

Heaven: Our Dream Home

Rev 21

Turn to Revelation 21. Our text is Rev 21, and it is mostly about a city, the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

**The Best Question.** We ask, “What will heaven be like?” We think of heaven as a *place*, and we want to know what the *place* will be like, and what will *life* be like for us in that *place*.

According to Revelation, that’s not the best question. The best question is, “what’s it like to be *with God*?” That is harder to answer, and usually it is not as attractive to us. When we imagine “heaven,” we imagine the perfect place, and the perfect life.

God is often not a big part of this. That’s not good, but that’s how we tend to be, so let’s just agree that we’re like that. Let’s admit to God that when we think of heaven, he’s not at the center of what we imagine. That’s not right.

God speaks to us in this Scripture. God says to us, “Let me shape your hope. Let me guide your imagination. Trust me on this. I know you because I made you. I know how to give you pleasure forevermore better than you know how to do this for yourself. You will be my home, and I will please you in ways you don’t understand now.”

We are God’s dream home. And God is our dream home.

**What John Sees** Rev 21:2 *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

If you see something coming down out of heaven from God, you should be able to tell the difference between a holy city coming down from heaven, and a beautiful bride in her wedding procession, right? But whatever John actually sees, he can tell right away that this is a holy city and it is also bride on her wedding day.

What did John actually see? I do not know, but this is much clear: the city and the woman are one and the same. This happened before in Revelation. Jesus is both the lion of Judah, and the slaughtered lamb. We don’t need to pick one, he is both lion and lamb. So also, the holy city and the beautifully dressed bride are one and the same.

Revelation has mentioned this city a few times, but has not been clear about what the city is. But we know what the bride is. Jesus talked about the bride, and so did Paul, and the OT prophets spoke about Israel as God’s wife. The bride of Christ is the whole church, the whole people of God, the whole crowd of Christ’s people. We know that, John’s seven churches knew that.

The city is the bride. So the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is not an actual city, just as the bride of Christ is not an actual woman. The holy city is another picture of the whole people of God. All of us together are the new Jerusalem, the holy city. We are not *in* the city, we *are* the city. God himself lives *in* the city.

John **saw** a city coming down, like a bride dressed for her wedding. What did he **hear**?

**What John Hears** – Rev 21:3 - *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now with the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.*

Now John hears what it means. In Revelation, we often read what John heard and what he saw. On the surface they are different, but what he hears and what he sees are just different ways of describing the same thing.

So here, John SEES the holy city which also looks like a beautiful bride ready for the wedding. That’s what he SEES. What he HEARS is “God with people” said three different ways. 1, God’s dwelling is with the people; 2, he will dwell with them; 3, God himself will be with them.

The city coming down is like a parable. The bride in procession is like another parable about the same thing. They are both talking about God moving in with his people, and living with them. Revelation 21:3 is the most important line in Revelation about heaven. God will live with us.

We will have magnificent bodies, and we will have interesting and wonderful lives, that is all true, but Revelation does not care about that. The best is that we will be with God.

Imagine yourself in deeply in love, completely romantically infatuated with someone wonderful and beautiful. In my school years I was often in love with some young lady. I never spoke to them, and certainly never touched them, but my affection was no less consuming for that.

When you’re in love like that, the joy is not where you are going, or what you will do, the joy is to be with that person. Going for a drive together, a walk together, a meal together, are exhilarating experiences. A slight touch is so wonderful. It’s not where you are, or what you do, it’s who you’re with. Who you are with completely changes the world and all of life.

We cannot imagine the relationship between God and his people being like that. And that, my brothers and sisters, is a sad failure of imagination. I’m not much better than you in this.

Be that as it may, Revelation is real clear: for God and his people to be together will be the most wonderful thing ever for both of them. It will make the best wedding honeymoon that ever happened on earth seem shallow and a little bit fake.

We are all made in the image and likeness of God. That has to include human sexuality and arousal, desire and stimulation. God wants us the way the groom wants his bride. Our Lord wants to be with his bride the way a groom wants to be with his bride. God has worked a lot harder to get us than we have worked to get him. We have no idea how much he wants us.

This is a picture of what it will be like to meet the Lord and be with the Lord forever. Human marriage and joys are an overcooked foretaste of what's coming with the Lord. Some of us are married, and some are not, but we'll all be a part of the real marriage

In Rev 21:9-10, we get the same message again, although said in a slightly different way.

