

REVELATION

Chapter 21

The New Jerusalem

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

21:2–22:5† The “Holy City” combines elements of Jerusalem, the tabernacle, the temple and the Garden of Eden. See Isa 66:22; 2Pe 3:13; Gal 4:25–26; Heb 12:22. (CSB)

The conclusion to the entire prophetic message of Revelation is the vision of “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). At the end of the first world, John had seen the judgment of the harlot and the beast (17:1–18:24), the marriage feast of the Lamb and the second coming of the Lord Christ (19:1–21). Then he saw a flashback of the binding of the dragon at Christ’s first advent, followed by the millennium (20:1–6), the loosing of the dragon for the battle of Gog and Magog just before the End (20:7–10), and the resurrection and the judgment of human race (20:11–15). John is now prepared to see *beyond* the end of the first world to the creation of “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). (CC p. 591)

In 20:11, as God on his throne held the last judgment, “the earth and the heaven fled” from his face “and a place was not found for them.” This suggests that the present heaven and earth originally created by God (Gen 1:1) would not be a fit home for his resurrected and righteous saints. Under the judgment of God because of the sin of the human race, the earth was cursed and thus suffered decay and ruin (Gen. 3:17-19; 5:29; cf. Is. 24:5-6; Rom. 8:20). But as Isaiah had prophesied (65:17), God says, “Behold, I am creating a new heaven and a new earth,” and “the former things,” that is, the former heaven and earth and all the travail therein, “will not be remembered and will not arise in the mind.” And then Isaiah (65:20–25) describes existence and life in the new heaven and new earth. He tells how God’s people will build houses and plant vineyards in peace and how the wolf and the lamb will eat together, and he speaks of the longevity of human life. The words of Isaiah seem to be an apt metaphorical description of the spiritual life on the present earth that God will bring about at the advent of the Messiah. But this description, in turn, by way of the messianic reign here on earth, is also a typological picture of life in the new heaven and new earth after the judgment and resurrection at this present world’s end. And according to Isaiah (66:22) this new heaven and new earth will endure forever before God as his own people will live forever. (CC p. 591)

21:1 new heaven and a new earth – Finally, the revelation of a perfectly restored creation is described. (TLSB)

First heaven ... passed away. This fulfills the prediction Jesus makes in Mt 24:35. Also, Rm 8:19–21 suggests that there is continuity between the new creation and that which it replaces. However, certain things truly disappear: sin, death, and corruption. That which has been redeemed is transformed. *sea was no more.* (TLSB)

Pseudepigrapha also speak of the new heaven and earth. For example, according to 1 Enoch 45:4–6 the Lord declares that on the day of judgment he will “transform the earth and make it a blessing,” and only God’s chosen righteous ones and not sinners will dwell in it. 1 Enoch 72:1 refers to a “new creation” that would be “created” and would abide forever. And 1 Enoch 91:16–17 promises that “the first heaven shall depart and pass away,” and “a new heaven shall appear,” and there shall be “goodness and righteousness, and sin shall no more be heard of forever.” In 4 Ezra 7:75, 88–99 a reference is made about God’s people at rest in death until God renews the creation. And 2 Baruch 32:6 says that God “the Mighty One will renew his creation.” This refrain is also voiced in Jubilees 1:29, which says that in “the new creation,” “the heaven and earth and all of their creatures shall be renewed.” (CC)

God’s promise of “a new heaven and a new earth” is found in 2 Pet 3:10–13, where the apostle reminds his hearers that the present heaven “will pass away” (παρελεύσονται) with “a loud crash” (ῥοιζηδόν), and the “elements” (στοιχεῖα) will burn and be destroyed, and the earth will be laid bare. The Lord Christ during his earthly ministry asserted that the present “heaven and earth will pass away.” (Mt. 24:35; cf. Mt. 5:18; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33) Though he did not describe the new heaven and earth, he did refer to the transcendent quality of the life to come (e.g., Lk 20:34–36), which will be in “paradise” (Lk 23:43). The apostle Paul, while not speaking directly of a new heaven and earth, seems to imply such when in 1 Cor 15:35–42 he speaks of the differing bodies (σάρξ, σώματα) of earthly creatures and of the differing glory (δόξα) of the sun and moon and stars as indicative of the surpassing glory of human bodies that die and are raised in the resurrection. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.36.1, makes an explicit comparison between the new heaven and earth and the resurrected body of man when he writes that as man is new in the resurrection, so there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and in this new heaven and earth resurrected man will remain. (CC p. 592)

Here in Rev 21:1 John sees “a new heaven and a new earth” which take the place of “the first heaven and the first earth.” But he gives no description of the passing away of the present heaven and earth (see 2 Pet 3:10–13) and no description of the new, except to say “the sea is no longer” (Rev 21:1). What is meant by “the sea”? Does this refer to the physical bodies of waters on our present earth? Or is “the sea” to be understood as the chaos that separates the human race from God? While either interpretation could be received, the former might present some difficulty, for it could suggest that in the new creation there will be no bodies of water, such as oceans and lakes. For that reason “the sea” in 21:1 seems to represent the chaos caused by sin and the fearful gulf that separates God and humanity resulting from human sin and rebellion against God. In the OT at times “the sea” is a terrifying embodiment of the violent tumult that exists between people and God, and between humans. (E.g., Gen 49:4; Ps. 65:8; 93:3–5; Is 57:20; cf. Eph. 4:14; Jude 13; Rev. 15:2) The sea lends itself toward such a portrayal because to ancient people it held a terror, especially when its boiling waves threatened and often times destroyed human life (e.g., Ps 107:23–30). In the early stage of creation “the waters” were associated with the darkness and the primeval formlessness and chaos (Gen 1:2). The sea is home to the evil serpent (Amos 9:3),

Leviathan. (Is. 27:1; Ps. 74:14; 104:26; Job 41:1/40:25; cf. Rev. 13:1-10) In the earthly ministry of Jesus too, the sea was a threat to the apostles, a threat which Jesus conquered (e.g., Mt 8:24–27; 14:24–33). Jonah’s rescue from the sea (Jonah 2) is indicative of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Mt 12:39–41). (CC p. 593)

sea was no more – Symbolically conveys that everything threatening and evil is removed. (TLSB)

καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι—Codex Alexandrinus (A) has καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν οὐκ εἶδον ἔτι, “and the sea I saw no longer,” a variant that most likely is not original, but which is interesting nonetheless. It suggests that John had seen “the sea” earlier—perhaps the sea before God’s heavenly throne in 4:6, which represented the separation between God and humanity, the sea in 12:18–13:1 out of which Satan conjures up the beast to attack the church, and/or the sea mixed with fire in 15:2, which was the place of the spiritual warfare between the saints of God on earth and the beast. θάλασσα appears twenty-six times in Revelation, usually in reference to the physical sea on the earth. But especially in 4:6; 12:18; 13:1; and 15:2, it has spiritual significance. (CC p. 588)

Whether one takes “the sea” here in Rev 21:1 to refer to literal bodies of water or as the symbol of spiritual evil—or both—certainly what is *not* present in the new heaven and earth is what the sea in Scripture represents: its terrifying dread and the chaos and gulf that separates mankind and God because of mankind’s sin and rebellion. “The Sea has disappeared, because in the mind of the writer it is associated with ideas which are at variance with the character of the New Creation.” “The sea is the primeval ocean, symbol of chaos; its disappearance is assurance of God’s total victory.” (CC p. 593)

Lenski questions whether there will be a physical sea because “the function of the sea (ocean) will no longer be needed to supply evaporation, clouds, rain, rivers, and springs, so that men and animals and plants may have the water they need.” However, such an interpretation does not take into consideration the fact that the earth in its sinless, pristine condition *did* have the sea (Gen 1:9–10). If the new heaven and earth is the renewed and restored present heaven and earth and is thus patterned after the original, there may well be waters collected together into bodies of waters and seas, just as the first earth had (Gen 1:9–10; cf. Job 38:8; Ps 95:5). But the sea in its storm-tossed, boiling rage, and as the symbolical domain of the primeval serpent, will no longer be present. That is, even if an ocean were physically present in the new earth, it would not have its terror and fearful character, for *that* sea has passed away. In the new heaven and earth the sea will be calm and at peace (cf. Mk 4:35–41; 6:45–52). Thus calmed, such a sea will never again remind God’s people of the fearful gulf that once separated them from God’s holy presence. (CC pp. 593-594)

In pseudepigraphal literature, the sea and its terror were envisioned as passing away. For example, in the Testament of Moses (10:6), when God comes at the End in judgment, “the sea all the way to the abyss will retire.” This will happen at the same time that the sun will be darkened and the moon will be made to flee and turned into blood (Testament of Moses 10:5). Similarly the Sibylline Oracles (5:155–61, 447) say that in the destruction of the cosmos at the End the sea will be burned up and dried. This same theme of the waters being dried up in the judgment at the End is referred to in the Testament of Levi (4:1). (CC p. 594)

Elsewhere in Revelation “the sea” does appear as a symbol which reminds the saints of God still here on the present earth of the separation between God and his fallen creation. As such a symbol it is also used to depict the arena of the horrible warfare that the dragon and his minions wage

against the church militant. In Rev 4:6 John sees a “sea” before God’s heavenly throne which in appearance was like crystal clear glass. That sea was a gentle reminder to John of his present separation: though a saint of God, he was still on his earthly pilgrimage and not yet elevated to God’s holy presence in heaven. John does *not* see that glassy sea in the new heaven and earth, for in the recreated earth, he and God’s people will never again be separated from their Creator and Lord. In 13:1 one of the beasts called forth by Satan, the dragon, comes from the sea to terrorize the woman of Revelation 12, the church. And in 15:2 the “glassy sea mixed with fire” depicts the field of warfare here on earth, upon which takes place the awesome conflict between God’s people and one of the beasts of the dragon—a warfare that continues throughout the entire NT era from Christ’s ascension to his second coming. This “sea” John does *not* see in the new heaven and earth, for it is no longer present. (CC pp. 594-595)

