**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**

[**REVELATION 21**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21&t=NKJV) **– A NEW HEAVENS, A NEW EARTH, AND A NEW JERUSALEM**

**Revelation 21**

**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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 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. 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 shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 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, 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 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: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 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. 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. 18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 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; 20 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. 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. 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. 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. 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. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 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.**

From the time described midway through Genesis chapter 3 until the events of Revelation 20, earth experienced—is experiencing—the presence of sin and death. At the end of chapter 20, John sees God delivering the final and ultimate judgment on Satan, casting all evil into the lake of fire. At that point, creation will finally be free from everything wicked, and what follows is a description of a remade, restored earth. Following the great white throne judgment of chapter 20, John sees a new heaven and a new earth. Scholars debate whether this means that all of creation will be destroyed and re-made, or that God will re-condition creation. The terminology used seems to suggest a renewal. John sees the new city of Jerusalem descending onto the earth, and voices celebrating the restored relationship between God and man. In particular, John hears the voice from the throne declare an end to suffering, pain, and death for all of eternity. At the same time, John hears a reminder that sin, and those who chose it over God, are condemned to the "second death" of hell (Revelation 21:1–8). John attempts to describe the New Jerusalem in terms others can understand. In doing so, he mentions precious materials such as gold and jasper, but associates them with properties those materials don't normally have. Gold, for instance, is not normally "clear," and neither is jasper. This is John's struggle in explaining what he sees; a modern person might say they saw smoke that looked like "transparent lead," and those hearing it would understand the mixture of two separate ideas. Here, John does something similar in his effort to describe the indescribable (Revelation 21:9–21). John also points out that there is no temple in this new city, since there is no need for a temple. Temples, priests, and rituals are all necessary when man is somehow separated from God. Two people speaking face-to-face don't need telephones or letters; those living in direct communion with God won't need a temple. This description also re-emphasizes the perfect holiness of this New Jerusalem, and the fact that only those who put their faith in Christ will be found there (Revelation 21:22–27). Revelation 22 is the final chapter of the New Testament. There, John will complete his description of the New Jerusalem and give some final words to those who read this text.

**All things made new: The new heaven and the new earth.**

**Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.**

We can say that Revelation chapter 21 begins a new section of the Book of Revelation:

· Jesus, the Lord of the Churches ([Revelation 1:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+1.1&t=NKJV) to 3:22).

· Jesus, the Lion over the nations ([Revelation 4:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+4.1&t=NKJV) to 20:15).

· Jesus, the Lamb among believers ([Revelation 21:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1&t=NKJV) to 22:21).

The new perspective of this last section is glorious.

**“From the smoke and pain and heat it is a relief to pass into the clear, clean atmosphere of the eternal morning where the breath of heaven is sweet and the vast city of God sparkles like a diamond in the radiance of his presence.” (Moffatt)**

A new heaven and a new earth: The idea of a new earth, with a new atmosphere and sky is a familiar theme in the Scriptures. Many of the prophets, both Old and New Testaments, spoke of this new heaven and new earth.

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create a Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. ([Isaiah 65:17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+65.17-18&t=NKJV))

Of old, You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes all of them will grow old like a garment, like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. ([Psalm 102:25-27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+102.25-27&t=NKJV))

Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat… Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ([2 Peter 3:12-13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Peter+3.12-13&t=NKJV)**)**

It’s worth remembering that the new heaven referred to doesn’t mean the heaven where God is enthroned. The Bible uses the word heaven in three senses.

1. The first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere, the “blue sky.”

2. The second heaven is outer space, the “night sky.”

3. The third heaven is the place where God lives in glory.

When the Scriptures speak of a new heaven, they mean a new “blue sky” and a new “night sky,” not a new heaven where God dwells.

New heaven… new earth: The ancient Greek word translated new here (kaine) means “new in character, ‘fresh’.” It doesn’t mean “recent” or “new in time.” This isn’t just the next heaven and the next earth; this is the better heaven and better earth replacing the old (the first earth had passed away). Though some disagree and argue that this earth will never be destroyed) we should understand that this is truly a new heaven and a new earth, not merely a “remade” heaven and earth. We know this because Jesus said that

“heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word would live forever **(**[Luke 21:33](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+21.33&t=NKJV)**)**. Also, in [Isaiah 65:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+65.17&t=NKJV) God said prophetically that He will create a new heaven and earth, and the ancient Hebrew word for “create” (bara) means to “create out of nothing,” instead of re-fashioning existing material. Some take this “newness” as only a spiritual and moral change. But there seems to be a genuine physical transformation in mind: there was no more sea.

