

The Angel's Second Visit

Revelation 21:9-22:21

Introduction

You may recall in our study on Revelation 17 that Jesus sent one of the angels having the seven bowls to explain what John had seen previously. In that setting, John was carried away in the Spirit into a desert and while there, he saw a richly adorned harlot sitting upon the composite beast which was covered with blasphemous names. The beast had seven heads and ten horns.¹ The final verses in Revelation are similar to Revelation 17. Once again, Jesus sends one of the seven angels to John with more information. However, this time John is not carried into a desert, but instead he is carried to a high mountain where the angel shows him the bride of Christ, New Jerusalem.

Many Bible students do not agree whether Christ's bride in Revelation 21:9 is His church (the saints) or His city (New Jerusalem). The solution to this confusion is the dual role of Jesus. Jesus is King of kings (the Ruler of the city) and Lord of lords (the Head of His church). In terms of kinship, affection, and worship, the bride of Christ is His church (the saints).² In terms of a kingdom and government, the bride of Christ is a glorious city filled with happy and holy citizens.³

The Sequence

{9} One of the seven angels of the seven last plagues said, "Come with me John, I will show you the bride. The wife of the Lamb is the glorious kingdom which the Father has given to Him."⁴ {10} He carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain. He showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down from Heaven where Jesus lives.

Rev. 21:9-10

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 thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 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,

Rev. 21:11-14

Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 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: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Rev. 21:15

And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

{11} The city shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. {12} It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels welcoming visitors at its gates. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the city's gates. {13} The city faced north, south, east, and west. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. {14} The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

{15} The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. {16} The city was laid out in a square, as long as it was wide. The angel measured the city with his measuring stick and found it to be 12,000 stadia (1,420 miles) on each side. The city was as tall as it was wide. The city is a giant cube! {17} The angel measured its wall and according to the Roman cubit, it was 216 feet thick. {18} The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

Physical Size

I believe that God revealed the physical dimensions of New Jerusalem to John to insure that human beings would understand the *physical* nature of the Holy City. The Holy City is not a mirage or a ghost town; it is a three dimensional reality. The New Jerusalem is 12,000 stadia or furlongs in length, width, and height and the city wall is 144 cubits thick. A Roman furlong was 625 feet in John's day and a cubit was 18 inches. Therefore, 12,000 furlongs is approximately 1,420 miles and a wall 144 cubits thick is approximately 216 feet thick. Even though we have to accept the measurements given at face value, I do not have a perfect solution for the enormous dimensions of the Holy City in terms of Earth's size and mass. It is hard to imagine a 1,420 mile cube sitting on Earth's surface. For the sake of comparison, Earth's diameter is 8,000 miles. Earth's atmosphere is 62 miles high and the International Space Station orbits Earth about 200 miles up. Can you imagine living about half way up the Holy City (say, at mile marker 710) and looking *down* on the International Space Station 500 miles below?

In an effort to rationalize the size of the Holy City and the physical parameters of Earth, please consider two suggestions. First, suppose planet Earth could be expanded to the size of

Saturn at the end of the 1,000 years. If so, a 1,420 mile cube sitting on the surface would not be such a problem. The diameter of Saturn is about ten times the size of Earth. To put this in perspective, 764 planets the size of Earth can fit within Saturn.

The second possibility is one that I favor. I have wondered if the shape of Earth will be changed at the end of the 1,000 years from that of a sphere to that of a toroid. (A toroid looks like a doughnut with a hole in the middle.) Suppose that when the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven, the Mount of Olives splits from East to West as the Scripture says, and a great valley (actually, a large hole) opens up through the middle of the Earth to accommodate the city of God.⁵ In this scenario, Earth would flatten out to look something like a huge doughnut revolving around the celestial Cube of God which faces north, south, east, and west. This physical arrangement would insure that everyone is close to God's throne, no matter where on Earth he lived!

We know that the holy city will not need the light of the Sun or the moon, for the glory of God will be its light.⁶ The Bible also says that God Himself will live among men.⁷ I mention these two facts because Jesus might have a special purpose for planet Earth. Jesus may take Earth out of its orbit around the Sun, since the Sun will not be needed. Jesus could use this planet as a giant "motor home" that travels throughout the universe. If so, the saints would see and visit an infinite number of galaxies and worlds which the Lamb will create during eternity to come. Think about this, New Jerusalem could become something like a huge "RV" where happiness and joy, homes and gardens, animals and victorious human beings will live forever with God. I know this is wishful speculation, but the Bible says we cannot conceive the wonderful things that God has prepared for His children.⁸ Nevertheless, I like the idea of the redeemed being known throughout the universe as "happy campers."