Isaiah uses a symbol of a quiet and peaceful sea when he prophetically describes the messianic age. In Is 11:9, when speaking of how the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh and danger no longer will exist, he says that the fullness of divine knowledge will be like waters covering the sea. Similarly Hab 2:14 states that when the earth is “filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh,” it will be like waters covering the sea. Both prophets, by way of analogy, are saying that the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth in the same way that waters cover or fill the sea, representing the righteousness and peace of God which according to Isaiah (11:1–10) the Branch of Jesse will bring. It might be conjectured that any physical bodies of water in the new heaven and earth would also be reminders that the righteousness and the glory of God in Christ will fill the newly recreated earth (cf. Rev 22:1), while at the same time the sea, which once reminded God’s people of agony and suffering in the conflict with the old evil foe, is now gone forever. (CC p. 595)

The absence of “the sea” from the new heaven and earth in the context of 21:1–8 suggests not the absence of water in the geophysically renewed earth, but the absence of any of the fear and terror that the sea evoked, and especially the absence of any painful reminder that God’s saints had once been separated from him. Nor will there be any vestiges of the mortal conflict and all its attending sufferings that the devil and the forces of evil caused the people of God to undergo. So while John did see the sea before God’s heavenly throne in 4:6 from the viewpoint of a saint on earth still suffering the warfare, now in 21:1 as he views the new heaven and earth, “the sea is no longer.” (CC p. 595)

21:2 new Jerusalem – Because this city is explicitly identified with the “bride,” it is best taken as representing the collective people of God (see note, 19:7–8). See “Zion,” p 844. Luther: “God’s house is found where God dwells with us, where we are the household, yes, the sons and daughters, and He Himself is our Father, who speaks and deals with us and brings it about in the most intimate way that the church is also the gate of heaven. For He dwells with us in order that we may enter into the kingdom of heaven. And, what is most delightful, He comes first and appears to us on the ladder. He descends and lives with us. He speaks and works in us” (AE 5:250). (TLSB)

Viewing the new heaven and new earth, John’s attention immediately is drawn not to a physical description of the new heaven and earth but to “the holy city, new Jerusalem ... coming down out of heaven from God” (21:2). This “new Jerusalem” is not the old historic city of the present earth restored. Rather it comes “from God,” for God is its “architect and builder” (Heb 11:10), and it is the city where God dwells with his people (Heb 12:22), and it will remain forever (Heb 13:14). In the letter to the church of Philadelphia (Rev 3:7–13), a blessing is pronounced upon those who remain faithful, for the Son of Man is “coming quickly” (3:11) and he “will write upon [his faithful] the name of [his] God and the name of the city of [his] God—the new Jerusalem, which

is coming down out of heaven from [his] God” (3:12). In Gal 4:25–26 Paul contrasts the earthly city Jerusalem of his day with “the new Jerusalem above,” which is the heavenly city that is free (by grace) and that is the “mother” of Christians, who are the true heirs of Abraham by means of the covenant fulfilled in Christ (cf. Heb 12:22). The “new Jerusalem” here in Rev 21:2 is described as “prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.” Similarly Isaiah speaks prophetically of Jerusalem or Zion as the bride of Yahweh. In chapters 54 and 60 he describes how the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Is 54:11–12; 60:10–14) and thus will radiate the glory of God (Is 60:1–5). The city represents God’s faithful people, who are identified as the bride of Yahweh (Is 54:4–8; 60:15–16, 21; cf. 62:1–12). (CC pp. 595–596)

bride. κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς—The dative could be that of the *agent* of the passive participle, “adorned by her husband,” but normally in the ancient Near East a groom would not help prepare the bride for the ceremony; her family and attendants would carry out that role (cf. 19:8). Therefore this is more likely the dative of advantage, “adorned for her husband.” Nevertheless, *theologically*, it is in fact *Christ* who *does* adorn and prepare his church to be his bride (Eph 5:25–27). Rev 21:11 will explain that what adorns the bride is “the glory of God,” which is God’s gift to her in Christ (cf. Jn 1:14; 2:11; 17:22, 24). (CC pp. 588–589)

Already in Rev 19:7–8 John had seen the church, the bride of the Lamb, adorned and made ready to be received by her Lord. Now she is revealed to John in all her heavenly attire as the holy city, the new Jerusalem. In Ezek 16:1–14 the prophet graphically portrays how God adorned Jerusalem as his bride, and though she prostituted herself to alien gods (Ezek 16:15–58), God would make atonement for her and she again would belong to her rightful Lord (Ezek 16:59–63). Here in Revelation 21 John sees the end result of the redemption of the bride of God, now spoken of as the bride of Christ. In all her godly beauty, as portrayed by the holy city Jerusalem, she will forever remain in God’s holy presence. (CC p. 596)

21:3 Scripture repeatedly underscores that one of the greatest blessings of the new heavens and new earth is that restored mankind will again behold God face-to-face and live in His immediate presence (cf 22:3–5; 1Co 13:12). (TLSB)

voice from the throne – In the new heaven and earth God will tabernacle (dwell) with his bride, his people (21:3). In 21:3–4 John gives a description of what it will be like for them when God takes up his abode among them. To introduce this description John hears “a loud voice from the throne” (21:3). As often elsewhere in Revelation, the actual living source of the voice is not identified. Sometimes an object is named as the source or direction from which the voice comes: one of the corners of the heavenly incense altar (9:13); heaven itself (10:4; 12:10; 14:13; 18:4); the temple or sanctuary of God in heaven (16:1, 17); or God’s heavenly throne (16:17; 19:5; 21:3). In 16:17 both the temple and the throne together are mentioned. (CC p. 596)

Whatever source might be named, the voice expresses the majesty and holiness and glory of the ultimate living source, God himself. Because at times an angel speaks for God (5:2; 6:6–7; 7:2; 14:6–7; 18:1–2), it may well be that it is also an angel who actually speaks when only a voice is mentioned. When some object is named, such as the furnishings in the heavenly temple, that may emphasize that the source is not only God, *but the God who has bound himself to his people in an incarnational and sacramental way*—in Christ, who is the new temple, and in divine worship, when God comes to his people through his Word and Sacraments. Thus, naming the altar as the source of the voice would suggest that the one who provided atonement for sin and who hears and receives the prayers of his saints is the living source of the voice. Naming heaven as the source of the voice might suggest that the one who is adored by the heavenly hosts is the source, while naming the temple could suggest that the one who dwells among his people through his covenant

of grace in Christ is the source. And naming the throne might suggest that the one who rules his people as their only King and Lord is the source. Here in 21:3 (as elsewhere) it may be an angel who is speaking, even though only “the throne” of God is mentioned. Even if it is an angel who is speaking, he is doing so for God and under God’s authority, that is, by and under the authority of the royal Lord, who alone is the object of the worship of all creation in the new heaven and earth (see 19:4; cf. 19:10; 22:8–9). (CC pp. 596-597)

The voice cries out, “Behold, the tabernacle [ἡ σκηνή] of God is with men” (21:3). In 15:5 John saw in heaven “the sanctuary of the tabernacle of the testimony” (ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου) of God. It was opened and from it came the seven censer-angels who would mediate the third and last vision of events on earth (16:1–21). There the tabernacle was associated with the judgments of God upon the human race as portrayed in chapter 16. Here in 21:3 the tabernacle is associated with God’s glorious and gracious presence with his people in the new heaven and earth. The OT tabernacle erected by Moses (Ex 26:1–37) was the visible location of God’s covenantal presence with his people. But the tabernacle here in Rev 21:3 is not the restoration of the earthly tabernacle of Moses, for there is no material tabernacle or sanctuary in the new Jerusalem, since the Lord God himself and the Lamb are the sanctuary (21:22). (CC p. 597)

dwelling place of God. θρόνου—The majority of manuscripts, in particular the Byzantine family, have οὐρανοῦ, “heaven,” instead of θρόνου, “throne.” But since codex Alexandrinus (A) and others (e.g., codex Sinaiticus [ⲭ]) have θρόνου, it is the better reading. Either reading indicates that the source of the voice was from heaven and was by the authority of God. (CC p. 589)

God’s heavenly tabernacle here in 21:3 in the vision of the new heaven and earth *signifies* the actual presence of God with his people. But when the new heaven and earth will actually be created, no visual tabernacle will be present. Its presence will not be necessary, *for God’s actual and personal presence among his people, which was represented by the tabernacle in the OT and which the tabernacle represents here in John’s vision of the new heaven and earth, will have become a permanent reality.* But here in 21:3 John sees the presence of God in the vision of the new heaven and earth still dwelling in the tabernacle, because it is still in the future and John is here on earth in the present age (cf. Heb 9:1–22). As the tabernacle, and later the temple, were typological, mediating structures that enabled the holy God to dwell among sinful people, and those structures were part of the sacrificial worship that provided typological atonement for sin, in the eschaton all that will remain of all this is the Lamb who once was slain (Rev 21:22). (CC pp. 597-598)

God himself will dwell directly and personally with his people as visually represented by the tabernacle as a result of the covenant that he had made with them through the Lamb. The statement that “they themselves will be his people, and God himself will be with them [as their God]” (21:3) has its roots in the OT. Already in Lev 26:11–12 God promised that he would place his dwelling place (יִבְנֶה, “my tabernacle, dwelling”; LXX: τὴν διαθήκην, “the covenant”) with his people, and as a result he would walk among them as their God and they would be his people. The tabernacle served as an archetype of this dwelling of God. In Jer 31:33 the prophet declares that through Yahweh’s covenant, he will be his people’s God and they will be his people. In Ezek 37:27 God prophesied that he would place his dwelling (יִבְנֶה; LXX: κατασκήνωσις) with the people and he would be their God and they his people (cf. Jer 30:32; Hos 2:23; Zech 8:8). (CC p. 598)

