

Revelation 21: 9-21
Further Up and Further IN

RAYBURN - Somerset Maugham expressed the unbelieving mind when he offered his opinion that "Perfection is apt to be dull." Well, there is a great deal of unbelief still in us Christians, which may explain why Christian people are not generally as eager to get to heaven as we might expect them to be. We are not entirely sure what will make it so wonderful a place to be. And perhaps we cannot know that until we are fit to be there.

But, however tempted we may be to prefer this life to heaven, a cursory knowledge of the Bible tells us that it is a place much to be preferred to this world and this life. YET we are tempted to try to make our little heaven on earth.

EX: Just watch the ads for Disney World or the upcoming cruise ship "Icon" and they are painting a picture of a perfect place i.e. a bit of heaven on earth perhaps.

CS Lewis...from uncle Screwtape (perspective of the devil)

Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is 'finding his place in it', while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth, which is just what we want.

So inveterate is their appetite for Heaven that our best method, at this stage, of attaching them to earth is to make them believe that earth can be turned into Heaven at some future date by politics or eugenics or 'science' or psychology, or what not.

Lewis, C. S.. The Screwtape Letters (p. 76). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

"Further Up and Further In" is the title of a chapter in The Last Battle That describes this section of ch 21 leading into ch 22

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. 13 *There were* three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. 16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to* human measurements, which are *also* angelic measurements.

18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This glorious vision of the New Jerusalem echoes of Ex 24
Moses and others taken to a mountain and see God .

9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.

This vision of the new city in OT AND NT shows a reversal of the fallen world.

The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD (Isa. 65:24).

This future renewal reveals the extent of the ruin of the fall which brought death and destruction into the realm of creation. The vision of the blessedness of heaven is a stark reminder of all that was lost in Gen 3.

EX: We don't know what we've lost til it's gone... Joni Mitchell

v. 9 "Come see the bride of Christ" and he sees a city

This city is symbolic of the church, the Bride of Christ.

In Rev 17 the same angel said, "Come I will show the judgment on the great prostitute." It was Babylon, a city. Not the actual city of 6 century BC in Mesopotamia, but the symbolic "Babylon" of the God-hating world. It was the community of humans in revolt against God.

The New Jerusalem is set in contrast to Babylon. This is God's alternative to Rome's empire and to all subsequent incarnations of Babylon. (Michael Gorman p. 155)

The city would be about the size of the Roman Empire

The city is seen as a square because that was the ideal shape for the ancient world. Babylon was remembered as a square (Herodotus History 1.178)

But the new Jerusalem is unique because it is a cube with an altitude of 1500 miles. The space shuttle orbits at only 200 miles in space.

The holy of holies was also cube shaped (1 Kings 6:20). That is where the High Priest would enter once a year to make atonement. NOW the church is not just a Bride, but we are also a nation or community of priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10, 20:6), so we enter the eternal 'holy of holies' – the New Jerusalem.

It is also contrasted with Babylon by the emphasis on what is absent, as we saw last week v. 8

No sea, death, tears, evil, no need for a temple or light – sun, moon, no closed gates. Another version is seen in v. 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it...

Is this a literal city? I think not.

It is the spiritual opposite of Babylon.

Babylon was the community of those in defiance of God and the Lamb while this new city is the community married to the Lamb. It is a city that represents the ultimate in community relationships. We are not scattered around on our clouds playing harps, but we will be living in blessed community. A common trait among cultic commune groups is the idea of harmonious community.

Groups like the Charles Manson cult, People's Temple group of Jones, the Branch Davidians, and others attract followers with a vision of some idyllic utopian community. That is also deeply rooted in Marxist philosophy / theology. This has never worked out this side of heaven.

Biblically, there is warrant for believing that we will know each other – Mt of Transfiguration, the disciples recognized Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

Knowing and being known is an aspect of heavenly joy that is dimly reflected as we gather in worship and in various small groups or times of fellowship. What is partial now will be completed in heaven. A cloud of witness is watching now inviting us 'further up and further in.'
Heaven is a place of ultimate fellowship, friendship, family, and community.

v. 10 ff the Description of the City

Remember that this is a vision; it is not an exact blueprint of civil engineers or city planners.

... Brilliance and light – the glory of God in the midst of the city

Paris is known as The City of Lights, and it is beautiful at night or daytime, but it is like a dull glow compared to the New Jerusalem.

Paris has the Eiffel Tower, but the new Jerusalem has the GLORY OF God.

Brilliant clarity of jasper – that term had a broader meaning in ancient times so it may refer to “crystal clear”, which is an expression that we use...

