

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, Revelation 21:9,10
John recognized this angel as one who had one of the bowls of the last plagues. He invites John to see the bride, the wife of the Lamb. From this verse to 22:9 we have the longest passage on the bride of Christ in the New Testament. Ephesians 5:22-32 is another passage that is considered to be about husbands and wives but is also addressing Jesus' relationship to the church as His bride, and also the Song of Songs in the Old Testament.

This is a concept the bride runs throughout the Old Testament. *The OT generally portrays Israel as Yahweh's wife, already married during the exodus and wilderness wanderings, but later estranged or even divorced because of her unfaithfulness—though also with the promise of restoration or remarriage through an act of divine mercy (e.g., Is 54:5–8; Ezek 16:60–63; Hosea 3).*ⁱ In the Old, Israel was the wife and God the husband, though she was unfaithful. There was divorce but also the promise of a gracious reunion. Paul explains that this is not about ethnic Israelites, but the Israel of God, the people whose faith is like that of their forefather Abraham (Romans 4:11,12ⁱⁱ; Galatians 6:15,16ⁱⁱⁱ). He is the father of ethnic Israel, but he is also the father of the people of faith, and it is the people of faith that make up the bride (Revelation 7:13,14^{iv}).

In the New Testament the concept changes to betrothal, which is a binding engagement with a future expectation of the marriage consummation and the wedding feast. The main difference between the Old and New concept of the bride is that **the marital relationship in the Old was dependent on the faithfulness of the bride. In the New, the emphasis is on the work of Jesus, the groom, to make us a faithful bride.** It is a picture of the difference between law and grace.

Betrothal was binding and simply a matter of preparation time before the consummation took place. It could only be broken by writ of divorce or death. In Matthew 9:14,15^v Jesus spoke as if the wedding celebration had already begun because He was present with them. That is why His disciples did not fast. He went on to say that it would be interrupted, and He would be taken away. In the book of John, John the Baptist described himself as the friend of the Bridegroom who stands at the door of nuptial chamber waiting to hear that the marriage is consummated, so that the feast can begin (John 3:29^{vi}). We have received the implanted Word which is able to save our souls (James 1:21^{vii}). But our Bridegroom has departed just as Jesus predicted in parables (Matthew 25:14^{viii}). We are the virgins in Jesus' parable (Matthew 25:1-13). We are waiting for His late arrival that we might go to the marriage feast with Him.

Both sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, point to preparation for betrothal and marriage. In the Lord's Supper Jesus used language of betrothal, offering the cup to the bride just as a Jewish man would do to propose marriage. He was offering his life's blood to support the new family, and if she received the cup and drank all of it and the bride price was agreed upon, they were betrothed. Then there was the preparation, of which we see an indication in baptism. We die to our old master, washed in the water, and come up as a helpmeet of our groom. This is a theme throughout the Bible in the sense

that marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. One could say that the theme started in the Garden of Eden and runs to the last chapter of Revelation which mentions the tree of life three times (22:2^{ix}, 14^x, 19^{xi}).

The bride is the wife, and she is the heavenly city. As we read the descriptions of the city, we should realize we are reading about the future glory of the believers who make up the city. When we speak of a city we relate it to the residents of that city, but here it seems the physical features are also descriptions of the bride. Revelation 17:1-3^{xii} invited us to see the destruction of the harlot with the same wording, "Come, I will show you" We are meant to see the difference between the outcome of the harlot and the outcome of the bride. The angel carries John to a great high mountain for a vantage point to see the whole city in which God will dwell (Isaiah 2:2^{xiii}; Ezekiel 40:2^{xiv}).