The use of the verb σκηνώσει (future tense of σκηνώω, “to dwell, to tent”) in Rev 21:3 is a pointed reminder of Jn 1:14, where the same verb is in the aorist tense for *completed* action: “The

Word [ὁ λόγος] became flesh and *dwelt* [ἐσκήνωσεν] among us.” Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the glory of Yahweh, in and through whom God dwells among his people. He is the new tabernacle, the new temple, the means of atonement and the place of the forgiveness of sins, the one who reconciles the holy God with sinful human beings (Mt 26:61; Jn 2:19; cf. Rev 21:22). And this will be manifestly evident and realized in the new heaven and earth. (CC p. 598)

21:4 *wipe every tear.*† See 7:17; Isa 25:8; Jn 16:20. (CSB)

Note that John describes heaven by way of negation, (i.e., in terms of what will not be there: tears, death, crying, or pain). Such a description is fitting, given that we have no experience of anything as fantastic as the new heavens and new earth (cf 1Co 2:9). (TLSB)

In Rev 21:4 the blessed benefits of God dwelling with his people in the new heaven and earth are described. Though given in negative terms, they are telling in their implications. “Abolished forever are the debilitating effects of sin. Sorrow, death, mourning, and pain are all part of the ‘first things’ which are now past and gone.” Perhaps the blessed state of life with God in the new heaven and earth is given in negative terms because it is easier for those still here in the present earth to understand what is being replaced, while the positive realities of heavenly existence transcend human comprehension. God “will wipe away every tear from [the] eyes” of the saints. No longer will weeping characterize the condition of God’s people as in the present life of tribulation. (See Job 16:16; Ps. 6:6or 7; Mt. 5:4; Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:33-35; Acts 20:19) As the psalmist (126:5–6) says, “Those who sow in tear[s] will reap with a song of joy, and he who now goes about weeping ... will return with a song of joy” (cf. Is 35:10). For God himself promised of old that when he would rejoice over Jerusalem and dwell in a state of happiness with his people, never again would they shed tears (Is 61:2–3; 65:19). For God would destroy death and as a result would “wipe away the tear[s]” from all the faces of his people (Is 25:8). Already in Rev 7:17 John had seen the blessed state of the souls of the saints in heaven, the church triumphant, whose tears had been wiped away. Now here in 21:4 John hears this description of God’s people *after* the resurrection in the state of eternal life in the new heaven and earth. (CC pp. 598-599)

The awareness of sin against God and its attending sufferings is a major cause of tears in the condition of repentance (Is 22:12; Joel 2:12; Mk 14:72), and such tears flow openly in the face of death. (Lk. 7:11-13; 8:49-52; Jn. 11:32-25; 20:11-15; Acts 9:36-39) But in the new heaven and earth all sin and its guilt are forever gone, and the last enemy, death, has been destroyed (Rev 20:14). So John hears the great voice saying, “And death shall no longer be, nor sorrow nor crying nor pain shall be ever again” (21:4). That was promised, for example, in Hos 13:14: “From the hand of the grave I will deliver them, and from death I will ransom them” (cf. Ps 49:14 [MT 49:15]; Is 25:8). This promise the apostle Paul reiterates as he sees it accomplished and realized in Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:20–26, 53–57), and thus the apostle cries out, “Death has been swallowed up into victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:54–55). And then, as a confirming statement that death indeed has been forever destroyed, John hears the great voice saying, “because the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:4). All the things of the first creation are gone, gone because they were corrupted and twisted out of their original godly purpose (see Gen 3:14, 16–19; cf. Rom 8:18–22). Their corruption resulted in death (Gen 3:19), and because death is now gone forever, so also are all the “first things.” (CC p. 599)

passed away – τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν—Instead of this phrase, codex Sinaiticus (ⲭ) has a rather strange reading: τὰ πρόβατα ἀπῆθεν, “the sheep passed away.” If this variant reading were to be taken seriously, it might be understood to mean that there would no longer be death, sorrow, and so on, because the sheep, that is, God’s people, have passed away from all the pain and sorrow.

Though this is a possible, attractive thought, the reading in codex X seems to be a scribal error in which the scribe read ΠΡΩΤΑ in the text from which he was copying as if it were ΠΡΟΒΑΤΑ. (CC p. 589)

21:5 on the throne – ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ—While elsewhere this phrase is constructed in the dative (4:9; 5:13; 7:10; 19:4), it is also found in the genitive (ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου, 4:10; 5:1, 7; 6:16; 7:15) and in the accusative (ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον, 4:2). The preposition ἐπὶ can govern all three cases and each case could have its own distinct nuance. But probably in Revelation there is no difference in meaning, for all are used in reference to a person on a throne. (CC p. 589)

In 21:5 for only the second time in Revelation God the Father (here “the One sitting on the throne”) speaks in the first person. In the prologue (1:1–8) in 1:8 God the Father spoke directly in the first person. But since that time and hitherto throughout the prophetic message of Revelation the presence on the throne has spoken only through intermediaries. Now for the first time in the prophetic message proper God speaks directly. To whom does he speak? Since in 21:6 “and he said” (καὶ εἶπεν) appears with “to me” (μοι), John is the one who is addressed. (CC p. 600)

all things new – The new creation has already begun to appear through the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit. However, it will not be completed until the day of Christ’s return. (TLSB)

And God said, “Behold, I make all things new!” (21:5). It is a creative word, a spoken word by which God creates. In Genesis 1 several times it is written, “And God said” (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים; LXX: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός). After each “And God said” there follows the word he actually spoke: “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3); “Let there be a firmament” (Gen 1:6); and so on. By these words God created in each case what his words described. Here in Rev 21:5 after “And God said” there follows a word by which he creates, only this time it refers to the *new* creation, the heaven and earth being recreated, restored after “the first things have passed away” (21:4). It is quite fitting that the first time God speaks in the prophetic message of Revelation it should be his creative word by which he will make his original creation new. (CC p. 600)

The words “Behold, I make all things new” (ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, 21:5) are similar to those in the LXX text of Is 43:19, “behold, I make new things” (ἰδοὺ ποιῶ καινά). In Isaiah these words have to do with the mercy that God will show to Israel (Is 43:14–21). Here in Rev 21:5 the words are spoken with regard to all things being restored, “the renovation of the universe,” the final and end result of God’s mercy in Christ. For “new” (καινά) points to the adjectives “new” (καινόν, καινήν) which describe the “heaven” (οὐρανόν) and “earth” (γῆν) in 21:1. For God’s assertion that he will “make all things new” (21:5) refers to all that God had originally created, “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1), which are transformed into the “new heaven” and “new earth” that John sees here in Revelation 21. The Lord God had promised long before the time of John through the prophet Isaiah (65:17; 66:22) that he would create “new [נִיחָן; LXX: καινός/καινή] heavens and a new earth.” To “make all things new” (Rev 21:5) thus means that all things that God had originally created will be recreated and restored to their original pristine state. “On a cosmic scale ... a totally new order will replace the old order marred by sin.” God will not annihilate the present creation, cast it out as some trash, but rather he will, by recreation, transform the old into the new. (CC pp. 600–601)

these words are trustworthy and true – οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν—Some manuscripts (mostly of the Byzantine family) add τοῦ θεοῦ after ἀληθινοί, thus making certain that the reader and hearers understood why “these words are faithful and true,” because they are “of God.” (CC p. 589)

“And he says, ‘Write, because these words are faithful and true’ ” (21:5). Who is the speaker of these words? Commentators are not in agreement. Some suggest that it is now an angel, and others say that it is still God himself.³⁷ It is because of the change from “he said” (εἶπεν) to “he says” (λέγει) in 21:5 and then back again to “he said” (εἶπεν) in 21:6 that it is postulated that the speaker is an angel. This interpretation suggests that an angel (speaking on behalf of God) interposes with the word “write” (γράψον). Four other times with regard to the prophetic message of Revelation the command is given to John, “Write”—all with the aorist imperative form, γράψον (1:11, 19; 14:13; 19:9). In the first two instances (1:11, 19) it is the exalted Son of Man, Jesus Christ, who tells John to write. In 14:13 and in 19:9 an unidentified voice, though most likely an angel speaking on behalf of God, tells John to write. In 19:9 the voice tells (λέγει) John, “These are the true words of God.” Here also in 21:5 John is told that the “words are ... true,” but with the addition that they are also “faithful.” This similarity in content to what the voice in 19:9 says could suggest that here also in 21:5 it is an angel who is speaking. But it is a little difficult to imagine that an angel would interrupt with his own voice while God is speaking directly to John. However, it could be that the same angel who has been attending John (17:1; 19:9–10; 22:8) throughout the conclusion (17:1–22:5) speaks to John *while God is speaking* to remind him that these are indeed the true and faithful words of God and that these words of God are to be written down for the sake of the church (as with the seven letters to the seven churches). (CC p. 601)

Whatever the actual source of the voice, John is explicitly told to “write,” for “these words are faithful and true.” In 19:9 the words that are “the true words of God” were the words that described the celebration at the marriage feast of the Lamb (19:5–10). The final time that John hears it said that “these words are faithful and true” is in 22:6, in the epilogue, where the “words” refer to the entire message of Revelation. Here in 21:5 they refer first of all to that which is said about the new heaven and the new earth and how God makes all things new. These words of God are certain and cannot be negated. They *will* be fulfilled, for God is ever faithful to his Word. (See Deut. 6:4;7:9; Ps. 117; Is. 43:10–13, 15, 25; 1 Cor. 1:9; Heb. 6:17–18; 1 Peter 4:19) *Without question* there will be a new heaven and earth. And as was already prophesied by Isaiah (66:22), the new heaven and earth will last *forever*—as will God’s people in them. (CC pp. 601–602)

