

Revelation 21.22-22.5

The New Jerusalem Internally [21.22-22.5]

The Sanctuary of the City [21.22]

v.22. I saw marks the last time in the book of Revelation John uses this expression. This is therefore the climax of his visions since he saw “seven golden candlesticks” in the first chapter (1.12). John notes two features that are not present in the new Jerusalem “and explains how these absences indicate God’s direct presence in the city,” (Fanning). I saw **no temple therein** for the intimate dwelling presence of God is not limited to a specific location or building within this city. In fact, the whole city is a temple; a holy of holies [*naos*], hence **the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it**. There is nothing that will conceal the presence of God and access to Him, and believers will constantly dwell in perfect, holy communion with God and the Lamb. The divine title used here is literally, “the Lord, the God, the Almighty” [*pantokratōr*] which describes God as the all-powerful, supreme sovereign and Lord (cf. 19.6). This same mighty God has brought divine purpose to pass and now resides permanently with His people. The Lamb is prominent in these closing verses (cf. 21.23, 27; 22.1, 3) reminding every saint of the abiding efficacy of the redemptive work of Christ – His precious shed blood is our only title to the city (cf. Hebrews 12.24).

The Sunlight of the City [21.23-24a]

v.23. The **city had no need of the sun**, neither the **moon to shine in it**. There will be no requirement for the sun (created light), moon (reflected light) or a candle (artificial light) to shine in this city for it will be filled with the inherent blazing light of the radiance of God’s glory. This is how Genesis begins – even before the sun was created, God said “Let there be light,” (Genesis 1.3). God is the primary source of light, not the sun. The **glory of God did lighten it**, or “lights it up” [NET]. Indeed, the **Lamb is the light** (lamp) **thereof** – Christ is the very effulgence (radiance) of the glory of God (Hebrews 1.3). This is instructive when we remember that the seven churches are presented as lampstands – pedestals on which oil lamps were hung. The Lamb is the lamp. It is therefore the responsibility of every local assembly to hold Christ aloft. The millennial Jerusalem will likewise be illuminated by the glory of God (cf. Isaiah 24.23; 60.2, 19-20).

JA Seiss adds a nice thought about the inherent glory of God, *“That shining is not from any material combustion, – not from any consumption of fuel that needs to be replaced as one supply burns out; for it is the uncreated light of Him who is light, dispensed by and through the Lamb as the everlasting Lamp. When Paul was on his way to Damascus, a light brighter than the sun at noon shone round about him, irradiating his whole being with new sights and understanding, and making his soul and body ever afterwards light in the Lord. On the Mount of Transfiguration that same light streamed forth from all the body and raiment of the blessed Jesus.”*

v.24. Some say there will be no **nations** in the eternal state and refer this verse to the millennium. But this is an assumption which Scripture does not confirm. In fact, it seems from Isaiah 66.22 that Israel will retain her national status eternally. Additionally, the word “people” in 21.3 is plural. This suggests eternal distinctions between people groups in a verse which no one disputes describes the eternal state. Those who suggest this is the millennium also change the preposition *eis* to read ‘unto it’ rather than “into it”, as if these kings bring their glory up to the city and leave it outside. This is because they see this city as a satellite city hovering above the earth during the millennium. This will not do. Though the preposition can bear this meaning, its use in the chapter demands the meaning ‘into’ not ‘unto’ (cf. v.27). Furthermore, the devil will not be thrown ‘unto’ but ‘into’ [*eis*] the lake of fire (20.10). Again, the parallel scripture in Isaiah shows that the kings of the nations will bring their wealth *into* Jerusalem as a tribute offering of worship to God during the millennium (60.11).

The phrase **them that are saved** is omitted by JND, NET and many other translations. Jim Allen says, “The phrase was included by Erasmus in the text of his Greek New Testament (1516 edition) on very weak manuscript evidence and thus became incorporated into the Textus Receptus and hence came into the AV.” So intense is the divine light that streams from the city, the nations will **walk in** (by means of) **the light of it**. Perhaps the city will be so bright it will supply illumination for the whole of the new creation.

