. Though what the moderns so call is of a deep reddish yellow near a flame colour.

**Amethyst** - A stone of a violet colour bordering on purple. It has been thought a preservative from drunkenness from whence it seems to get its name.

Revelation 21:21 *“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.”*

**One pearl** - The size of the gems listed is beyond human comprehension.

Revelation 21:22 *“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”*

**Temple** - Greek *naos* - The word for the sanctuary is confined to the holy and most holy places, not including the outer courts and other buildings. For *hieron*, the word for the entire sacred enclosure, see Luke 2:46; Revelation 3:12.

The earthly sanctuary was symbolic of the dwelling place of God. Because of their sin Adam and Eve were driven from Eden and the presence of God. When sin has been removed, the church will again be able to dwell in His presence and no structure will be required to symbolize the dwelling of God.

Revelation 21:23 *“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.”*

**No need** - Light giving bodies will not be imperative for the illumination of the city. The glorious effulgence of the presence of God will give more than sufficient light. (cf. Isaiah 60:19-20) Material things are not indispensable in God's plan. In His presence they are put to shame. (cf. Isaiah 24:23) Created light cannot outshine the uncreated glory of the divine presence.

Revelation 21:24 *“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.”*

**Nations** - A description of the redeemed from “all nations, kindreds, people and tongues.” (Revelation 7:9; cf. Isaiah 60:3, 5)

**Kings** - The picture is drawn from the OT. (see Isaiah 60:11)

Revelation 21:25 *“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.”*

**No night** - No doubt because of the circumstances in verse 23. (cf. Zechariah 14:7)

Revelation 21:26 *“And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”*

**Of the nations** - Compare verse 24.

Revelation 21:27 *“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.”*

**Any thing that defileth** - No doubt an allusion to Isaiah 52:1. Much of the imagery in John's description of the Holy City is borrowed from the writings of ancient prophets who described the glories of the Jerusalem that might have been. John is describing the city that will be. (Ezekiel 48:35)

**Worketh abomination** - verse 8.

**Maketh a lie** - verse 8.

**Book of life** - See Philippians 4:3.