21:6 *it is done* – Echoes Jn 19:30. In that context, Jesus is pronouncing that redemption has been won. Here, God announces that the final restoration has been completed. (TLSB)

γέγοναν—This is the perfect tense of γίνομαι, “to become, be, happen, take place,” with the aoristic ending of the third person plural, -αν, instead of the normal perfect ending of the third person plural, -ασι(ν). (CC p. 589)

In Rev 21:6 God speaks again to John and tells him, “It has come into being.” The verb γέγοναν is the perfect indicative active of γίνομαι, “to become, happen, come to pass, come into being.” All that God has spoken of regarding the making of all things new and regarding the restoration of the new heaven and earth has come about. All is now done. It is done. There is nothing to be added. As John sees it in this visionary prophetic message, the Lord Christ *has already come* (19:11–21), the resurrection and the final judgment *have taken place* (20:11–15), and the heavens and the earth *have been made new* and thus restored to their original pristine condition. Yet for John and God’s saints still here on the present earth, this is still all in the future—even though John now in the prophetic vision sees it all as an accomplished fact. Nevertheless, in their regeneration through faith, God’s people have the assurance of the fulfillment of what is yet to take place (cf. 2 Cor 3:18; 4:16–18; 5:16–17). God on his heavenly throne can now say that everything is accomplished because his Son, Jesus Christ, completed the work of restoring God’s people by the shedding of his blood (Rev 5:9–10). The completion of the salvation of God’s

people was attested when Jesus cried out from the cross, “It is finished” (τετέλεσται, Jn 19:30). This work completed at his death was visibly demonstrated by his resurrection (Rev 1:17–18). Now in John’s vision of the new heaven and earth he sees the final action of God, which final action is the result of Christ’s completed work of redemption. Thus all things have been made new. “It is finished” (τετέλεσται). “It has come into being” (γέγοναν). All is accomplished. (CC p. 602)

the Alpha and the Omega. The One sitting on the throne, God the Father, continues to speak: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (21:6). The first time God called himself “the Alpha and the Omega” was in the prologue (1:8). Now for the second time, here in 21:6 he declares that he is such. And then God adds, “I am ... the Beginning and the End” (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος). While this addition (which is not present in 1:8) may seem to be a definition and explanation of “the Alpha and the Omega,” the two are not synonymous. For “the Beginning and the End,” while explaining the sense of “the Alpha and the Omega,” does so *inreference to all creation*. That is, it declares that “the Alpha and the Omega” is also “the Beginning and the End” of all creation, of all life (cf. Col 1:13–20; Rev 3:14). While the phrase “the Beginning and the End” is not present with “the Alpha and the Omega” in the prologue (1:8), it is present here in 21:6 *because of the context of the new heaven and earth*. God, “the Alpha and the Omega,” now also calls himself “the Beginning and the End” of the creation of the new heaven and earth. One more time the combination of “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the Beginning and the End” will appear, in 22:13, where *the Lord Christ* says this of himself. By sharing these titles, the full divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father are affirmed. (CC pp. 602-603)

spring of life.† Cf. Ps 36:9; Isa 55:1; Jn 4:14. See 22:1, 17. This symbol obviously portrays the preaching of the gospel. (CSB)

Probably another example of baptismal imagery. Cf 3:4; 6:11; 7:3, 14. (TLSB)

The Alpha and the Omega, that is, the eternal God who gave the prophetic message of Revelation to John through Christ and his angel (1:1–8), now assures John that, as the eternal God who also is the Beginning and the End, he makes all things new. As Paul says in Rom 11:36, “All things [τὰ πάντα] are from him and through him and for him” (cf. 1 Cor 8:6). Therefore the eternal God can now say, “To the one who is thirsty I myself will give from the spring of the water of life freely” (Rev 21:6). These words are reminiscent of the gracious invitation spoken by God through Isaiah (55:1): “Come, all who are thirsty, to the waters ... come, buy wine and milk without money.” In Jer 2:13 God complains that his people have “committed two sins: they have forsaken [him] who is the spring of living water, and they have dug their own wells”—a definition of idolatry. Nevertheless, the gracious invitation prophetically spoken by Isaiah is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for in his earthly ministry he said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me” (Jn 7:37; cf. Jn 4:10–14). Now at the conclusion of the prophetic message of Revelation and in reference to all things made new God reminds John of this invitation, an invitation that John and God’s people heeded, and the fruition of which they now see in the new heaven and earth. In the epilogue (22:6–21) John will once again be reminded of this gracious call to the waters of life given freely (22:17). (CC p. 603)

21:7 *He who conquers.* Cf. the emphasis on overcoming in the seven letters (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). (CSB)

Recalls the promises appearing in each of the seven letters to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). (TLSB)

Rev 21:7–8 gives a description of those who will inhabit the new heaven and earth and those who will not. “The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (21:7). In Revelation 2 and 3, the conclusion of each of the seven letters has a promise from the Lord Christ for “the one who conquers” (ὁ νικῶν). “I will grant [to him] to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (2:7). He “will certainly never be harmed by the second death” (2:11). “I will give [to him] of the manna which has been hidden, and I will give to him a white stone [of innocence], and upon that stone a new name” (2:17). “I will give to him authority over the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod” (2:26–27). He “will be clothed in white garments, and I will certainly not remove his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (3:5). “I will place him as a pillar in the temple of my God ... and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God—the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God—and my own new name” (3:12). “I will grant to him to sit with me on my throne” (3:21). Taken together, these conclusions of the seven letters to the seven churches are a sevenfold description of the blessed state of those who will live in the new heaven and earth. “The one who conquers” is an heir (21:7) of God’s gift of eternal life in the new heaven and earth *because of the victory of the one who conquered*. For it was the Lamb who conquered (ἐνίκησεν) and by his victory made a people for God (1:5–6; 5:5; 7:14–17)—and because of his victory the saints of God are also called victorious ones (12:11). And as John says elsewhere, “Everyone who has been born of God conquers [νικᾷ] the world, and this is the victory [ἡ νίκη] which has conquered [ἡ νικήσασα] the world, our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). (CC pp. 603–604)

The one who conquers “will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son” (Rev 21:7). To be an heir of God is to share in all the blessings that he confers upon his own son. The one who is in Christ, who has been clothed with Christ in Baptism and believes in him as the Savior, becomes such an heir of God, for it is through the righteousness of faith (διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως, Rom 4:13) in Christ that the sinner is adopted as a son of God and so an heir (Rom 4:13; Gal 3:26–29; Titus 3:5–7). Christ Jesus won this inheritance by his suffering and death, and as the heir of God he has made all who are in him children of God and heirs of his glory (Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29). The heir in Christ is acknowledged as God’s son, for God is now his Father. Rev 21:3 promised that when the time comes that God will dwell with his people, “they themselves will be his people, and God himself will be with them [as their God].” Here in 21:7 the people of God are individualized as his heirs. As the Son of God is the heir of God, so each believer in Christ is a son of God as an individual heir. Not only does God in Christ recognize a people as his, he also singles out each one as his own child (see Gal 4:7). (CC p. 604)

21:8 *cowardly, faithless, detestable, murders, sexually immoral* – Part of a “vice list,” of which there are many in the NT (cf Rm 1:29–32; Col 3:5). (TLSB)

sorcerers. Cf. Ac 19:19. The magical tradition in ancient times called for the mixing of various herbs to ward off evil. (CSB)

Gk *pharmakos*, refers to a person who mixed magical potions and poisons. (TLSB)

Only the heirs and sons of God in Christ will live in the new heaven and earth. All others will have as their eternal portion “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). They are described as “the cowards and unfaithful persons” (τοῖς δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις, 21:8). Jesus called his disciples “cowards” when their fear of a storm threatened to overpower their faith, but he allowed that they had some faith because he called them “of little faith” (ὀλιγόπιστοι, Mt 8:26) and asked, “Do you not yet have faith?” (Mk 4:40). Here in Rev 21:8 “the cowards” are also the “unfaithful persons”; they are unbelievers with *no* faith in Christ.

If they were Christians at one time, they later “cowered in the face of persecution and joined the company of the reprobate. Leading the retreat are the cowardly, who in the last resort choose personal safety over faithfulness to Christ.” They include apostate Christians who, because of fear and/or cares of this life and love of the world, have chosen self and earthly honor and security and riches over losing oneself in Christ (See Mt. 13:21; Mk. 8:35; Lk. 8:14; James 4:4; 1 Jm. 2:15). The following description of “those who have made themselves vile, and murderers and sexually immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all the liars” (21:8) is meant to indicate all unbelievers and pagans. Apostate Christians are included, but also all those who never were followers of Christ. By such immoral living they demonstrate that they are not of Christ (cf. Mt 25:41–46; Rom 1:18–32; Eph 4:17–19). (CC pp. 604-605)

their portion – Those unswervingly persisting in evil will share the fate of Satan and his demonic host (cf 20:10, 14–15). (TLSB)

lake that burns with fire and sulfur. Their “portion” is “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8). This is a graphic portrayal of hell. In Mt 25:41 it is called “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” In Rev 20:10 John prophetically saw the devil thrown into “the lake of fire and brimstone,” where also the beast and the false prophet (the harlot) had been cast (see also 19:20). And in 20:15 John saw how anyone who was not found written in the book of life was thrown into “the lake of fire.” This lake of fire is called “the second death” (20:14) in contrast to what could be called the first death, that is, the state of sin and unbelief in which all people are conceived and born (See Rev. 20:5-6; cf. Ps. 51:5 {MT 51:7}; Jn. 5:25-29; Eph. 2:1-6; Col. 3:1-4). (CC p. 605)

21:9–27† A symbolic representation of the church triumphant. (CSB)

