

VBS 2022

**THE RETURN
OF THE
KING**

Day 5: The Book of Life
1st-5th Grade

The Book of Life

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

Each day, the students will learn a memory verse. Students who learn all 5 memory verses this week will receive a prize.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective This lesson will look at the new heavens and new earth and present the Gospel and give the students an opportunity to respond.

Key Verses

Revelation 20:7-22:5—Main Teaching Passage

Matthew 7:21-23

James 2:10

Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9, 13

John 3:16

Memory Verse - Matthew 24:46

"Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."

Hook

Review Matthew 24:42-45.

Tell the students to imagine they are getting ready to go on a bike ride. Describe the process of getting ready (wake up, eat breakfast, put on athletic clothes, put on a helmet, etc.) but leave out bringing the actual bike. Ask the kids if you are ready to go bike riding. When they answer, point out that you are missing the most important thing needed to be ready for a bike ride: a bike!

All week, we've been learning about the Lord's return and what we need to do to be ready for it. But today, we are looking at the most important thing we need to do to be ready.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

After the 1,000 years of peace and harmony with Christ reigning on earth that we learned about yesterday, Revelation 20:7-15 tells us that Satan will be released from his prison and deceive the nations one last time. He will lead many people to rebel against God, but God immediately defeats him and his army, and all of sinful humanity will then stand before God. He will judge every man by their works, and everyone who does not accept Jesus as Savior, those whose names aren't written in the Book of Life, will be separated from Him forever.

Then in Revelation 21-22, the focus shifts to the destiny of those who *do* trust in Jesus. In these wonderful chapters, we read about the new heavens and new earth, the eternal dwelling of all believers. This passage describes many incredible things that will be there (great light, high walls, twelve foundations made of precious stones, pearly gates, streets of gold, and the tree of life), as well as things that won't be there (death, sorrow, crying, pain, things that defile, the curse, night). But the most wonderful part of heaven is found in 21:3, where it says that the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God will be with man—God will live with us forever, and we will be His people, and He will be our God!

In Revelation 21:6-8, God offers each and everyone of us a chance to spend eternity with Him. All we have to do is come to Him, and He will freely give us eternal life. But those who reject God and instead chose a life of sin face separation from Him forever.

LOOK

This week, we have answered two important questions: what is the return of Christ, and how can I be ready for it? We've learned many awesome things about what His return will be like, and looked at the jobs Jesus has given us to do in the meantime, which include growing in holiness and preaching the Gospel. But before any of that, there is something we must do first. The most important thing everyone must do to be ready for Jesus' return is to ask Him to forgive your sins and be your Lord and Savior.

Today we read that every person will spend eternity in one of two places. You will either be with God forever in the new heavens and new earth, dwelling in His love, joy, and peace, or be eternally separated from Him. In today's passage, we read that your eternal destiny is determined by one simple question: is your name written in the Book of Life?

So then how do we get our names into God's book? Is it by doing good things? Some people think so, but in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus says that there will be many people who think they did lots of things for the Lord, but will not enter into His kingdom because He never knew them.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

The Bible teaches us that no amount of good works can get us into heaven, because we all have sin. Sin is anything we think, say, or do that breaks God's law. James 2:10 says that if you break just one of God's laws, even if you keep all the rest of them, you are guilty, and Romans 6:23 says that the punishment for our sin is death and eternal separation from God like we read about today.

So there's the problem: our sin separates us from God, and no amount of good things we could do can fix the problem. But God loves us so much that He sent Jesus into the world to save us from our sins, so that everyone who believes in Him can have eternal life (John 3:16). Jesus lived a perfect life, yet He died on the cross to take the punishment for sin that we deserved. Then on the third day, He rose again from the dead, overcoming death for us. Now if we ask Jesus to forgive our sins and be our Lord (King) and Savior, we will be saved from our sins and spend eternity with Him in the new heavens and new earth (Romans 10:9).

Trusting in Jesus as your Savior is the only way to have your name written in the Book of Life. If you've never done that before, you can do it today. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done. Romans 10:13 says that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved. So ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. He could return at any time—even today! Making the decision to follow Jesus is the most important thing we need to do to be ready for His return.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Give the students an opportunity to respond to the Gospel and make Jesus their Lord and Savior. Have anyone who accepts Christ fill out a yellow "Welcome to God's family" card.

As a class, memorize Matthew 24:42-46.

Review with the class what the new heavens and new earth will be like. Ask what their favorite part is.

