

The Synopsis

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1 THE REVELATION

1.1 Chapter 21

But there was a new heaven and a new earth; but no more sea-no separation, nor part of the world not brought into an ordered earth before God. Here we do not find any mediatorial kingdom. The Lamb is not in the scene. God is all in all. No sorrow or crying more, no earthly people of God distinct from the inhabitants of the earth. These are God's people, and God is with them Himself, but withal His tabernacle is with them. This is the holy city, the New Jerusalem. The assembly has her own character, is the habitation of God in a special way, when the unchanging state comes, and all is made new. God is the end, as the beginning. Him that is athirst now God will refresh with the fountain of the water of life-the overcomer shall inherit all things. The world for the Christian is now a great Rephidim. This is the twofold portion of the final blessedness: he shall have God for his God, and be His son. Those who feared this path-did not overcome the world and Satan but had walked in iniquity would have their part in the lake of fire. This closes the history of God's ways.

What follows is the description of the heavenly city, as before we had that of Babylon. Its heavenly character and millennial connection with the earth is revealed. One of the seven angels, as in the case of Babylon, comes to shew the prophet the bride, the Lamb's wife. The result of judgment on the earth is the introduction of better and higher blessings. The prophet is taken, like Moses, to see the scene of promise, and sees New Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. This was its double character from God, divine in its origin, and also heavenly (compare 2 Cor. 5: I). It might be of God and earthly. It might be heavenly and angelic. It was neither; it was divine in origin and heavenly in nature and character. It was clothed with divine glory; it must be as founded on Christ's work. It was transparent jasper; jasper being used as a symbol of divine glory (chap. 4: 3). It is secure, having a wall great and high. It has twelve gates. Angels are become the willing doorkeepers of the great city, the fruit of Christ's redemption-work in glory. This marked the possession, too, by man thus brought in the assembly to glory, of the highest place in the creation, and providential order of God, of which angels had previously been the administrators. The twelve gates are full of human perfectness of governmental

administrative power. The gate was the place of judgment. Twelve, we have often seen, denotes perfection and governmental power. The character of it is noted by the names of the twelve tribes. God had so governed these. They were not the foundation; but this character of power was found there. There were twelve foundations, but these were the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They were, in their work, the foundation of the heavenly city. Thus the creative and providential display of power, the governmental (Jehovah), and the assembly once founded at Jerusalem, are all brought together in the heavenly city, the organised seat of heavenly power. It is not presented as the bride, though it be the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is not in the Pauline character of nearness of blessing to Christ. It is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve—the organised seat of heavenly power, the new and now heavenly capital of God's government. They had suffered and served the Lamb in the earthly, and under Him founded the heavenly. It is alike vast and perfect, and all measured and owned of God. It is not now a remnant measured; it is the city. It has not divine perfectness (that could not be), but it has divinely given perfectness. It is a cube, equal on every side, finite perfection. So the wall (they are merely symbols) was perfect, 12 X 12. The wall which secured it was the divine glory. As it is written of the earthly Jerusalem, "Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks."

The city was formed, in its nature, in divine righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass. That which was now by the word wrought in and applied to men below, was the very nature of the whole place (compare Eph. 4: 24). The precious stones, or varied display of God's nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezekiel 28; in grace in the high priest's breast-plate), now shone in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city. The gates had the moral beauty, which attracted Christ in the assembly and in a glorious way. That on which men walked, instead of bringing danger of defilement, was itself righteous and holy; the streets, all that men came in contact with, were righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass.

There was no concealment of God's glory in that which awed by its display—no temple where men approached but where they could not draw nigh, where God was hidden. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were its temple. They were approached in their own nature and glory, surrounded only by that fully displayed.

Nor was there need of created light here; the glory of the divine nature lighted all, and the Lamb was the light-bearer in it.

Note here, we have not the Father as the temple. It is the revealed dispensational Ruler, the true God, and the Lamb who has made good His glory. This was the character of the city.

The vision goes on to shew its relationship to those on the earth, and its inhabitants: a seeming inconsistency, but no real one; for the city is viewed as the estate of the bride. Where the inhabitants are spoken of, it is the individual blessing. The nations, spared in the judgments on earth, walk in the light of it; the world does, in a measure, in that of the assembly now. Then the glory will be perfect. The city enjoys the direct light within; the world transmitted

light of glory. To it the kings of the earth bring their honour and glory. They own the heavens and the heavenly kingdom to be the source of all, and bring there the homage of their power. Night, there is not there, and its gates are ever open; no defence against evil is needed, though divine security leaves no approach to evil. The kings themselves bring their willing homage to it. But the glory and honour of the Gentiles is brought to it too. Heaven is seen as the source of all the glory and honour of this world. Hence these are now true. Nothing defiling enters there, nor what introduces idols and falsehood. Neither man's evil nor Satan's deceit can exist or produce any corruption there. How often, when anything good is set up now, the considerate heart knows that evil will enter, and Satan deceive and corrupt! There we have the certainty that this can never be. It was not merely the absence of evil, but the impossibility of its entrance, which characterised the holy city. There was that which, having its source in perfect grace, involves all blessed affections in connection with the Lamb in those within the city. Those only whose names were in the Lamb's book of life found place in the city.