The Sequence Continues

{19} The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, {20} the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. {21} There were twelve gates and each gate was made of a single pearl. The great street in the city was

Rev. 21:16-18

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. 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. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

Rev. 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;

Rev. 21:20-22

The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysopterus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 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. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

Rev. 21:23-27

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. 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.

made of pure gold that looked like transparent glass. Words cannot describe the beauty and glory of God's city.

{22} I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. People in the Holy City will not worship in a temple because they will worship the living God, wherever He happens to be!

A temple became necessary in Heaven when sin began. The plan of salvation required a command and control center and this made it necessary for God to establish a temple in Heaven. Before sin existed, there was no need for altars and atonement. When the work of the Two Witnesses is completed on Earth, there will be no need for altars and atonement. Thus, the temple in Heaven will be vacated.⁹ During the 1,000 years, the saints will return to Heaven and they will sit (reign) with Jesus in Heaven's courtroom to determine the amount of restitution which must be extracted from the wicked. After this phase of judgment is completed, the temple will be forever eliminated. It will have no further purpose because the problem of sin will be concluded. When the Holy City descends at the end of the 1,000 years, it will not have a temple in it. The Father and Son will be worshiped wherever they present themselves.

{23} The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. {24} The redeemed of all nations will walk by their light, and the 144,000 (the kings of the new Earth) will bring their splendor into it. {25} The gates of Heaven will never be closed, for there will be no darkness or fear there. {26} God will bring the glory and honor of all the redeemed from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people into Heaven. {27} Nothing impure will ever enter the Holy City, and no one who does anything shameful or deceitful will be permitted to enter. Only those people whose names are found written in the Lamb's Book of Life will live in this city.

{22:1} Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life that is clear as crystal. It flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, {2} down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the redeemed from all nations.

Because of rebellion and sin, God separated mankind at the Tower of Babel. God imposed different languages on Noah's descendants and language caused the people to distance themselves from one another. As time progressed, differences in cultures separated the human family and differences in religion produced a "wall of separation" that is very difficult, even to this day, to overcome. After Jesus destroys the sin problem, the shade provided by the leaves on the Tree of Life will become a joyful meeting place. A diverse human family will become acquainted with one another and united as one family again.

Rev. 21:23-27

And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 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.

Rev. 22:1-2

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Rev. 22:3-5

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Rev. 22:6-7

And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

{3} The curse of sin will not exist in the holy city. Everywhere, there will be joy and life! The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His 144,000 servants will serve Him. {4} They will see the face of Jesus,¹⁰ and His name and the Father's name¹¹ will be written on their foreheads. {5} Never again will there be darkness. God's people will not need a lamp or light produced by the Sun, for the Lord God will give them light; and they will reign as priests and kings forever and ever.¹²

{6} I saw Jesus standing in Heaven as the captain of a mighty host. Appearing as Michael, the archangel, whom I had seen earlier¹³ he said to me, "The words you have heard and what you have seen are trustworthy and true. I am the Lord of hosts, the God of the spirits of the prophets, and I have sent my angel to show you and my servants the events that must soon occur. {7} Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book in his heart and mind."

{8} When I heard and saw these things, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had come to explain these things to me. {9} But he said, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

{10} Then He (Michael, the archangel) spoke to me again, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. {11} Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.

Rev. 22:8-9

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

Rev. 22:10-11

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Rev. 22:12-13

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Rev. 22:14-16

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

{12} Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. {13} I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

Several times in the book of Revelation, the return of Jesus and the end of the age is described as “near” and “soon.”¹⁴ At first glance, Jesus’ use of these two words seems to indicate an imminent return and this has puzzled Bible students for two thousand years. Because two thousand years have passed since Jesus uttered these words, some scholars have concluded that the words “near” and “soon” should be understood from God’s point of view, that a day is as a thousand years.¹⁵