Pray: Thank Jesus for coming to earth to die for our sins and rise again. Thank Him for making the new heavens and new earth.

Parent Question: What is the most important thing to do to be ready for Christ's return?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Revelation 20:7-22:5 By David Guzik

C. The final battle after the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

1. ([Rev 20:7-8](#)) Satan is released and gathers an army.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

a. **Satan will be released:** For the thousand years of the direct reign of Jesus over this earth, Satan was bound and inactive. But after the thousand years are over, he will be released and successfully organize many people of the earth in another rebellion against God.

i. If Jesus has reigned so wonderfully for a thousand years, then why will the earth rebel? They will do it, and God will allow it, as a final demonstration of man's rebellion and depravity. *Outward* conformity to Jesus' rule will be required during His reign, but seemingly, an inward embrace of His Lordship will still be up to the individual.

b. **Gather them together to battle:** Who will these rebels be? They will be those who survive the Great Tribulation, enter into the Millennial Kingdom, and their descendants. "Infants born during the millennium will live to its conclusion and will not be required to make a choice between the devil and Christ until the end." (Walvoord)

c. **Gog and Magog:** These are prophetic enemies of Israel in [Ezekiel 38-39](#), but the battle described in those chapters of Ezekiel seems to be distinct and different from this final battle.

i. John seems to borrow the term and use it as a symbol. Seemingly, the battles described in [Ezekiel 38-39](#) take place before the return of Jesus, perhaps right before or during the tribulation. This final battle clearly takes place at the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

2. ([Rev 20:9-10](#)) A battle ends before it begins.

They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

a. **Surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city:** We don't know if the **saints** referred to here are glorified saints who reign with Jesus, or earth-inhabitants who come to faith in Jesus during the Millennium. Either way, the strategy of this vast Satanic army is clear: to destroy God's people, and the "headquarters" or "capital city" of His administration, Jerusalem (**the beloved city**).

b. **Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them:** We shouldn't even call this a final battle, because there is no battle. The fight is over before it begins. At this point, God finally deals with the devil and his followers forever.

c. **Cast into the lake of fire... they will be tormented day and night forever and ever:** After this aborted battle, Satan is then judged and **tormented** forever – together with the **beast and the false prophet**, who were cast into the lake of fire at the beginning of the thousand years ([Revelation 19:20](#)).

i. The presence of the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire after a thousand years argues against annihilationism. In eternal punishment, a thousand years is just the beginning. It never ends. Commentator

John Trapp thought this eternal aspect of hell so terrible that he called it “another hell in the midst of hell.”

d. **Forever and ever:** Is this really *eternal* punishment? Yes it is; the words mean exactly what they appear to mean. “There would be no way possible in the Greek language to state more emphatically the everlasting punishment of the lost than here in mentioning both day and night and the expression ‘forever and ever,’ literally ‘to the ages of ages.’” (Walvoord)

D. Judgment at the Great White Throne.

1. ([Rev 20:11](#)) An awesome throne.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

a. **I saw a great white throne:** **Great** in status, power and authority; **white** in purity and holiness; and a **throne** in kingly sovereignty.

b. **And Him who sat on it:** Who is this? The Bible tells us that the Judge is Jesus ([John 5:22-27](#)); or more likely, the fullness of the Triune God.

c. **The earth and the heaven fled away:** **Earth** and **heaven** flee from this throne, but **there was found no place for them.** There is absolutely no hiding from this throne. No one can escape the judgment that it represents.

i. Many – even most – Bible scholars believe that Christians will never appear before this **great white throne.** It isn’t because we can *hide* from it – no one can. The idea is that we are spared from this awesome throne of judgment because our sins are *already judged* in Jesus at the cross. We don’t escape God’s judgment; we satisfy it in Jesus.

ii. However, Christians will have to stand before another throne – the *judgment seat of Christ.* [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) says, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

2. ([Rev 20:12-13](#)) The judgment of condemnation.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

a. **Standing before God:** This is not a *trial*, trying to determine what the facts are. The facts are in; here is the sentencing of someone already condemned. “Their standing posture means that they are now about to be sentenced.” (Walvoord)

b. **And the dead were judged according to their works:** If people are *not* listed in the **Book of Life**, then each one is judged **according to his works.** Those who refuse to come to God by faith will, by default, be judged (and condemned) by their works.

i. “The issue is not salvation by works but works as the irrefutable evidence of a man’s actual relationship with God.” (Mounce)

ii. There are degrees of punishment for unbelievers, according to their works ([Matthew 11:20-24](#)). Here is where they are sentenced to their specific eternal punishment.

c. **The sea gave up the dead who were in it:** Why does the *sea* give up its dead? It represents the place of unburied bodies; the emphasis is on the universal character of judgment – *everybody* is included.