**“In this chapter we see that the history of time is finished; the history of eternity is about to begin.” (Barnhouse)**

To the Jewish mind, the sea was a place of separation and evil. Already in the Book of Revelation it is shown to be the source of the Satanic beast (Revelation 13:1) and the place of the dead (Revelation 20:13). In other passages of Scripture, the sea is associated with the heathen

**Isaiah 57:20**

**20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.**

and in a more general sense, with the opponents of the Lord that must be conquered

**Psalm 89:9**

**9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.**

**(2-4) The New Jerusalem descends from heaven.**

**Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”**

This is the Jerusalem of hope

**Hebrews 12:22**

**22 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,**

The Jerusalem above

**Galatians 4:26**

**26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.**

The place of our real citizenship

**Philippians 3:20**

**20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:**

The terms holy and new distinguish the city. Because it is holy and new, it is different from any earthly city. The name Jerusalem gives it continuity with earth, especially with the place of our redemption. It is significant that this glorious dwelling place of God and His people is described as the holy city. Cities are places with many people, and people interacting with each other. This isn’t isolation, but a perfect community of the people of God. Man has never known a community unmarred by sin. Adam and Eve only knew a limited community, and community in a larger context only came long after the Fall. Here, in the NewJerusalem, we have something totally unique: a sinless, pure, community of righteousness, a holy city. Problems arise when believers expect this kind of community now, or fail to realize that it only comes down out of heaven. Cults have developed and arisen out of the idea that we can create such a city ourselves, This city is not and never can be the achievement of man, but only a gift from God. Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband: John used the most striking, beautiful image he could think of. The most beautiful thing a man will ever see is his bride coming down the aisle, ready to meet him. John said that this is how beautiful the New Jerusalem will be. The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them: Moses’ tabernacle represented the dwelling place of God on earth. That was past the representation of the dwelling place of God; this tabernacle of God is the reality of His presence. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people: This succinctly states essence of God’s desire and man’s purpose. Simply, God’s desire is to live in close fellowship with man, and man’s purpose is to be a people unto God. This is the greatest glory of heaven, and the ultimate restoration of what was lost in the Fall.

**“I do not think the glory of Eden lay in its grassy walks, or in the boughs bending with luscious fruit-but its glory lay in this, that the ‘Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.’ Here was Adam’s highest privilege, that he had companionship with the Most High.” (Spurgeon)**

The former things have passed away: The New Jerusalem is distinguished by what it does not have – no tears, no sorrow, no death or pain. Later it will be shown that the New Jerusalem has no temple, no sacrifice, no sun, no moon, no darkness, no sin, and no abomination.

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes:

**“‘Every tear,’ for they be many; – tears of bereaved affection, such as Mary, and Martha, and the widow of Nain wept; – tears of sympathy and mercy, such as Jeremiah and Jesus wept over the sins and the calamities of Jerusalem; – tears of persecuted innocence, tears of contrition and penitence for faults and crimes against the goodness and majesty of heaven; – tears of disappointment and neglect; – tears of yearning for what cannot now be ours; – these, and whatever others ever course the cheeks of mortals, shall then be dried forever.” (Seiss)**

**(5) All things new.**

**Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”**

This is an authoritative announcement, coming from the throne of God itself. This is one of the few times in Revelation where we clearly see God speaking directly from His throne.

Behold, I make all things new: This statement is in the present tense, “I am making everything new.” This is the consummation of God’s work of renewal and redemption, having begun here and now in our present time. Paul saw this transformation at work on this side of eternity: Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day…

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ([2 Corinthians 4:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+4.16&t=NKJV), [5:17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.17&t=NKJV)**)**

This is a brief glance at the thinking behind God’s eternal plan – to allow sin and its destruction in order to do a greater work of making all things new. At this point in His plan of the ages, the plan is complete. All things are new. Our instinct is to romantically consider innocence as man’s perfect state, and wish Adam would have never done what he did. But we fail to realize that redeemed man is greater than innocent man, that we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. God’s perfect state is one of redemption, not innocence.

Write, for these words are true and faithful: John was probably so astounded by these words that he forgot to write – and must be told to do so.

**(6-8) The invitation and a warning.**

**And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**

It is done! God’s eternal purpose in Jesus is now accomplished. [Ephesians 1:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.10&t=NKJV) has been fulfilled: that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him.

At this point, all things have been resolved or summed up in Jesus – it is done! I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts: Drinking and thirst are common pictures of God’s supply and man’s spiritual need. He who overcomes shall inherit all things: Those who overcome (by faith in Jesus, as in [1 John 5:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1John+5.5&t=NKJV)) enjoy a special relationship with God (I will be his God and he shall be My son).

**1 John 5:5**

**5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable… have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone:

Those who reject Jesus and make themselves apostate are specifically prohibited from entering the New Jerusalem.

Cowardly: Is cowardice enough to send a person to hell? “John is not speaking of natural timidity, but of that cowardice which in the last resort chooses self and safety before Christ.