¹¹ *having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.* Revelation 21:11 The city which is the bride has the glory God! Glory is the outshining of perfect attributes such as the fruits of the Spirit. That glory is seen in us because the work in us is finished, and we are like the Son who shares His glory with us (Romans 8:17^{xv}, 2 Thessalonians 2:14^{xvi}). It is like a translucent jasper in appearance. I have some jasper in stones. They are a solid red color, but can also be found in green, yellow, brown, and even blue. Normally it is opaque, but this verse reveals the radiance of God is clear as crystal. Clear jasper is an oxymoron. Its opaqueness comes from impurities always found within. Perhaps the meaning here is that all impurity is gone and that while we were once opaque with sin, then will be all pure, holy, and clear as crystal through which God's glory shines (Hebrews 12:14^{xvii}). That will apply to you and to everyone you meet there.

¹² *It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—* 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 on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* Revelation 21:12-14 There is a high wall on each of its four sides with three gates on each side. The walls with angel security remind us that nothing evil will ever bother us again (Isaiah 11:9^{xviii}). We are completely secure (Zechariah 2:5^{xix}). I cannot imagine what it will be like to know you are perfectly secure forever! This formation of three gates on each side reminds us of the camp of Israel that had three tribes on each side of the tabernacle. The angels guarding the gates remind us of the angel guarding the way into Eden to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24^{xx}). Those inside freely partake of the tree of life, which I believe to be Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6^{xxi}). The names of the tribes of Israel are on the gates, three tribal names on each gate. But on the foundations are the names of the twelve apostles. There is not a different heaven for Jew and Gentile, we are one in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:14-16^{xxii}). All people of faith in the one true God will worship only Him.

These verses are one of the reasons I understand the 144,000 to be all of the redeemed, twelve tribes times twelve apostles times 1000. After all, Paul declared about those with a new nature in Christ: ¹¹ *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.* Colossians 3:11 Heaven is a place where all are one in Christ. Perfect unity in this world in any realm or organization is impossible. Sometimes we get a taste of it when we are

worshiping the Lord, or when we see the Holy Spirit at work. We will only experience it perfectly in heaven; and how wonderful it will be!

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. Revelation 21:15,16 We should recognize the similarity to Ezekiel 40:3^{xxiii}. In that verse a man appearing as bronze with a linen cord and in his hand a measuring reed. He commands Ezekiel to tell Israel everything he shows him and begins measuring the walls. For nine chapters he records the description of the new temple.

Gold represents holiness. Everything in the Holy of Holies was covered with it. Even the measuring rod used by the angel is gold. Since God will dwell there, the entire city is the new Holy of Holies.

The angel measures a cube of 1,500 miles in every direction. It is cubical like the ancient holy of holies (1 Kings 6:20^{xxiv}). That is the distance from Phoenix to Vancouver. That is enormous! If there are levels within like a skyscraper, and if each level was one-hundred feet in height, it could have nine-hundred levels! It will certainly need a new earth, for anything that size made of gold would cause our planet to have quite a wobble. The ancients thought that dimension was about the size of the whole world, so perhaps what is being conveyed is that the new earth will be the Holy of Holies, God's residence! But in the following verses we will see there are nations outside the city.

¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. Revelation 21:17,18 The angel measures with a man's cubit, that is the elbow to the tip of the fingers. It is usually considered to be a foot and a half. Some read this verse as saying the angel is using earthly terms to describe heavenly realities. The wall is measured at over 200 feet high. That is like a twenty-story building. The idea is that it is impenetrable, making the city absolutely secure. Notice that all descriptions are multiples of 12, meaning completeness or wholeness. Nothing will be incomplete.

In verse 11 we read that the radiance of the city was like clear jasper and now in verse 18 we see the wall is also built of jasper. The city itself is pure clear gold. Again, we are reminded that it is all the holy place of God. We cannot refine gold to be clear, but God can. Our gold always has some impurity. There will be no impurity in that city.

¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. Revelation 21:19,20 The stones that decorate the foundation are the same as those the high priest had in his breastplate which represented the tribes of Israel (Exodus 28:17-20^{xxv}). This decoration of the foundation fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 54:11,12. *¹¹ "O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. ¹² I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of precious stones.* Our present lives are fragile and storm tossed, but the world that is to come is secure and saturated with joy and peace. All these descriptions point to this city being the reality of which the best of this life is only a shadow. The symbolism can be understood by Ephesians 2:20-22^{xxvi} and Matthew 16:18^{xxvii}. The Apostles' teaching is the foundation for it is the words and instruction of Jesus. The Apostle Peter's

revelation of Jesus being the Messiah is the rock on which the church is built (Matthew 16:16-18^{xxviii}). Is it literally a city? Is it the people of faith throughout the ages? Yes, to both! The visible exterior is indicative of what is within.

²¹ *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.* Revelation 21:21 I cannot imagine a pearl big enough to make a gate, but nothing is impossible with God. Each gate is an enormous pearl. And the streets like the rest of the city are of translucent gold.

The story is told of a man who prayed to be able to bring a bag of gold to heaven with him when he died. His priest assured that he could. Upon arriving at the great pearl gate, Peter asked him what was in the bag. He showed Peter the gold he had brought. Then Peter said, "Why would you bring this. We do not have potholes in our streets." It is a funny story, but the point is that what is precious here will be common there.

Hamilton points out that there will be no need for street cleaners for all our feet will be clean, washed by the One who loved us to the end (John 13:1-20). There are many TV shows about remodeling homes or searching for the perfect home on a beach or homes that lottery winners buy. The New Jerusalem will be our home. Nothing on this earth is in any way comparable. The best location in this age with the best materials will look like an old garden shed when we get to our eternal home.

²² *And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.* Revelation 21:22 There is no temple in the city. The Father and Son are the temple, the place of worship. We worship in their very presence. Remember that Jesus said if they destroyed this temple, He would rebuild it in three days. He was talking about His body (John 2:19-21^{xxix}). He is the center of worship. He and the Father are one. The entire city made up of all believers is the eternal Holy of Holies (Zechariah 14:20,21^{xxx}).

²³ *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.* ²⁴ *By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,* Revelation 21:23,24 Vernon McGee suggested that New Jerusalem may be orbiting the earth like a moon, giving light to the earth. But foundations sound to me like the city will be firmly in place on the earth. Of course, foundations could be symbolic of being firmly established. We will find out when that day comes.^{xxxi}

Nobody says it quite like the Prince of Preachers C. S. Spurgeon. "The Lamb is the light thereof." *Quietly contemplate the Lamb as the light of heaven. Light in Scripture is the emblem of joy. The joy of the saints in heaven is comprised in this: Jesus chose us, loved us, bought us, cleansed us, robed us, kept us, glorified us: we are here entirely through the Lord Jesus. Each one of these thoughts shall be to them like a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol. Light is also the cause of beauty. Nought of beauty is left when light is gone. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl; and thus all the beauty of the saints above comes from Jesus. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb. If he withdrew, they must die; if his glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Light is also the emblem of knowledge. In heaven our knowledge will be perfect, but the Lord Jesus himself will be the fountain of it. Dark providences, never understood before, will then be clearly seen, and all that puzzles us now will become plain to us in the light of the Lamb. Oh! what unfoldings there will be and what glorifying of the God of love!*

Light also means manifestation. Light manifests. In this world it doth not yet appear what we shall be. God's people are a hidden people, but when Christ receives his people into heaven, he will touch them with the wand of his own love, and change them into the image of his manifested glory. They were poor and wretched, but what a transformation! They were stained with sin, but one touch of his finger, and they are bright as the sun, and clear as crystal. Oh! what a manifestation! All this proceeds from the exalted Lamb. Whatever there may be of effulgent splendour, Jesus shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh! to be present and to see him in his own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!^{xxxii}

The light of the city is the glory of God and the Lamb (1 John 1:5^{xxxiii}; Isaiah 60:19,20^{xxxiv}). There are new heavens, so there may be a sun, though there is no need for its light, for it is God's glory that is the light by which the nations walk. This can mean the truth of God will infuse everything in the city and outside the city as well. When Jesus said, *"Walk while you have the light,"* He was saying to live His teaching while He was among them (John 12:35^{xxxv}). Life will be lived for the glory of God. Thus, kings bring their glory into God's glory.