3. ([Rev 20:14-15](#)) Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire.

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

a. **Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire:** The last echoes of sin are now eliminated. **Death** is

the result of sin, and it is gone. **Hades** is the result of death, and it is gone. The last vestiges of sin's unlawful domination are done away with.

b. **The lake of fire:** When a person refers to *hell*, **the lake of fire** is what they usually have in mind. The Bible uses three main words to describe where the ungodly may go when they die.

i. *Sheol* is a Hebrew word with the idea of the "place of the dead." It has no direct reference to either torment or eternal happiness. The idea of *Sheol* is often accurately expressed as "the grave."

ii. *Hades* is a Greek word used to describe the "world beyond." In the Bible, it has generally the same idea as *Sheol*. [Revelation 9:1](#) speaks of the *bottomless pit*; this place called the *abyssos* is a prison for certain demons ([Luke 8:31](#); [2 Peter 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#)). Or more generally, it is considered part of the realm of the dead ([Romans 10:7](#) uses it in the sense of *Hades*).

iii. *Gehenna* is a Greek word borrowed from the Hebrew language. In [Mark 9:43-44](#), Jesus speaks of *hell* (*gehenna*). *Hell* is a Greek translation of the Hebrew "Valley of Hinnom," a place outside Jerusalem's walls desecrated by Molech worship and human sacrifice ([2 Chronicles 28:1-3](#); [Jeremiah 32:35](#)). It was also a garbage dump where rubbish and refuse were burned. The smoldering fires and festering worms of the Valley of Hinnom made it a graphic and effective picture of the fate of the damned. This is **the lake of fire** prepared for the devil and his angels ([Matthew 25:41](#)). Men only go to this place prepared for the devil and his angels if they reject God's salvation and condemn themselves.

c. **This is the second death:** "As there is a second and higher life, so there is also a second and deeper death. And as after that life there is no more death, so after that death there is no more life." (Alford)

i. "The devil and the damned have punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without succor, crying without comfort, mischief without measure, torments without end and past imagination." (Trapp)

A NEW HEAVENS, A NEW EARTH, AND A NEW JERUSALEM

A. All things made new.

1. ([Rev 21:1](#)) The new heaven and the new earth.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

i. The new perspective of this last section is glorious. "From the smoke and pain and heat it is a relief to pass into the clear, clean atmosphere of the eternal morning where the breath of heaven is sweet and the vast city of God sparkles like a diamond in the radiance of his presence." (Moffatt)

b. **A new heaven and a new earth:** The idea of a new earth, with a new atmosphere and sky is a familiar theme in the Scriptures. Many of the prophets, both Old and New Testaments, spoke of this **new heaven** and **new earth**.

iv. It's worth remembering that the **new heaven** referred to doesn't mean the *heaven* where God is enthroned. The Bible uses the word *heaven* in three senses. The *first heaven* is the earth's atmosphere, the "blue sky." The *second heaven* is outer space, the "night sky." The *third heaven* is the place where God lives in glory. When the Scriptures speak of a **new heaven**, they mean a new "blue sky" and a new "night sky," not a new heaven where God dwells.

c. **New heaven... new earth:** The ancient Greek word translated **new** here (*kaine*) means "new in character, 'fresh'." It doesn't mean "recent" or "new in time." This isn't just the *next* heaven and the *next* earth; this is the *better* heaven and *better* earth replacing the old (**the first earth had passed away**).

i. Though some disagree (such as Seiss, who argued passionately that this earth will *never* be destroyed) we should understand that this is truly a **new heaven** and a **new earth**, not merely a "remade" heaven and earth. We know this because Jesus said that heaven and earth *shall* pass away, but His Word would live forever ([Luke 21:33](#)). Also, in [Isaiah 65:17](#) God said prophetically that He will create a new heaven and earth, and the ancient Hebrew word for "create" (*bara*) means to "create out of nothing," instead of re-fashioning existing material.

ii. Some take this “newness” as only a spiritual and moral change. But there seems to be a genuine physical transformation in mind: **there was no more sea.**

d. **A new heaven and a new earth:** Is this **new heaven** and **new earth** the Millennial earth shown in [Revelation 20](#), or is it something beyond? It definitely seems to be past the Millennial earth. This is what we think of as “heaven” and “eternity.”