The Sovereigns and the City [21.24b-26]

The **kings of the earth** suggests that, in eternity, the saved from the millennium will be organised into people groups over which kings will exercise delegated authority from God. These kings **bring their glory into** the city. They no longer glory in themselves or claim the honour due to their position. They recognise that all glory and honour belong rightfully to God (cf. 4.11; 5.12) and thus they come to the administrative centre of the new earth to acknowledge and worship Him. The word “bring” is in the present tense suggesting their actions are habitual and regular.

v.25. The **gates** of the city will **not be shut** (cf. Isaiah 60.11) **at all by day** granting the kings full and free access to the city. In the Roman empire, city gates were normally closed at sunset to protect its citizens and keep unwanted visitors outside. But in eternity there are no enemies or threats to the security of the city's residents. Indeed, there is **no night** in this city for the light of God's glory has banished darkness forever. **v.26.** In an expansion of v.24, not only kings, but also nations can freely enter and bring their **glory and honour** into new Jerusalem. As the queen of Sheba of old (cf. 1 Kings 10.10), the nations will bring gifts of worship and appreciation for the God to whom all honour belongs. The nations are those who have come through the millennium and been transferred to the new earth. The millennial scene of Isaiah 60 serves as a model for this eternal day. Isaiah 60.3, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, And kings to the brightness of thy rising." (cf. Zechariah 14.16-19).

The Separation of the City [21.27]

v.27. The preceding verses have described what will enter the city. This verse describes what will never enter the city – *anything* polluting, or *anyone* unclean. The mention of defilement stands as a warning to the reader that anyone seeking to inherit the city must be a partaker in the holiness of God and the Lamb. Jim Allen says, "There is no suggestion that such (defiling) persons exist outside the city, or that attempt is made to keep them out. The emphatic negative statement of the verse makes it clear that all the contamination of sin has been dealt with and excluded from this creation. The possibility of another fallen creation does not arise."

The city is free from anything ritually unclean or polluting (cf. Acts 21.28) – there **shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth**. Access to the city is also restricted for anyone who **worketh abomination**, a word which generally refers to that which is detestable before God (Luke 16.15), primarily in the form of idolatry. The word is used to refer to the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24.15), and Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations (Revelation 17.5). One who **maketh a lie** refers to a person who "practices falsehood" [NET], i.e. deceit. The great tribulation will perpetuate the lie of the man of sin in his claim to be God (2 Thessalonians 2.11). Men who follow the lie of this man ultimately bow the knee to Satan, the great deceiver (Revelation 12.9; 20.3) and will never inherit the city. By contrast, the saints have "no lie found in their mouths," (Revelation 14.5). Since God is so particular about defilement entering His presence, we ought to be equally cautious about reception to the assembly, and the personal cleanliness of our own lives.

The only people who have title to this city are those whose names **are written in the Lamb's book of life**. The book of life is mentioned six other times in the AV translation of Revelation (3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12, 15; 22.19). The Lamb's book of life is the complete register of the redeemed. This register was written "from" [*apo*] the foundation of the world (17.8), describing the time from which names began to be written in the book, with the name of each saint being indelibly scribed at conversion.

The Stream of the City [22.1]

v.1. The final chapter of Revelation commences with five verses that conclude the description of new Jerusalem. There is much here that is reminiscent of the garden of Eden (garden of delight) including the river of life and the tree of life. But, unlike Eden, in the new Jerusalem God will permanently dwell with His people in an eternal, imperishable and resplendent new creation that will never be tainted or scarred by sin.

The angel (cf. 21.9-10) showed John a **pure river of water of life**. This is reminiscent of the river that rose in Eden to water the garden before dividing into four heads that flowed out to the world (Genesis 2.10-14). Perhaps this river will do the same, supplying its inexhaustible waters to the four corners of the new earth. Though the river is real, it is also symbolic of the fullness of eternal life enjoyed by the saints forever. Mounce says, "God's people will live at the source of the life-giving stream, the very presence of God Himself." Indeed, God and the Lamb are the ever-abundant source of life and health for the redeemed eternally. The river is as **clear as crystal** indicating the purity of the water. Note. The river is not to be confused with the millennial rivers of Zechariah 14.8 (flowing through Jerusalem) or Ezekiel 47.1-2 (flowing from the temple).

The river **proceeds** (pours) **out of the throne of God and of the Lamb**. Revelation has thus far referred to the throne of the Lord Jesus (3.21), the Father's throne (3.21), the throne of God (4.2; 7.15; 14.5) and the Great White Throne among others (20.11). This is the first time the throne has been described as the throne "of God and of the Lamb". This is a clear indication that the period in view is the eternal state. Jim Allen says, "In the millennium the throne is the throne of Christ and Christ speaks of it as 'my throne' (3.21). Here it is the throne of God *and* of the Lamb, not two thrones (note the two genitives) but one throne." Thus, the kingdom has been delivered up to God, and He is all in all.