“:Am I clear?” “Crystal”

v. 22-26 Light for the city and the nations

rf: Isa 9:2 Handel

The people who walk in darkness

Will see a great light;

Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them.

v. 15 ff...High wall with Gates

One hint that this is a symbolic vision is the measuring rod of gold. 1500 cubic miles - length, height, width – all the same size. That would be one big heavy rod of gold.

Twelve gates of massive pearl. Imagine the oyster it took to create that.

The measurement of the pearly gate is 18 inches (cubit) x 144 = 72 yards. That is the diameter of the pearl. An unimaginable value.

... Foundation stones

v. 19 The foundations are laid with precious stones referred to in OT EX.28, ISA 54; Ez 28

The foundation stones range in color from blue, red, green, white, yellow, purple, all competing with one another in splendor and beauty, highlighting the preciousness of the city.

....Angelic measurements in size

.... Costly building materials

Imagine the cost of such a city. Builders and those doing rehab projects were rocked the past couple of years as building costs soared. What about pearly gates and streets of gold?

Streets of clear gold – clean, untarnished. Usually, streets are the dirtiest part of a city, but not here.

The entire image is impossible to imagine. The measurements and the nature of its make-up is something beyond our grasp. We can't relate to such a city.

As the Apostle Paul stresses to the Corinthians. *No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him* (1 Cor. 2:9). What God has prepared for those who love Him is unseeable, unimaginable from this earthly realm.

v. 21:18-20

Heaven is the preservation and perfection of what is praiseworthy in our lives here on earth.
We were made for beauty by a Creator who is the author of what is beautiful.

Ex 28:2 You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.

Rev 21:24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

It shouldn't surprise us that heaven is described with such beauty. Our souls are made for beauty and glory. When our souls are stirred by beautiful scenery, art, or music it's because our hearts resonate with what God has created.

v. 22-27 – Nothing unclean

repeat of v. 7-8

Once again, we see the blessing of having your name in the Lamb's book of life.

Part of keeping the New City pure is keeping it free of lying and liars i.e. the Dragon, Satan, the Father of lies.

While waiting for that day of Ch 21, Satan uses his cunning and deceit.

<https://www.dailywire.com/news/the-left-and-the-devil-tell-you-lies-so-you-will-despair>

Archbishop Fulton Sheen - "Before the sin, Satan assures us that it is of no consequence; after the sin, he persuades us that it is unforgivable."

Candace Owens...Afterward, he pelts you with thoughts that you have gone down a dark path and can never return. Salvation is out of reach — so you might as well keep sinning or take drastic action to avoid the misery you find yourself in.

The Beast (ungodly spirit of the age) wants you to feel demoralized so he can amass political power. The Devil wants you to feel hopeless so he can keep you away from God forever.

Friends, he and his lies are defeated. DON'T LISTEN TO HIS LIES; remember the GOSPEL
We are marching to Zion. We are headed further up and further in.

Take the very best of life here, the happiest things, the purest things, the most satisfying things, and imagine a life that is beyond all that we ask or think. While our sin is worse than we dare admit, heaven is more glorious than we dare imagine.

In grandeur, glory, and blessedness heaven will be like the Narnia described in The Last Battle.

LUCY – "I see now. The garden is like the stable. It is far bigger inside than it was outside."

"Of course, Daughter of Eve", said the Faun Tumnus. "The further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside."

John gives the dimensions of 1500 miles wide, long, and high, but in reality, it is bigger on the inside than the outside.

Have you ever thought or said, 'Well, it was heavenly while it lasted.'

This most natural of expressions carries immense implications. To say 'It was heavenly' of any experience is to imply that you have been briefly lifted above the humdrum level of experience proper to earthly life and given a glimpse, or rather a taste, of life at a level of wonder and delight which is proper to heaven."

[Harry Blamires *Knowing the Truth About Heaven and Hell*, 126-127] quoted by Rayburn

The New Jerusalem is a perfect cube in height, width, and length. So was the Holy of Holies – the dwelling place of God.

Ezekiel's prophecy, of which the New Jerusalem is the final fulfillment, sums it up this way...

"And the name of the city from that time on shall be: The LORD Is There." (Ez. 48:35).

Thus, the new city is the perfect dwelling place of God with His people.

Heaven won't seem like a strange or bizarre place because we were made for it. It will seem like home, the city that we've longed for.

Heb 11:9-10

By faith Abraham lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Phil 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

The Last Battle

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried:

"I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this. Bree-hee-hee! Come further up, come further in!"— C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*

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