Who are the kings and the nations? Some say they are survivors who did not participate in the final rebellion at the end of the Millennium. If that is the case they would have to be redeemed and transformed. Others say it is the saints who will rule and reign with Christ. Whichever, vainglory will be no more. All will be for God's glory.

²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

Revelation 21:25 The fact that gates need never be shut means nothing that would harm, steal, or destroy any longer exists. There is no need for protection. Everyone there is Christlike, transformed, completed. The unbelievers are in the lake of fire (20:15^{xxxvi}). No night reminds us of evil done in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:7,8^{xxxvii}). There will be no need to sleep, and the glory of God will always shine forth.

²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. Revelation 21:26 I assume the nations are believers who are gloriously like Jesus. The next verse says those who enter are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. All their glory and honor will be brought into the heavenly city. We will all be striving for the glory of God.

²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:27 New Jerusalem will be forever pure and holy. Only truth will be spoken. The city is made up of those in the Lamb's book of life, and those who enter the city are only those who are in the Lamb's book of life. That makes me wonder what is outside. Are we free to roam the universe? The song, I Can Only Imagine, comes to mind. One thing we can be sure of, it will be everything we hoped for and more. And best of all, we will live forever in the glorious presence of Jesus our Lord.

Questions:

- 1 How does the OT differ from the NT in our relationship with God?
- 2 How do the sacraments convey our union with Christ?
- 3 What may "clear as jasper" represent? 4 How are we described?
- 5 What does that mean to you today? 6 Why are there the names of the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles on the city? 7 What are the foundation jewels similar to? 8 Why is there no temple there? 9 Review Spurgeon's description. 10 What are the main differences between then and now?

ⁱ Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 2003), 51.

ⁱⁱ **Romans 4:11-12 (NKJV)**

¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Galatians 6:15-16 (ESV)**

¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

^{iv} **Revelation 7:13-14 (ESV)**

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

^v **Matthew 9:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

^{vi} **John 3:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

^{vii} **James 1:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

^{viii} **Matthew 25:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

^{ix} **Revelation 22:2 (ESV)**

² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

^x **Revelation 22:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

^{xi} **Revelation 22:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

^{xii} **Revelation 17:1-3 (ESV)**

¹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk." ³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

^{xiii} **Isaiah 2:2 (ESV)**

² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

^{xiv} **Ezekiel 40:2 (ESV)**

² In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.

^{xv} **Romans 8:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

^{xvi} **2 Thessalonians 2:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

^{xvii} **Hebrews 12:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

xviii **Isaiah 11:9 (ESV)**

⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

xix **Zechariah 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.”

xx **Genesis 3:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

xxi **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

xxii **Ephesians 2:14-16 (ESV)**

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

xxiii **Ezekiel 40:3 (ESV)**

³ When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. And he was standing in the gateway.

xxiv **1 Kings 6:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar.

xxv **Exodus 28:17-20 (ESV)**

¹⁷ You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; ¹⁸ and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; ¹⁹ and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ²⁰ and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold filigree.

xxvi **Ephesians 2:20-22 (ESV)**

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

xxvii **Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

xxviii **Matthew 16:16-18 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

xxix **John 2:19-21 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰ The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

xxx **Zechariah 14:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the LORD.” And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. ²¹ And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

xxxi Verses 15 to 21 describe the city. 15,16 gives us the measurement of the city and verse 17 measurement of the wall. In verse 18 we find what the city is made of, and in verses 19 and 20 the foundation of the wall is described. The gates and streets are described last in verse 21.

xxxii C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896).

xxxiii **1 John 1:5 (ESV)**

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

xxxiv **Isaiah 60:19-20 (ESV)**

¹⁹ The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. ²⁰ Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

^{xxxv} **John 12:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.

^{xxxvi} **Revelation 20:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

^{xxxvii} **1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 (ESV)**

⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.