I believe there is a better explanation. The book of Revelation was given to benefit mankind, *especially* those who would live at the end of the age. John was told in A.D. 95, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book,” because there are many profound truths about Jesus in the book of Revelation that are timeless. (See Appendix D) However, the words “near” and “soon” do indicate an imminent return and they should be taken at face value. *When the time of fulfillment arrives, the words “soon” and “near” will mean what they say.* This timing solution is supported in verse 11 on the previous page. Jesus said to John, “Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” If Jesus’ words are taken at face value starting with A.D. 95, this means no one can change his behavior and the words of Jesus in verse 17 are in conflict with His words in verse 11. Jesus says in verse 17, “whoever is thirsty and whoever wishes, let him come and take the free gift of the water of life.” The solution to the *apparent* conflict is simple. If verse 11 is understood to be a benediction of redemption’s offer (that is, it occurs at the end of the 1,260 days granted to His Two Witnesses), the benediction makes perfect sense *when the proper time arrives.*

{14} Michael/Jesus, the archangel continued to speak, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. {15} Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. {16} I have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the seven churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of

David, and the bright Morning Star. {17} The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. {18} I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. {19} And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." {20} He who speaks these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon. Amen."

"Yes!" John added, "Come, Lord Jesus. {21} The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen, so be it."

Rev. 22:17-21

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Adding to and Subtracting from the Book of Revelation

God promises a blessing for everyone who will read and attempt to understand the book of Revelation.¹⁶ He also promises to put a curse on anyone who adds or subtracts anything from this book. This curse can be viewed on two different levels. First, in ancient times, there were no copy machines. Everything had to be copied by hand. Therefore, God's warning could be understood as a promised curse for anyone who might distort or change the wording of this mysterious book. Perhaps Jesus said this to ensure that the final generation would have a perfect copy of John's original document.

The second view of the curse is larger and more complex. This view involves the interpretation of Revelation's story. A day is coming when the 144,000 will present the book of Revelation to the people of Earth *as a testing truth*. At that time, anyone adding to or subtracting from the book of Revelation will be cursed.

Of course, God knows that down through the ages, honest and sincere people have tried to understand the amazing books of Daniel and Revelation. Today, there is a great deal of *honest* confusion about apocalyptic prophecy. Even though most of what is presently said about Revelation is wrong (according to Daniel's four rules), God does not hold a person accountable for ignorance unless he knows better and continues to do evil anyway or he rejects the clearest evidences of truth or the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the curse pronounced in Revelation 22:18,19 will only occur when people knowingly and willingly alter the book of Revelation to justify their rebellion against God's laws. This time has not yet occurred because the world has not been confronted with a testing truth. Soon, the 144,000 and the Two Witnesses will proclaim the story contained in Revelation in the clearest of terms and those who willfully attempt to distort or change the story will be cursed.

Remember, Holy Spirit power will rest upon the 144,000 and they alone will present the four angel's messages to the world. (See Prophecies 12 and 14.) For 1,260 days every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will hear from the book of Revelation in their own language. The world will hear a pure gospel, the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus given today is highly contaminated with human doctrine. If you disagree, just step back and look at the confusion that is called Christianity.

The Bible says no lie will be found in the mouths of the 144,000.¹⁷ The 144,000 will challenge the lies (and laws) of Babylon. Babylon will intensely persecute anyone who opposes its lies. Do not forget, Babylon will wield great power because the devil will give Babylon its great power and authority. To counteract God's 144,000 servants, the devil will empower a large number of false prophets. Of course, I do not know the actual number of the devil's false prophets, but I do recall that one true prophet (Elijah) faced down 450 false prophets on Mount Carmel.¹⁸ I am looking forward to the day when God's 144,000 servants will present the book of Revelation to the world with power and authority and God's penetrating truth will separate the sheep from the goats. Many will refuse to believe the truth,¹⁹ but many will also embrace the two laws of love and be saved!

Final Words

I cannot adequately explain the love, grace, mercy, or patience of God as He deals with sinners (including me) within the pages of this book. I cannot adequately explain the dimensions of the plan of redemption which the Father designed before the world was created and put into motion on the day that sin began. I cannot adequately explain the joy and peace that comes from knowing and abiding in Christ. I cannot explain the comforting companionship of the Holy Spirit. Even after forty years of Bible study, I cannot adequately explain the Bible or the books of Daniel and Revelation because I consider myself still a beginner. As I wrote this book, there were times I wanted to quit because there is so much to the story of redemption that it is overwhelming. Where does one start? How does one organize an overwhelming number of facts? What are the best words to use and when should certain details be presented? My desire has been to write the facts so that readers can easily follow the story. I have done my best and the book is finished, even though I consider it an inadequate product.