21:9-14 In these verses John is shown in detail the bride of Christ as she will live in the new heaven and earth. As stated above in 21:2, the bride is illustrated by and displayed as the holy city Jerusalem. Again an angel attends John and points out to him the bride of the Lamb in all her godly beauty. It is “one of the seven angels who had the seven censers full of the seven last plagues” (21:9), referring to the seven angels in 15:1, 7; 16:1–21. These seven angels had revealed to John the seven scenes in the third vision of events taking place on earth (16:1–21). One of these seven angels has been attending John throughout the conclusion of Revelation’s prophecy (17:1–22:5). Most likely this angel remains the same. It seems that the seven censer-angels in 15:1–16:21 are the same as the seven trumpet-angels in 8:2–11:15, who in turn are the seven angels of the seven churches in chapters 1–3. Thus in Revelation there is one group of seven angels throughout. It is quite fitting that one of the angels of the seven churches (identified here in 21:9 as one of the censer-angels) should show to John the bride of the Lamb as she will appear in the new heaven and earth. (CC p. 608)

21:1–8 The climax of this Book and indeed all of history at last comes clear: the restored heaven and earth is presented to God’s resurrected people. Such a magnificent future and hope call us to rise above the ugliness and sin of this fallen world, because impenitence and a lack of vigilance can still lead to the shipwreck of our souls. At the same time, God is faithful and so will unfailingly fulfill the purposes for which His Son became man; He will remove the curse that so sorely afflicts us. • Jesus, You suffered to make all things new. Therefore, renew our hearts and minds, and hasten the day when You shall present the holy city as Your beloved Bride, the Church. Amen.

The New Jerusalem

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, **11** having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. **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. **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. **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. **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. **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. **22** And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. **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, **25** and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. **26** They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. **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.

21:9-11, 22-27 This text appears in the section 21:1–22:5, dealing with the vision of the New Jerusalem, the seventh and last vision in the book of Revelation. Note the frequency with which parallel passages from Is 60 are quoted. Revelation 21 is the final consummation of Isaiah 60. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:9 *seven angels* - “One of the seven angels”—see 17:1. Some say it is unusual that one of the seven angels who had carried the seven bowls of wrath now shows this beautiful sight. However, God apparently intends a deliberate contrast between the Harlot City, shown in chapter 17, and the Bride City, introduced here. The Harlot City, Babylon, is great and old, sinful and shameful, an earthly travesty, vile and abominable. The Bride City, Jerusalem, is holy and new, pure and lovely, a heavenly reality. That the same angels could carry out such different tasks illustrates that God’s servants do not select their tasks and that God works out his purpose even in judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

seven bowls – Note how the revelation doubles back to the earlier scene regarding the pouring out of God’s wrath (16:17). (TLSB)

seven last plagues. See 15:1. (CSB)

Note how revelation doubles back to the earlier scene regarding the pouring out of God’s wrath (16:17). (TLSB)

The angel says to John, “Come, I will show to you” (δεῦρο, δείξω σοι, 21:9). The same words were used in 17:1 when the same angel came to John to show him “the judgment of the great harlot.” The harlot is the antichurch, which on earth is opposed to the true church of Christ. Christ’s true church was portrayed by the woman in Revelation 12, who was adorned with the glory of God. That woman, who was the church militant in suffering (12:13–18), is now the bride of Christ (cf. 19:6–8). The harlot is gone forever, having been cast into hell (19:20; 20:10). Now the angel shows to John the true woman of God, the church triumphant, set forth here in Revelation 21 as the bride of the Lamb and portrayed as the holy city Jerusalem. (CC pp. 608-609)

bride – Cf 12:6, 13–14; 19:7–8. This feminine imagery acts as a foil to the great prostitute of chs 17–19. (TLSB)

The New Testament frequently calls the church “the bride” of Christ, stressing the intimate relationship of love and fidelity. Verse 9 adds that as John glimpses the end of earthly time, the church now is also “the wife” (v 9); the marriage day has now arrived (cf. 19:7; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5: 25–27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

the Lamb - Note the prominence of the title “the Lamb,” which occurs in 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27. It is important for explaining God’s grace in the suffering of the Lamb on the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:10 *carried me away* – ἀπήνεγκεν—This verb (ἀποφέρω) can mean either that John was carried away from where he was (BAGD, 1 a α and 1 b) or that he was forcefully carried away (BAGD 1 a β) by a power or volition other than his own. Both nuances could be present in meaning of the translation “carried ... away” here in 21:10. (CC p. 607)

great high mountain – Much like the wilderness of 17:3, this is an otherwise inaccessible vantage point, allowing a glimpse into divine mysteries. (TLSB)

holy city Jerusalem. Though this symbol sometimes represents heaven itself (22:2), it also stands for God’s people (21:2). Here, it seems to represent the latter. (TLSB)

This was the best vantage point to see such greatness. In Scripture, mountains are often the location of great revelations (Sinai/Horeb, Moriah/Zion, Sermon on the Mount and the Transfiguration).

“A mountain great and high”—the city of Jerusalem was located on a height, something the psalmist emphasizes in Ps 48:2, thereby enabling it to draw all nations to itself (cf. vv 24–26, John 12:32); note the parallel in Ezek 40:1–2. The phrase also emphasizes the greatness and glory of what John saw (Lenski). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The angel carries John “in the Spirit to a large and high mountain” (21:10). This is the fourth and final time John is said to be “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι). In 1:10 John, on the Lord’s day on Patmos, was “in the Spirit” when the exalted Son of Man commissioned him to write the revelation. In 4:2 John was “in the Spirit” when he was transported into heaven to see the vision of God’s enthroned glory and of the elevation of the victorious Lamb. In 17:3, after the angel had said to him, “Come, I will show to you the judgment of the great harlot” (17:1), the angel carried John into the desert “in the Spirit.” And now here in 21:10 John once again is “in the Spirit” as the angel carries him to a large mountain. “In the Spirit” indicates that it was by the Holy Spirit of

God that John was transported to the mountain. This is an event in the Spirit (whether in the body or outside the body; cf. 2 Cor 12:2–4) by which John saw the bride of Christ visually, and possibly also experientially or empirically. Perhaps it was similar to the spiritual event in which Ezekiel was taken by the Spirit and lifted up between heaven and earth and then saw a vision in which he was taken by God from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezek 8:1–4; cf. Ezek 3:12; 11:1). (CC p. 609)

In Rev 17:3 John was taken in the Spirit into “a desert” to see the harlot. Here in 21:10 he is taken in the Spirit to “a large and high mountain” to see the bride of the Lamb. While “the Harlot City is seen in a wilderness, the Bride City [is seen] from a mountain.” From this “mountain” John sees “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.” Perhaps this mountaintop experience, on later reflection, may have reminded John of the mountaintop experience of the transfiguration (Lk 9:28–36), except that here it is not *Christ* who is transfigured, but Christ’s *church*, adorned in the glory of the exalted Christ as it is displayed as the holy city Jerusalem. (CC p. 609)

coming down - Coming down” does not denote a second descent, but the same as in v 2. These words are the basis for the sermon title, “Here Comes the Bride.” This “coming down” may well indicate that the new heaven and new earth will have some characteristics familiar to us who have lived on earth; in a sense, they will be “down to earth.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:11 *the glory of the Lord* – When Christ appears, the saints will be glorified and given resurrected bodies like Christ’s own (Php 3:20–21). Thus, both heaven and its citizens will reflect the divine majesty. (TLSB)

This verse describes the glory of God among the believers in heaven (cf. Is 60:1). The brilliance of the Holy City is beyond description (cf 2 Cor 12:1–4, where Paul writes about the difficulty of putting this into words). The truth of God and his Gospel drives away the darkness of ignorance, misery, guilt, and moral pollution (Hendriksen). Swete relates the glory to the saints themselves (cf. Dan 12:3; Phil 2:16). Others ascribe it to Christ (cf. Luke 2:9). The Gospel is the common denominator of all these views. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

its radiance – Above in 21:2 the holy city Jerusalem was “prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.” Here in 21:11 John sees that adornment as “the glory of God,” which is her “radiance” (φωστήρ). The church on earth bears “the glory of God” because of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Rev 12:1), but it is unseen to the human eye. Now, after the resurrection and the restoration of heaven and earth, the church is adorned with this glory for all to see. “Radiance” (φωστήρ) suggests that “the glory of God” conferred upon the holy city as her “radiance” now shines forth as if it were her own beauty and righteousness and holiness. In classical Greek a φωστήρ, “illuminator, luminary,” was a heavenly body which generated its own light, like a star. In the cosmology of the Bible, God first created “light” (φῶς, LXX Gen 1:3–5) and then the “luminaries” (φωστῆρες, LXX Gen 1:14, 16), which when empowered by the light generate their own light (the sun and stars) or reflect (the moon) and distribute that light. This “radiance” in Rev 21:11 indicates that while initially the glory of God was given to the saints solely because of and through Jesus Christ, who is “the light” (τὸ φῶς, Jn 1:4–9; 8:12), in the new age that glory will be the possession of God’s people who (like a “luminary,” φωστήρ) generate their own radiance by which “the glory of God” is distributed, that is, appears and is seen. (CC pp. 609–610)

like jasper, clear as crystal – This “radiance” (φωστήρ) of the holy city appears like “a most precious stone, like a crystalized jasper” (Rev 21:11), a rare gem which is green in color “but lustrous as crystal.” (CC p. 610)

Precious stone, previously mentioned in connection with God’s radiance. (TLSB)