i. “In this chapter we see that the history of time is finished; the history of eternity is about to begin.” (Barnhouse)

ii. “The eternal state is clearly indicated in the absence of sea, for frequent mention of bodies of water occur in millennial passages (cf. [Psalm 72:8](#); [Isaiah 11:9, 11](#); [Ezekiel 47:10, 15, 17, 18, 20](#); [48:28](#); [Zechariah 9:10](#); [14:8](#)). The evidence of [Revelation 21:1](#) is so specific that most commentators do not question that the eternal state is in view.” (Walvoord)

e. **No more sea:** To the Jewish mind, the sea was a place of separation and evil. Already in the Book of Revelation it is shown to be the source of the Satanic beast ([Revelation 13:1](#)) and the place of the dead ([Revelation 20:13](#)).

i. In other passages of Scripture, the **sea** is associated with the heathen ([Isaiah 57:20](#)) and in a more general sense, with the opponents of the Lord that must be conquered ([Psalm 89:9](#)).

2. ([Rev 21:2-4](#)) The New Jerusalem descends from heaven.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

a. **The holy city, New Jerusalem:** This is the Jerusalem of hope ([Hebrews 12:22](#)), the Jerusalem above ([Galatians 4:26](#)), the place of our real citizenship ([Philippians 3:20](#)).

i. The terms **holy** and **new** distinguish the city. Because it is **holy** and **new**, it is different from any earthly city. The name **Jerusalem** gives it continuity with earth, especially with the place of our redemption.

ii. It is significant that this glorious dwelling place of God and His people is described as **the holy city**. *Cities are places with many people, and people interacting with each other. This isn't isolation, but a perfect community of the people of God.*

iii. The Christian concept of heaven as a city – a place of life, activity, interest, and people – is very different from Hindu conception of a blank Nirvana. “The consummation of the Christian hope is supremely social. It is no ‘flight of the alone to the Alone’ but life in the redeemed community of heaven.” (Hunter)

iv. Man has never known a community unmarred by sin. Adam and Eve only knew a limited community, and community in a larger context only came long after the Fall. Here, in the **New Jerusalem**, we have something totally unique: a sinless, pure, community of righteousness, a **holy city**.

v. Problems arise when believers expect this kind of community *now*, or fail to realize that it *only comes down out of heaven*. This city is not and *never can be* the achievement of man, but only a gift from God.

b. **Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband:** John used the most striking, beautiful image he could think of. The most beautiful thing a man will ever see is his bride coming down the aisle, ready to meet him. John said that this is how beautiful the New Jerusalem will be.

c. **The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them:** Moses’ tabernacle represented the dwelling place of God on earth. That was past the *representation* of the dwelling place of God; this **tabernacle of God** is the reality of His presence.

i. **He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people:** This succinctly states essence of *God's desire* and *man's purpose*. Simply, God's desire is to live in close fellowship with man, and man's purpose is to be

a people unto God.

ii. *This* is the greatest glory of heaven, and the ultimate restoration of what was lost in the Fall. “I do not think the glory of Eden lay in its grassy walks, or in the boughs bending with luscious fruit-but its glory lay in this, that the ‘Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.’ Here was Adam’s highest privilege, that he had companionship with the Most High.” (Spurgeon)

d. **The former things have passed away:** The New Jerusalem is distinguished by what it does *not* have – no tears, no sorrow, no death or pain. Later it will be shown that the New Jerusalem has no temple, no sacrifice, no sun, no moon, no darkness, no sin, and no abomination.

i. “Man comes into the world with a cry; and goes out of it with a groan, and all between is more or less intoned with helpless wailing... But the Halleluias of the renewed world will drown out the voice of woe forever.” (Seiss)

e. **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes:** “*Every tear,*’ for they be many; – tears of bereaved affection, such as Mary, and Martha, and the widow of Nain wept; – tears of sympathy and mercy, such as Jeremiah and Jesus wept over the sins and the calamities of Jerusalem; – tears of persecuted innocence, tears of contrition and penitence for faults and crimes against the goodness and majesty of heaven; – tears of disappointment and neglect; – tears of yearning for what cannot now be ours; – these, and whatever others ever course the cheeks of mortals, shall then be dried forever.” (Seiss)

i. But the idea of tears in heaven should never be used as a tool of guilt-manipulation on this earth. “There is no just ground for imagining from this text that the saints will shed tears in heaven concerning the failures of their former life on earth. The emphasis here is on the comfort of God, not on the remorse of the saints.” (Walvoord)

3. ([Rev 21:5](#)) All things new.

Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

a. **He who sat on the throne said:** This is an authoritative announcement, coming from the throne of God itself. This is one of the few times in Revelation where we clearly see God speaking directly from His throne.

b. **Behold, I make all things new:** This statement is in the present tense, “*I am making everything new.*” This is the consummation of God’s work of renewal and redemption, having *begun* here and now in our present time.

i. Paul saw this transformation at work on *this side* of eternity: *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* ([2 Corinthians 4:16, 5:17](#))

c. **All things new:** This is a brief glance at the thinking behind God’s eternal plan – to allow sin and its destruction in order to do a greater work of making **all things new**. At this point in His plan of the ages, the plan is complete. **All things** are **new**.

i. Our instinct is to romantically consider innocence as man’s perfect state, and wish Adam would have never done what he did. But we fail to realize that redeemed man is greater than innocent man, that we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. God’s perfect state is one of redemption, not innocence.

ii. When God finally completes this work of making **all things new**, they will *stay new*. “Presumably this means not only that everything will be made new, but also that everything will stay then new. The entropy law will be ‘repealed.’ Nothing will wear out or decay, and no one will age or atrophy anymore.” (H. Morris)

d. **Write, for these words are true and faithful:** John was probably so astounded by these words that he forgot to **write** – and must be told to do so.

4. ([Rev 21:6-8](#)) The invitation and a warning.

And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of

the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

a. **It is done!** God’s eternal purpose in Jesus is now accomplished. [Ephesians 1:10](#) has been fulfilled: *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him.* At this point, all things have been resolved or summed up in Jesus – **it is done!**

b. **I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts:** Drinking and thirst are common pictures of God’s supply and man’s spiritual need. Drinking is an action, but an action of receiving – like faith, it is *doing* something, but it is not a merit-earning work in itself.

i. “What does a thirsty man do to get rid of his thirst? He drinks. Perhaps there is no better representation of faith in all the Word of God than that. To drink is to receive-to take in the refreshing draught-and that is all. A man’s face may be unwashed, but yet he can drink; he may be a very unworthy character, but yet a draught of water will remove his thirst. Drinking is such a remarkably easy thing, it is even more simple than eating.” (Spurgeon)

c. **He who overcomes shall inherit all things:** Those who overcome (by faith in Jesus, as in [1 John 5:5](#)) enjoy a special relationship with God (**I will be his God and he shall be My son**).

d. **But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable... have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone:** Those who reject Jesus and make themselves apostate are specifically prohibited from entering the New Jerusalem.

i. **Cowardly:** Is cowardice enough to send a person to hell? “John is not speaking of natural timidity, but of that cowardice which in the last resort chooses self and safety before Christ.” (L. Morris) John Trapp spoke of these “Cowardly recreants, white-livered milk-sops, that pull in their horns for every pile of grass that toucheth them, that are afraid of every new step.”

B. The nature of the New Jerusalem.

1. ([Rev 21:9-10](#)) An angel will show John the city in greater detail.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

a. **I will show you the bride... showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem:** Passages like this make some wonder if the New Jerusalem is a literal *place* at all. Some suggest that it is really just an exotic symbol of the Church, the Bride of Christ.

b. **I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife:** This heavenly city is literal, but it is called **the bride, the Lamb’s wife** because it is the place where all God’s people are gathered. In this sense the New Jerusalem is certainly *like* the bride; but this association doesn’t diminish the reality behind the image. The city is associated with the bride to awe us with a sense of its beauty.

2. ([Rev 21:11-14](#)) The city’s brilliance, wall, gates and foundation.

Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

a. **Her light was like a most precious stone:** John was first impressed by the *glory* of this city. She shared in the **glory of God**, and it was expressed in the radiant light shining from her.

b. **She had a great and high wall:** The wall was not needed for defense, because there were no more enemies. But the **great and high wall** gave the city definition (this is no cosmic nirvana) and shows that some will be excluded from the city (only the righteous can enter).

c. **Twelve gates... and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:** The names of the tribes on the gates communicate the unity and heritage that the people of God have with Israel. God will never forget the tribes of Israel, even unto eternity.

i. **Three gates on the east, three gates on the north:** Some have thought the arrangement of gates looks back to the camp layout used during the Exodus ([Numbers 2](#)).

d. **The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb:** The foundations are an eternal testimony to the apostles, and their permanent place in God's plan. If it isn't built on the foundation of the apostles, it's isn't the right place for God's people.

i. The New Jerusalem and the church are founded upon the apostles ([Ephesians 2:20](#)).