The Street of the City [22.2]

v.2. In the midst of the street of it (the city) is a phrase which probably belongs to the preceding verse and describes the location of the river of water of life. That is, the river was cascading from the throne and “flowing down the middle of the city’s main street,” [NET]. Then, on **either side of the river was the tree** (singular) **of life**. The singular could refer to one massive tree spanning both sides of the river. However, singular nouns in Greek can sometimes denote a collective which allows for the possibility of multiple trees. This is implied by the phrase “on either side of the river” (see also Ezekiel 47.7, 12). The “tree of life” is a real tree from which mankind was banished in Eden because of sin. Adam could not be permitted to eat of the tree in his fallen sinful state. Now, in the eternal state, the tree is freely available to every saint, symbolising the full and abundant spiritual life found in fellowship with God and the Lamb.

The tree **bore twelve manner of fruits** and **yielded her fruit every month**. The words “manner of” are not in the Greek – the text literally reads, “producing twelve fruits”. The language allows two possible interpretations. It is either referring to twelve crops of the *same* fruit, one crop produced each month of the year (see NLT translation), or twelve *different* kinds of fruit, a different crop being produced each month for twelve months. Whichever view is taken, the tree of life is perpetually, rather than seasonally, in fruit – thus being always fragrant and productive and a full picture of health and vitality. The **leaves of the tree** were for the **healing** [*therapeia*] **of the nations**. The word *therapeia* primarily denotes ‘care’ and ‘attention’ given to those who are unwell. The purpose of the leaves is not to heal existing sicknesses – there will be no illness in the eternal state. Rather, the leaves are symbolic of the assured fulness of life and health that is enjoyed by every nation in the eternal state. RL Thomas says, “Healing, however, does not necessarily indicate the presence of disease any more than the wiping away of tears (21.4) implies that sorrow still exists in the new Jerusalem. The tears were those caused by the troubles of this creation, tears that will no longer exist in the new creation. Likewise, the disease for which this healing provides is that of the former creation which no longer exists in the new Jerusalem.”

The Servants of the City [22.3-5]

v.3. In the eternal state there will be **no more curse** which was brought upon the earth by the entrance of sin (Genesis 3.14-19). The removal of the curse will mean the end of sorrow, pain, and especially death (Genesis 2.17). During the millennium, the effects of the curse will be suspended but death will still exist – “no one will die before the age of a hundred; anyone who fails to reach the age of a hundred will be considered cursed,” (Isaiah 65.20). But, in eternity “there shall be no curse anymore,” [RV]. Interestingly, “curse” is the very last word of the OT (Malachi 4.6). By the end of the NT, God’s people are enjoying eternal blessing – but only because Christ was made a curse for us (Galatians 3.13). The people of God will be occupied eternally for **his servants shall** (keep on) **serving** [*latreuō*] both God and the Lamb forever. The word *latreuō* implies priestly service (especially in Hebrews). No slave labour or arduous toil is in question but glad service to the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.

v.4. It will be the privilege of the saints to **see his face** – likely referring to both God *and* the Lamb as a divine unity. In the OT, seeing God’s face was associated with divine favour and intimacy but was restricted due to human sinfulness. For example, God tells Moses, “You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live,” (Exodus 33.20). But the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5.8). Every saint will therefore have free and unrestricted access and acceptance before God and shall see God as revealed in the person of the Lamb (John 14.9). His **name shall be in their foreheads** is the fulfilment of Revelation 3.12, “I will write upon him the name of my God... and I will write upon him my new name.” The writing of a name upon a person was a claim to ownership. In the Roman world, slaves and soldiers had a visible tattoo to ensure that their allegiance to master and empire was known. The saints will be eternally identified with the name and glory of deity, acting as divine representatives in the new earth.

v.5. The saints who dwell in this city will bathe in eternal, divine light for **there shall be no night there**, or “night will be no more,” [NET], cf. 21.25. They **need no candle** (lamp, *artificial* light), **neither light of the sun** (*created* light) for the city is illuminated by *divine* light – **the Lord God giveth them light**. Some translate this last phrase as “the Lord God will cause His face to shine upon them,” (RL Thomas). This is suggestive of a position of favour, and reminiscent of the priestly blessing of Numbers 6 (vv.24-27). The saints will enjoy God’s eternal blessing, protection, grace and peace.

In this new creation, the saints **will reign forever and ever**, or ‘unto the ages of the ages’. This is the strongest way in the Greek language of indicating something that is never-ending or unceasing. The saints have already “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years,” (20.4) – now the promise is extended to include eternity. Jim Allen says, “Christ does not cease to rule but the character of the rule changes, the mediatorial reign of the millennium is over, and from that point the Lamb is seen to share the throne with God, indeed as God. This reign has no end. It is with this reign of God and the Lamb that the visions of John close.”