21:12 *high wall* – The holy city Jerusalem “has a large and high wall” (21:12). Usually a wall around a city was for protection and defense. Such physical protection would not be a necessity for the bride of Christ in the new heaven and earth because all her enemies will have been vanquished. (That is the theme of Revelation 17–19; 20:7–10.) For that reason early commentators interpreted the “wall” to be a symbol of God’s care and protection, which insured that the peace and security of his people would last forever. For example, Oecumenius (sixth century) says, “The wall of the saints, or of the church, again is Christ himself, as our defense and surrounding fence and ready help.” That interpretation is supported by OT passages that speak of God as a fortification and wall around his people. For example, Is 26:1 states that the land of Judah has “a mighty city” because God has made salvation her walls. Similarly in Zech 2:4–5 (MT 2:8–9) an angel tells the prophet that Jerusalem will have no walls, for Yahweh himself will be “a wall of fire all around.” However one interprets the “wall” in Rev 21:12, it suggests that in the new heaven and earth God’s people will forever be under God’s gracious protection so that never again will they suffer attacks or be afflicted. Moreover, they will never be tempted by evil or fall into sin and death, as happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8–9; 3:1–19). In the new Eden, that is, “paradise” (Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7), this will not happen, for the people of Christ, the new Adam, will forever be in a state of grace and righteousness and innocence (cf. Rom 5:12–21). As John sees the city Jerusalem coming down from God in heaven, the “wall” reminds him of this eternal protection. (CC pp. 610–11)

twelve gates. See Eze 48:30–35. The number 12 probably emphasizes the continuity of the NT church and the OT people of God. See v. 14, where the 12 foundations bear the names of the 12 apostles. (CSB)

angels at gates – The twelve angels on the twelve gates are evidently guardians of the gates (cf. Pss 34:7 [MT 34:8]; 91:11; Heb 1:14). In Is 62:6–7 the Lord tells the prophet that he will place “watchmen” or “sentries” (שָׁמָרִים; LXX: φύλακας) on the wall of Jerusalem. These watchmen will continue to be vigilant until the Lord renews Jerusalem and establishes her as the praise of the whole earth. Perhaps on reflection that reference in Isaiah may have come to John’s mind. Certainly these guardian angels would remind John (as did the wall) that no enemy will enter the city ever again to hurt God’s people (see Rev 21:27 below). These twelve angels as a group are unique, for nowhere else in biblical literature is such a group mentioned. (Evidently no group of twelve angels of any kind appears in the pseudepigraphal literature either.) There are groups of seven angels (e.g., 1:20; 8:2; 15:1) but not of twelve. But that twelve are mentioned here in 21:12 is not surprising (despite their uniqueness), for the city has twelve gates patterned after the twelve tribes. And each gate has its own angelic guardian—as already prophetically suggested by both Ezek 48:30–34 and Is 62:6–7 when seen intertextually. As the cherubim protected the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), though for a different purpose, so the guardian angels protect the holy city Jerusalem, the new Eden. (CC pp. 612–613)

21:13 *on the east* – ἀπό—This Greek preposition usually means “from, away from.” English would usually say “toward” or “on” the east, and so on. This use of ἀπό is a Hebraism, reflecting the geographic use of the preposition מִן (see BDB, 1 c). That is, as one comes from the east, there are three gates by which one may enter the city. (CC p. 607)

In Ezek 48:30–34 the prophet in a vision sees a restored and new Jerusalem in the end times, after the final battle of Gog from Magog (Ezekiel 38–39; cf. Rev 20:7–10), and in it Jerusalem has twelve gates in its wall. In Ezekiel’s vision three gates are located in each of the four sides of the wall, three facing the north, three the east, three the south, and three the west. In Ezekiel’s vision, the gates in the wall are named after the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, which names are then given. In John’s vision the gates in the wall are also named after the “twelve tribes of the sons of Israel” (Rev 21:12), but he does not give the names as Ezekiel does. It was common for ancient Near Eastern cities to have only a single gate because the gate was more vulnerable to attack and was more difficult to defend than the wall. The *twelve gates* of the new Jerusalem “symbolize abundant entrance. Reference to twelve tribes emphasizes the continuity of the NT church with God’s people of OT times.” More than that, the gates also emphasize that the entrance into the city is by the arrangement set by God himself. The naming of the gates after the twelve tribes may also hint at an evangelistic or mission theme as the whole people of God testified to the world about his salvation. That theme would be continued by the reference in 21:14 to the names of the twelve apostles. (CC pp. 611-612)

21:14 *twelve foundations* – The wall of the city rests on “twelve foundation stones,” upon which are the “names of the twelve apostles” (21:14). As Paul describes it in Eph 2:19–22, citizens of God’s household and family “were built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” which foundation has as its cornerstone Christ Jesus. “The church in a historical sense rests upon the apostles and prophets, that is, upon the faith and labors of those who first proclaimed the gospel message. The juxtaposition of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles shows the unity of ancient Israel and the NT church.” Thus by means of the wall with its twelve gates John is reminded that, as there has always been only one covenant of grace embracing the entire people of God, those of old by faith in the promise of the Messiah and those by faith in the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus Christ, so now the true Israel of God will be in the new heaven and earth as represented by the new Jerusalem (cf. Rom 4:13–25; Gal 4:21–28). John earlier had seen the twenty-four elders sitting around God and his throne in heaven; they too represent the entire people of God, of both the OT and the NT. (CC p. 612)

The twelve angels on the twelve gates are evidently guardians of the gates (cf. Pss 34:7 [MT 34:8]; 91:11; Heb 1:14). In Is 62:6–7 the Lord tells the prophet that he will place “watchmen” or “sentries” (שָׂרֵי־לָיִל; LXX: φύλακας) on the wall of Jerusalem. These watchmen will continue to be vigilant until the Lord renews Jerusalem and establishes her as the praise of the whole earth. Perhaps on reflection that reference in Isaiah may have come to John’s mind. Certainly these guardian angels would remind John (as did the wall) that no enemy will enter the city ever again to hurt God’s people (see Rev 21:27 below). These twelve angels as a group are unique, for nowhere else in biblical literature is such a group mentioned. (Evidently no group of twelve angels of any kind appears in the pseudepigraphal literature either.) There are groups of seven angels (e.g., 1:20; 8:2; 15:1) but not of twelve. But that twelve are mentioned here in 21:12 is not surprising (despite their uniqueness), for the city has twelve gates patterned after the twelve tribes. And each gate has its own angelic guardian—as already prophetically suggested by both Ezek 48:30–34 and Is 62:6–7 when seen intertextually. As the cherubim protected the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24), though for a different purpose, so the guardian angels protect the holy city Jerusalem, the new Eden. (CC pp. 612-613)

21:15 *measure the city*. Cf. Eze 40–41. In Rev 11 the measuring was to ensure protection; here it serves to show the size and symmetry of the eternal dwelling place of the faithful. (CSB)

This picture of the angel taking a measurement underscores the perfection, splendor, and grand scale of the heavenly city. (TLSB)

In these verses the dimensions of the holy city Jerusalem are given, together with a further description of the foundation stones as precious jewels. “The one who was speaking with” John (21:15) is most likely the same angel who has been attending him as a guide throughout this concluding vision (17:1–22:5). He has “a golden measuring rod, so that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall” (21:15). In Ezek 40:1–42:20 the prophet saw in a vision “a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze” (Ezek 40:3), who showed Ezekiel the new temple. The bronze-like man did this by measuring the temple, its courts and gates and various rooms. This measuring of the temple assured Ezekiel (and through him the Israelites) of its reality and concreteness (Ezek 40:1–4). When the man whose appearance was like bronze had finished measuring the temple, the glory of God came into the temple and filled it (Ezek 43:1–5). The new temple would be God’s dwelling place and throne, in which he would live forever with his people (Ezek 43:6–7). Probably the man with a bronze-like appearance was an angel, for he himself does not bear the splendor and glory of God, but rather acts on God’s behalf. The bronze-like appearance could remind one of the “man” with divine-like appearance in Ezek 8:2–4 and the exalted “Son of Man” in Rev 1:12–15. But his appearance is not the same, and he acts more like an angel on God’s behalf rather than God himself (cf. Rev 10:1–7). (CC p. 613)

In Ezekiel the angelic man measures the temple. The prophet Zechariah (2:1–5 [MT 2:5–9]) in a vision saw “a man” (2:1 [MT 2:5]) (“the angel,” 2:3 [MT 2:7]) measuring the city Jerusalem. The measuring affirmed God’s promise regarding the future Jerusalem, “I myself will be for her ... a wall of fire all around, and I will be [her] glory in her midst” (Zech 2:5 [MT 2:9]). Here in Rev 21:15 the angel measures the holy city and its dimensions for a similar reason. It is to assure John of the certainty and concreteness of the new and restored Jerusalem, which will last forever and which will be God’s holy dwelling place in the new heaven and earth. That which the measuring in both Ezekiel and Zechariah prophetically represented and which was confirmed by means of the coming messianic age (cf. Jn 2:19), John sees fulfilled and consummated in his vision here in Revelation 21 (cf. Ezek 37:24–28). Earlier in Revelation (11:1–2) in a vision there was a measuring of the temple. But that time John himself did the measuring. He measured the temple of God, its incense altar, and those worshiping in the temple. The temple and its worshipers represented the church on earth as it was prepared for mission (11:2–13). The measuring assured John that God would protect his church on earth as she carried out her mission. (CC p. 614)

21:16 *length ... width ... height*. Thus a perfect cube, as was the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and the temple. (CSB)

The square (and cube) were considered “perfect” shapes. C 1,200 mi. This city is thus larger than many nations. *equal*. A perfect cube, just like the Most Holy Place in Solomon’s temple (1Ki 6:20). (TLSB)