**The nature of the New Jerusalem.**

**(9-10) An angel will show John the city in greater detail.**

**Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,**

Passages like this make some wonder if the New Jerusalem is a literal place at all. Some suggest that it is really just an exotic symbol of the Church, the Bride of Christ. This heavenly city is literal, but it is called the bride, the Lamb’s wife because it is the place where all God’s people are gathered. In this sense the New Jerusalem is certainly like the bride; but this association doesn’t diminish the reality behind the image. The city is associated with the bride to awe us with a sense of its beauty.

**(11-14) The city’s brilliance, wall, gates and foundation.**

**Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

John was first impressed by the glory of this city. She shared in the glory of God, and it was expressed in the radiant light shining from her. She had a great and high wall: The wall was not needed for defense, because there were no more enemies. But the great and high wall gave the city definition and shows that some will be excluded from the city (only the righteous can enter). The names of the tribes on the gates communicate the unity and heritage that the people of God have with Israel. God will never forget the tribes of Israel, even unto eternity. Three gates on the east, three gates on the north: Some have thought the arrangement of gates looks back to the camp layout used during the Exodus ([Numbers 2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+2&t=NKJV)).

The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb: The foundations are an eternal testimony to the apostles, and their permanent place in God’s plan. If it isn’t build on the foundation of the apostles, it’s isn’t the right place for God’s people. The New Jerusalem and the church are founded upon the apostles

**Ephesians 2:20**

**20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;**

**(15-17) The dimensions of the city.**

**And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.**

The New Jerusalem’s length, height and width are equal. This means that it is either a cube or a pyramid. A cube is reminiscent of the Holy Place of the tabernacle, suggesting that the entire city is the Holy Place. The size of the New Jerusalem is enormous; twelve thousand furlongs equals 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers). This is the same distance from Maine to Florida; the square footage would approximate the size of the moon. Henry Morris, guessing that there will have been 100 billion people in the human race through history, and that 20% of them will be saved, calculated that each person would have a “block” with about 75 acres on each face to call their own. This is highly speculative, but illustrates the point that there is plenty of room in the New Jerusalem.

**(18-21) The beauty of its structure.**

**The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**

The construction of its wall was of jasper: When we read of jasper and pure gold and all kinds of precious stones, we should take these as literal representations; yet they express realities of another world. We can gain a brief glimpse of what John saw, but we can’t even begin to see it in fullness until we see it with our own eyes.

**John’s use of riches in his description “is his way of bringing out the very great value of what God has for His people.” (L. Morris)**

Jasper… sapphire… chalcedony: The precise identification of these gemstones in modern terms is difficult, but the impression is of unending, staggering beauty. If the dimensions and descriptions seem confusing or impossible, there are two main principles to keep in mind.

First, we must understand the ideas communicated in the details (glory, beauty, splendor, and so forth).

Second, we must understand that this is the city whose architect and maker is God ([Hebrews 11:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+11.10&t=NKJV)). We should expect it to be beyond our comprehension.

**Hebrews 11:10**

**10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**

**The temple of the New Jerusalem.**

**1. (22-23) God is all in the New Jerusalem.**

**But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**

In the ancient world, it was unthinkable to have a great city without many different temples. It’s like saying today, “I saw a great city but I saw no bank in it” or “I saw a great city but I saw no shopping mall in it.” Nevertheless, in this city there was no temple in it**.** For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple: Here, ­­the temple was not removed, but expanded. Every­thing and every place is holy and the dwelling place of God. Before Jesus the temple was a prophecy. In the Christian era God’s people are His temple. In the Millennium the temple will be a memorial. Here the temple is everywhere.

No temple… no need of the sun or of the moon: This reminds us that heaven will be a place of pure worship. The things we use to help us worship, but often end up distracting us in worship (such as buildings, music systems, customs, and so forth) will no longer be an issue. Our focus will be totally on the Person we worship, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. In heaven, none of our joy, beauty, or knowledge will be based on created things, but only on the Creator. By faith, you can have it that way now. You can decide to trust in God so completely that your joy, what you consider beauty, and your foundation of knowledge are all based on Jesus, and not on anything created.

The Lamb is its light: Light speaks of joy, for in the Scriptures light and joy go together. Light speaks of beauty, because without light there is no beauty. Light speaks of knowledge and in heaven we will all know Him as He knows us.

**(24-27) Access into the city.**

**And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.**

What about these kings of the earth? Who are they? This is difficult to understand, and different commentators have different suggestions.

**“Among the mysteries of this new heaven and earth this is set forth to us: that, besides the glorified church, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations, organized by kings, and saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city.” (Alford)**

There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles: Does this mean that such people will threaten the city? It isn’t necessary to say that this is the idea, because all sinners and death have been cast into the Lake of Fire ([Revelation 20:11-15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.11-15&t=NKJV)). The exhortation warns present readers that the only way to participate in the future city is to turn one’s loyalties to the Lamb now.