I am so thankful that God gave us the books of Daniel and Revelation. They provide a wonderful roadmap for the end time scenario. We have a chance to understand Jesus' coming actions. As I have explained, I believe the revealing of Jesus Christ began in 1798 and that it will quickly accelerate during the Great Tribulation. I eagerly anticipate the revelation of Jesus (the breaking of the fourth seal) because the human race desperately needs to reconnect with its Creator. The curse of sin has placed the world in

darkness and rebellion. The curse of sin has caused endless sorrow, suffering, violence, illness, and death. The curse of sin has spawned predators who prey upon children, the elderly and anyone who they can overpower. The curse of sin has led man to put his faith in money and his love to be displaced by lust. Man's character is corrupt and loyalty to ennobling principles has vanished. It is the curse of sin that causes God's wrath to come, and it surely will come.

The curse of sin left Jesus to face several challenges. First, Lucifer's jealous hatred focused on Jesus in Heaven, and then it focused on Adam and Eve, two people who Jesus loved enough to die in their place. Then, Lucifer's attention moved toward the destruction of the world, but Jesus saved eight souls in Noah's day. As time progressed, Lucifer focused on Israel, but Jesus saved a remnant (His Church) out of Israel. Lucifer focused on Baby Jesus, only to have His parents be given a warning to escape. Lucifer tried again by sealing Jesus in the tomb of death, only to have Jesus released. Lucifer fought against Jesus in Heaven on Resurrection Sunday, but Jesus prevailed. Thrown to Earth, Lucifer focused on the woman, the bride of Christ, but she too, escaped. Let me be clear, Lucifer will soon persecute the remnant of the woman, but a remnant will live to see Jesus appear at the Second Coming! In his attempt to conquer Jesus and His creation, Lucifer will lead the kings and armies of Earth to make war on Jesus, but Jesus will destroy them. Finally, at the end of the 1,000 years, Lucifer will lead a numberless multitude against New Jerusalem, but fire will come down from God, out of Heaven, and burn them up.

A day is coming when Satan will make his last stand and Jesus will rise up and annihilate the devil and all who are like him. Yet, there is one final victory that I am sure Jesus is anxious to complete – to destroy death itself. When Jesus destroys the curse of sin, death will no longer exist in God's universe. Finally, God's house will be free of the cancer of sin!

“Then the end [of sin's drama] will come, when he [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all [earthly] dominion, authority and power. For he [Jesus] must reign [as Sovereign God] until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he [the Father] ‘has put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put un-

der him [Jesus], it is clear that this does not include God [the Father] himself, who put everything under Christ. When he [Jesus] has done this [that is, destroyed death itself], then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God [the Father] may be all in all.”²⁰

Most people do not realize that the final victory of Jesus has a surprise ending. Instead of remaining on the throne of God and basking forever in the glory of His incredible accomplishments, Jesus will become a subject (a son) of God all over again because His greatest joy is living among those He has created. What humility! What kindness and compassion! What love! And here I go again, having no words to adequately describe our Savior and friend, Jesus.

References

1. Revelation 17:3,4
2. Revelation 19:7
3. Isaiah 9:6; Revelation 11:2; 21:9
4. Psalm 2:7-12; John 17:6,7; Daniel 7:13,14
5. Zechariah 14:4-6
6. Revelation 21:23
7. Revelation 21:3
8. 1 Corinthians 2:9
9. Revelation 15:5-8
10. Evidently, the Father's face cannot be seen and will not be seen throughout eternity. See John 6:46; 1:18; and 1 Timothy 6:15,16. Daniel saw a representation of the Father (Daniel 7:9,10) and John saw His hand (Revelation 5:7).
11. Revelation 14:1
12. Revelation 1:6
13. Revelation 1:1; 10:1
14. Revelation 1:1; 1:3; 3:11; 22:6,10,20
15. 2 Peter 3:8
16. Revelation 1:3
17. Revelation 14:5
18. See Revelation 13:4; 1 Kings 18:20-22.
19. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12
20. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, insertions mine