The city Jerusalem “was laid out foursquare” (21:16). The “length and the width and the height of it are equal,” that is, it is a perfect cube. Each side of the cube measured “twelve thousand furlongs/stadia” (21:16). A Greek “stade” (στάδιον) measured 600 Greek feet (625 Roman feet), the equivalent of around 607 English feet. “Twelve thousand furlongs/stadia” would equal about 1,380 English miles or 2,200 kilometers. Thus the city would be about 1,380 miles long and wide and high. “Such dimensions defy imagination.” The Sibylline Oracles (5:250–52) say that the new Jerusalem, “the city of God in the middle of the earth,” would reach up to “the dark clouds” and its wall would extend “as far as Joppa.” The Talmud, *Baba Bathra*, 75b, states that the new Jerusalem would reach a height equivalent to three parasangs, that is, about twelve miles. Shir

Rabbah 7.5.3 says, “Jerusalem will one day expand on all sides until it reaches the gates of Damascus,” and “Jerusalem is destined to expand and ascend until it reaches the Throne of Glory.” With the possible exception of that last statement in Shir Rabbah 7.5.3, the measured dimensions of the new Jerusalem John sees are far greater than those of these pseud-epigraphal and rabbinic sources. Whatever one makes of these measurements, the size and scope of the holy city Jerusalem in Revelation 21 certainly declares that it is all encompassing in its perfection and splendor. Beckwith surmises that “perhaps the great height of the city figures the blending of heaven and earth in the new world.” However this may be, the holy city—that is, the bride of Christ under God’s majestic glory in Christ—will dominate the new heaven and earth as a magnificent precious stone of a ring in all its radiant splendor dominates its setting. (CC pp. 614-615)

The holy city has the glory of God because he dwells within her, and this glory is Jerusalem’s “radiance” (see 21:11 above). The fact that this is so is also attested by its cubic dimensions, for a cube symbolizes perfection. This perfect cubic shape of Jerusalem would certainly remind John of the perfect cubic shape and dimensions of the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary of Solomon’s temple. It was a perfect cube with its length of twenty cubits, and its width and height also of twenty cubits each (1 Ki 6:20; cf. Ezek 41:3–4; 45:1–2). This inner sanctuary was the place of God’s holy presence. It housed the ark of the covenant, and it was where the high priest, once a year on the Day of Atonement, sprinkled the blood upon the atonement cover (כַּפֹּרֶת; LXX: ἱλαστήριον) for the sins of the people (Lev 16:1–17; cf. Heb 9:1–22). The holy city Jerusalem—that is, the bride of Christ, the saints of God—will be the Holy of Holies of the new heaven and earth. She will be the holy place of God’s dwelling on the newly created and restored earth. (CC pp. 615-616)

21:17 *144 cubits*. About 200 feet. (CSB)

which is also an angel’s measure – Implies that humans and angels are about the same size. This might also convey that people will be like angels in the resurrection (Mt 22:30), though they do not become angels. (TLSB)

ὁ ἔστιν ἀγγέλου—The phrase means to say that “the measure of a man” is the same as that “of an angel.” The reader is not to think that the angelic cubit is different from a standard human cubit, and that equivalence implies that the measuring is realistic and concrete, not just an other-worldly measuring using a different (spiritual or unearthly) standard. In the ancient world the cubit generally was about eighteen inches, but there were different cubits of slightly different lengths. (CC p. 608)

The angel then measured the wall of the city. It was “one hundred forty-four cubits,” the common “measure of a man” as well as that “of an angel” (Rev 21:17). That the measurement of a human person and of an angel are the same suggests that, though the measurement was taken by an angel, it would have been the same if a man had taken it—as John himself did in 11:1–2. The number 144 is the square of twelve and certainly is reminiscent of the 144,000 (which is twelve times 12,000), the number of saints in 7:4–8. As the 144,000 in 14:1–5 represented the church militant on earth throughout the time between Christ’s ascension and his second coming at the End, so the measurement of the wall of the holy city, 144 cubits, suggests that the church—now the church triumphant, the bride of the Lamb—is this holy city, this Holy of Holies. That is, God’s people who on earth had witnessed to the Christ and suffered because of that testimony (11:7–10; cf. 12:13–18; 13:7) are now, in the new heaven and earth, his holy dwelling place, that new Holy of Holies in which God will dwell in the new heaven and earth. (CC p. 616)

21:18-21 Rev 21:18–21 describes the building material and the composition and adornment of the city, with its precious stones and gold. The color of the precious stones of “jasper” (ἵασπις, 21:18) and “sardius” (σάρδιον, 21:20) is akin to the description of God on his heavenly throne in 4:3, for the presence on the throne was “like in appearance to a jasper stone and a sardius” (ὁμοιος ὁράσει λίθῳ ἵασπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ). This suggests that the holy city glows with and reflects the very glory of God himself, and so she reminds John of God’s splendid and glorious presence in the city. The city itself was “pure gold like clear glass” (21:18), and its main street was “pure gold, like transparent glass” (21:21). This gold indicates that the city and its main street convey the supreme *royalty* of God’s glory. The “main street” (21:21) is the very way of the royal majesty of God and the city is his royal palace. (CC p. 616-617)

“The foundation stones of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of precious stone,” twelve kinds of stone in all (21:19–20). The prophet Isaiah (54:11–12) prophetically proclaimed that the Lord God would rebuild Zion, her walls and foundations and gates, with precious stones. When Jerusalem will be rebuilt, according to Tobit 13:16, her gates will be like sapphire and emerald, her walls like precious stones, her tower built from gold, and her fortified places shall be like pure gold. While John, on reflection, may have been reminded of this Jewish hope in Tobit, reflecting the prophetic announcement of Isaiah, probably he also would have been reminded of the breastplate of the high priest, which was made of gold and inlaid with twelve precious stones, one for each of the names of the twelve sons of Israel (Ex 28:15–17; 39:8–21). While the stones in the breastplate represented the twelve tribes of Israel, here in Rev 21:19–21 the twelve kinds of foundation stones represent the twelve apostles (see 21:14). Individually, the precious stones of the wall illustrate God’s people as individuals who are precious in his sight. As represented by the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel and by the twelve apostles, the saints in the holy city collectively reflect “the multicolored wisdom [ἡ πολυποικίλας σοφία] of God” (Eph 3:10). For the church is the house and building of God (Eph 2:20–22), and she will ever be reminded as she lives with God in the new heaven and earth that she “was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the capstone” (Eph 2:20). (CC p. 617)

One final description of the splendor of the city is that “the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each one of the gates was of one pearl” (Rev 21:21). In Is 54:12 God promises that the gates in the restored Jerusalem would be “precious jewels” (תְּכֵנִיטִים יָקָרִים; LXX: λίθους κρυστάλλου). Here in Rev 21:21 they are of “pearls.” Pearls are not mentioned in the OT. However, pearls are mentioned in the NT. For example, Jesus in a parable mentions how a merchant in seeking “pearls” (μαργαρίτας) found one so precious that he sold everything he possessed in order to purchase it (Mt 13:45–46; cf. Mt 7:6; 1 Tim 2:9). So precious is the entrance into the city that it is worth any cost—a price that only the Son of God could pay, but which now the Christian values as his one great possession, having abandoned everything else for its sake. So precious is the inheritance of living with God in the new heaven and earth that John must have been reminded of the word of his Lord, “In my Father’s house there are many mansions, ... and I go to prepare a place for you” (Jn 14:2). And the saints of God will walk on streets of “pure gold, like transparent glass” (Rev 21:21) in those heavenly mansions as they tread on the royal main street of their God. Every footstep will follow upon and reflect the royal glory of God. (CC pp. 617-618)

21:19 EVERY KIND OF PRECIOUS STONE – This suggests that the holy city glows with and reflects the very glory of God himself, and so she reminds John of God’s splendid and glorious presence in the city. (CC p. 616)

21:21 city was pure gold – Gold indicates that the city and its main street convey the supreme royalty of God’s glory. (CC pp. 616-17)

21:22 *I saw no temple* – God gave the tabernacle and temples in order to mediate His presence on earth. In heaven, however, His people will see Him face-to-face and experience Him directly. Thus, a temple will be unnecessary. (TLSB)

John says regarding the holy city Jerusalem, that is, the people of God living in the new heaven and earth, “I did not see a temple in it, for Yahweh, the [only] God, the Almighty, is its temple together with the Lamb” (21:22). The saints of God in their state of righteousness and holiness and perfection after the resurrection can now look directly into the face of God. No longer does God have to hide his glory from their view. No longer does he have to shield his people from the brilliance of his overpowering holiness and awesomeness (cf. Deut 31:17–18; Is 64:7 [MT 64:6]). For God can now directly and personally live in the midst of his saints with his glory. With sin and every evil having passed away, there is no longer a need for a tabernacle or temple to mediate and temper God’s presence. For God the Father himself together with the Lord Christ is now that temple. The city itself (that is, the people of God) is now the Holy of Holies in which God dwells. What Paul said in 2 Cor 6:16, that the believers in Christ living in the present age are “the temple of the living God,” is now fulfilled in all its completeness and openness (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19–20). Andreas (sixth century) asks in his Greek commentary, “For what need is there of a tangible temple in the [city] having God as the guard and shelter, [God] in whom we live and move and exist? For this [God] is both the temple and the dwelling of the saints, as he dwells in them and walks about among them, even as he had promised.” (CC p.618)

The city itself has been described as a holy of holies, as its cubic form suggests (v 16). Yet God and the Lamb are the temple; no lambs (for sacrifice), but the Lamb (Poellot). In “the Lord God Almighty,” “Lord” stands for the personal name of God Yahweh—indicating his presence in grace, and the word “almighty” indicates his presence in power. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:23 *has no need of sun or moon* – No created light will be needed because the glory of the Lord will always be present. Therefore there will be no night (v. 25).