**What John Hears** – Rev 21:9 *One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”* What John hears is, “I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

**What John Sees** - Rev 21:10 - *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.*

What John HEARD was, “this is the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” What John SAW was the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, having the glory of God.

Do you think Jesus has a particular woman he's keeping in heaven, and when we get there, Jesus will get married to this woman in front of us, and we'll be invited to the wedding? No, of course not. WE together are the woman, WE all together are the Bride of the Lamb.

So, folks, if there's no woman, if we're the bride, the wife of the Lamb, then there is no city either, we are the city, the holy city. The bride, the wife of the Lamb, is a picture of God's people, an innumerable crowd from every nation, tribe, people, and language.

In the same way, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, is a picture of us, God's holy people, an innumerable crowd from every nation, tribe, people, and language. There are no streets of gold, and there are no pearly gates. We, this incredible crowd of believers in Christ from every part of the world, WE OURSELVES are the holy city that has streets of gold and pearly gates.

The measurements of the city are all about “twelve.” There is a famous 12 in the OT, the twelve sons of Jacob, becoming the twelve tribes of Israel. There's a famous 12 in the NT too, the twelve disciples of Christ. Both of those twelves mean “the people of God.” “12 x 12” means “all the people of God.” Rev 21:12,14 mention the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles, just to be clear.

## The Cubical Holy of Holies

The holy city, the new Jerusalem, has a peculiar shape. It is a massive cube, 12,000 stadia long and wide and high. That's about 1400 miles, 2200 km. When was there ever a city like that? For them, a 1400 mile square pretty well covered the whole known earth. That's about as far as they knew.

In the tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness, the Holy of Holies was a cube shaped room at the back of the tabernacle. It was 10 cubits, that's about 15 feet, long and wide and high. All the furniture in there was gold, the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat with two gold cherubim. That little room was where God dwelled. That was God's throne room, he was enthroned above the cherubim, and they viewed the ark as his footstool. This is mentioned in a few OT places.

Only one person ever went in there, only the High Priest, and he only went in there one day a year, on the day of Atonement. So God's tent was in the middle of the people, he wanted it there, but ordinary Israelites never came into the Holy of Holies, or even near it.

Four or five hundred years later, Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem. Here's how Kings describes the Holy of Holies: (1 Kgs 6:20) *The inner sanctuary [of the temple Solomon made] was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar [with pure gold].*

Twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high. This is bigger than the Holy of Holies in Moses' tabernacle, but it is the same cube shape, and everything pure gold.

When Solomon finished building the temple, God moved in. *When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed Solomon's burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."*

1 Chron 7:1-3.

And Revelation tells us that the new Jerusalem, the holy city, is a cube, 12,000 stadia long and wide and high. This whole city is God's Holy of Holies! It's called the holy city, the new Jerusalem, but it's a cube, a massive Holy of Holies, God's inner throne room.

The angel measured the city with a golden measuring stick (21:15), and the city is of pure gold, and the great street of the city is of pure gold. (21:18,21). Gold means here Holy of Holies. But it is unusual gold, because you can see through it. It says *the city shone with the glory of God, and the whole city was clear as crystal. The city is of pure gold, pure as glass. The great street is gold, as pure as transparent glass* (21:11, 18, 21). It is transparent to tell us that the glory of God and of the Lamb fills every corner, no dark corners at all.

But there is no actual city, we are the city. The great crowd of chapter 7, from every nation, tribe, people, and language – we all together are the woman, the beautiful bride, and we all together are this great Holy of Holies, we are the sacred dwelling of God. We are the streets of gold and the gates of pearl. God lives in this city.

*God's dwelling place is now with the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.* At the end of Rev 21, we learn that there is no temple in the city. Well of course not. Why would anyone build a temple inside the Holy of Holies? It is already God's sacred dwelling place.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus said so his followers, *If I go prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may also be.* And Jesus prayed this way: *Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am.* Jn 14:3; 17:24. It's not where we be, or what we'll do, it's who we'll be with. Amen.

PRAYER: Lord, you made us, you know us. We trust you completely, that whatever you have planned for us will be the best thing that could possibly happen to us. Eye has not seen nor ear heard what you have planned for us. It turns out that our imaginations are not very heavenly. We'd like some help with this, Lord. And Lord, come quickly please. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.