Because God Himself is “light” (Ps 36:9; 1Jn 1:5), there is no need for any other source of illumination in heaven. There, people bask in the unmediated glory of His aura. (TLSB)

“And the city does not have need of the sun nor of the moon” (Rev 21:23) for light. God himself by means of his “glory” will illuminate her, and “her lamp is the Lamb” (21:23). John is not referring to the physical sun and moon but rather is describing what it will be like for God’s people, who are the new Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, to live in God’s holy presence. “John is not supplying his readers with information about future astrological changes but setting forth by means of accepted apocalyptic imagery the splendor which will radiate from the presence of God and the Lamb.” Will there be astrophysical luminaries in the new heaven and earth? If the physical universe of the new heaven and earth will be similar to that of the first created heaven and earth, the conjectured answer would be yes, but John does not deal with this mystery. (CC pp. 618-619)

The prophet Isaiah used similar language when he spoke about the restored “city of Yahweh, Zion, the holy one of Israel” (Is 60:14). He says that “the sun will no longer be your light by day, nor will the moon by its brightness shine on you, for Yahweh will be your everlasting light” (Is 60:19). In the restored Jerusalem God would be the true light of his people. When this verse is

applied to the life of God's people on this earth, it does not refer to the physical sun and moon, for these two physical luminaries still fulfill the original function for which they were created and established by God: to govern the passage of time and to furnish light for the physical well-being of daily living (Gen 1:14–19). Similarly, Christians affirm that Jesus Christ is “the true light ... which is coming into the world” (Jn 1:9) and is “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12; cf. 3:19; 12:35). Jesus Christ is the light of the Christian's life, which illuminates his pilgrimage through this present earthly life. The believer does not need (and cannot employ) the physical sun for spiritual guidance, though the need for the astrophysical sun is still present for his physical well-being. In the new heaven and earth, God in his glory and Jesus Christ as the lamp will be seen directly and experienced personally as the eternal light. (CC p. 619)

Cf. Is 60:19; John 1:4; 8:12; Christ is the light of this world and the next, the “sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). Note the equality of the Lamb with the Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:24 *by its light the nations will walk* – Cf Is 60:1–6. Emphasizes the complete fulfillment of God's plan to save all people (cf Rv 7:9). This suggests the transformation rather than the annihilation of the old orders. (TLSB)

So wonderful is the light of the glory of God and of his Christ that John sees that “the nations will walk about by her light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into her,” the holy city (Rev 21:24). In eschatological terms, John here in 21:24 sees the consummation and final fulfillment of the prophecy in Is 60:1–6 concerning nations and kings who will see the glory of Yahweh coming to his people. A preview and type of this ultimate fulfillment occurred in the journey of the Magi from the east to worship the Christ Child (Mt 2:1–12). Commentators differ in their interpretation concerning these nations and kings in Rev 21:24. Some maintain that in Is 60:1–3 the prophet envisioned heathen Gentiles and their kings living outside Jerusalem after the restoration of Israel, and John included those words in his quote from Isaiah even though those words are inappropriate in their new context in Revelation, since John is referring to the new Jerusalem in the new heaven and earth. Others suggest that this verse indicates a universal salvation. Lenski is correct when he says that “ ‘the nations’ are the glorified saints,” and that the term “the kings of the earth” is used to “convey the idea that not all these powers of the earth were won for Satan but that the Lamb, too, won many of their number for himself.” This is certainly indicated by John in Rev 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 22:2, where the church's ministry extends to all nations and to kings (Rev. 10:11; cf. Mt. 28:19–20; Lk. 21:12–13; Acts 9:15) and the church consists of people from all nations. Rev 21:24a is quoting Is 60:3, where the emphasis is the inclusion of all kinds of Gentiles, in addition to Israelites, in the kingdom of God. That the kings of the earth bring their glory into the new Jerusalem as tribute indicates the supreme royalty of Christ, who is “King of kings” (Rev 17:14; 19:16; cf. 1:5; 15:3). While “kings” in Revelation usually are unbelieving enemies of Christ and his church (e.g., 6:15; 16:12, 14; 18:3), the context of Is 60:3 suggests that the “kings” are Gentile rulers who join the true Israelites in turning to the God of Israel and believing in him (e.g., Is 60:9). That interpretation is reinforced by the fulfillment of Is 60:1–6 in the Magi and the gifts they brought to the Christ Child as tokens of their worship (Mt 2:1–12). “Kings” may also allude to the royal reign of *all Christians* with Christ (Rev 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). (CC pp. 619–620)

While some think “the nations” in v 24 refers to the heathen, the heavenly context of this word can only mean that Christians from every nation are meant. John here uses Old Testament language, since an imperial city should receive tribute from nations and kings. The verse

describes the consummation of Is 60:3, 5, the OT text for Epiphany. While the Magi, representatives of the Gentile nations, fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy at Christ's first advent, the prophecy now comes true on a much larger scale. But "the nations" and "kings" later in this verse cannot be stretched to teach universalism, although the universality of grace may be emphasized. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:25 *its gates will never be shut by day...no nights* – With evil once and for all vanquished, there is no need for security measures. (TLSB)

The "gates" of the city "will never be closed by day, for night will not be there" (Rev 21:25). As stated above in 21:12, 14, the city's wall represents God's surrounding, protective presence. Here in 21:25 the inability of any evil force or danger to threaten or hurt God's people is emphasized again, this time by the open "gates" which never are closed, and by the fact that "night" is totally absent. City gates were usually closed at night (e.g., Josh 2:5–7). "Night" here represents the spiritual darkness of sin and evil (cf. Jn 11:10; 12:35; 1 Thess 5:5). Because there is no darkness of sin and the suffering and terror of eternal death that sin generates, there is no need for the gates in the wall of the city to be closed. It will always be day because of the eternal light of God's presence (Rev 21:23–24). Rev 21:25 quotes Is 60:11, which promises the restored Jerusalem that "your gates will always be open; day and night they will never be shut." The purpose of them remaining open is so that through them the wealth of nations and their kings may be brought into the city in a worshipful procession. (CC p. 621)

Cf. Is 60:20, John 10:9; the doors never shut because there is no danger of invasion in heaven. This is the opposite of Matt 25:10, where the door to heaven is shut to unbelievers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:26 *glory and honor of the nations* – This all that they did for the Lamb while they were here on the old earth, for which they receive reward in the Eternal City, namely the varying degrees of glory. (Poellot p. 287)

John sees that the nations and their kings (Rev 21:24) "will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into her" (21:26), that is, into the holy city. In the new heaven and earth, all peoples and all nations and all kings—yea, the entire creation and all the heavenly hosts—will honor and praise God and the Lamb (cf. 4:1–5:14). (CC p. 621)

Cf. Is 60:5; this verse continues v 24. In heaven, God will be glorified by the presence of people who spent their lives honoring him through their labors, whether in the church, art, literature, science, etc. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

21:27 *unclean...detestable* – Another reminder that future citizenship in heaven is secured through repentance and holiness. (TLSB)

And never again will "any unclean thing" or anyone "doing an abominable thing and a lie"—any evil whatsoever—be able to enter, to tarnish, to savage God's people and his creation (21:27). "Unclean" was a category in the OT laws of purity (κοινός, as also in Acts 10:14, reflecting نجس in, for example, Lev 11:4–8). While these purity laws were fulfilled and abolished in Christ (e.g., κοινός in Mk 7:2, 5; Acts 10:28), in Rev 21:27 "unclean" has the theological sense of something abhorrent to God, as indicated by the synonyms "abominable" (βδέλυγμα, as also in Rev 17:4–5; also Mt 24:15) and "a lie, falsehood" (ψεῦδος, as also in Rev 14:5; 22:15), which is characteristic

of the devil (Jn 8:44; 2 Thess 2:9, 11). The short description in Rev 21:27 of those excluded will be expanded in 22:15 (see also 21:8). (CC p. 621)

Lamb's book of life. Only the elect, whose names are written in the book of life [Revelation 21:27], are saved. Therefore, how can we know, or why and how can we perceive who the elect are and who can and should receive this teaching for comfort? In this matter we should not judge according to our reason, or according to the Law or from any outward appearance.... If we want to think about our eternal election to salvation helpfully, we must in every way hold strongly and firmly to this truth: just as the preaching of repentance is universal, so also the promise of the Gospel is universal, that is, it belongs to all people" (FC SD XI 25–26, 28). Luther: "To be sure, all sins have been remitted and covered, but they have not yet been completely cleansed away. Not only do the dregs of lust, pride, hatred, wrath, and other desires cling to us, but also inner evils and hidden stains, doubts about God, unbelief, impatience, and murmuring, which do not come out into the open until the conscience is troubled by the Law and by the terrors of sin. Although we pay no attention to these things and do not sob because of such a disgraceful fall, yet God sees them. Therefore He tries to purge our impure nature. This is what He thinks: 'You have been enlightened and baptized; but you still stink, and your flesh is full of many great vices. Therefore I must cleanse it, for that which is unclean and polluted shall not enter the kingdom of heaven' (cf. Rev. 21:27)" (AE 7:229). (TLSB)

Revelation has a number of descriptions of those who will enter the eternal abode of God (Rev. 2:7, 10; 3:21; 7:14; 14:4-5). Here they are not described according to any of their own characteristics or actions; they are designated by God's own action for their sake: they are "those who have been written in the book of life of the Lamb" (21:27). Their names are engraved in the mind and heart of God and his Christ, the shepherd of his flock (cf. Jn 10:3, 11, 27–30; 20:11–16). (CC p. 621)

21:9–27 John continues his description of the glorified Church by focusing upon the splendor of the city in which God's people will dwell eternally. On the one hand, the incredible beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem stretches our imaginations beyond what they can comprehend; on the other hand, the stern warnings about the impure, false, and detestable seem all too familiar. Yet God will overcome all evil, including that in our lives, for He who has written our names in the Book of Life will Himself see us home. • Christ Jesus, Bridegroom of the Church, help us to watch for the end of days and prepare for our reception into the new heaven and earth, where the great wedding feast never ends. Come soon, Lord Jesus. Amen.