3. ([Rev 21:15-17](#)) The dimensions of the city.

And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

a. **The city is laid out as a square:** The New Jerusalem's length, height and width are equal. This means that it is either a cube or a pyramid. A cube is reminiscent of the Holy Place of the tabernacle, suggesting that the entire city is the Holy Place.

b. **He measured the city with the reed:** The size of the New Jerusalem is enormous; **twelve thousand furlongs** equals 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers). This is the same distance from Maine to Florida; the square footage would approximate the size of the moon.

i. "A city of this size is too large for the imagination to take in. John is certainly conveying the idea of splendour. And, more importantly, that of room for all." (L. Morris)

ii. Henry Morris, guessing that there will have been 100 billion people in the human race through history, and that 20% of them will be saved, calculated that each person would have a "block" with about 75 acres on each face to call their own. This is highly speculative, but illustrates the point that there is plenty of room in the New Jerusalem.

c. **According to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel:** In this case, the cubit measure of a man is the same as an angel's measure of a cubit.

4. ([Rev 21:18-21](#)) The beauty of its structure.

The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

a. **The construction of its wall was of jasper:** When we read of **jasper** and **pure gold** and **all kinds of precious stones**, we should take these as literal representations; yet they express realities of another world. We can gain a brief glimpse of what John saw, but we can't even begin to see it in fullness until we see it with our own eyes.

i. John's use of riches in his description "is his way of bringing out the very great value of what God has for His people." (L. Morris)

b. **Jasper... sapphire... chalcedony:** The precise identification of these gemstones in modern terms is difficult,

but the impression is of unending, staggering beauty.

i. "The symbolism is not meant to give the impression of wealth and luxury, but to point to the glory and holiness of God." (Johnson)

ii. If there is any Biblical reference point for this assortment of gemstones, it is probably the High Priest's breastplate ([Exodus 28:15-21](#)).

c. **Like clear glass... like transparent glass:** "The constant mention of transparency indicates that the city is designed to transmit the glory of God in the form of light without hindrance." (Walvoord)

i. If the dimensions and descriptions seem confusing or impossible, there are two main principles to keep in mind. First, we must understand the *ideas* communicated in the details (glory, beauty, splendor, and so forth). Second, we must understand that this is the city *whose architect and maker is God* ([Hebrews 11:10](#)). We should expect it to be beyond our comprehension.

C. The temple of the New Jerusalem.

1. ([Rev 21:22-23](#)) God is all in the New Jerusalem.

But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

a. **But I saw no temple in it:** In the ancient world, it was unthinkable to have a great city without many different temples. It's like saying today, "I saw a great city but I saw no bank in it" or "I saw a great city but I saw no shopping mall in it." Nevertheless, in this city there was **no temple in it**.

b. **For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple:** Here, --the temple was not removed, but expanded. Every-thing and every place is holy and the dwelling place of God.

i. Before Jesus the temple was a prophecy. In the Christian era God's people are His temple. In the Millennium the temple will be a memorial. Here the temple is everywhere.

ii. "The inhabitants need no place of worship or sacrifice, the object of all worship being present, and the great sacrifice Himself being there." (Alford)

c. **No temple... no need of the sun or of the moon:** This reminds us that heaven will be a place of *pure* worship. The things we use to help us worship, but often end up *distracting* us in worship (such as buildings, music systems, customs, and so forth) will no longer be an issue. Our focus will be totally on the Person we worship, **the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb**.

i. In heaven, none of our joy, beauty, or knowledge will be based on *created things*, but only on the *Creator*. By faith, you can have it that way *now*. You can decide to trust in God so completely that your *joy*, what you consider *beauty*, and your foundation of *knowledge* are all based on Jesus, and not on anything created.

d. **The Lamb is its light:** Light speaks of *joy*, for in the Scriptures light and joy go together. Light speaks of *beauty*, because without light there is no beauty. Light speaks of *knowledge* and in heaven we will all know Him as He knows us.

2. ([Rev 21:24-27](#)) Access into the city.

And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

a. **The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it:** What about these **kings of the earth**? Who are they? This is difficult to understand, and different commentators have different suggestions.

i. "How encouraging to note that not all were destroyed when the nations came to do battle against Jerusalem and the Lord Himself. There will also be 'kings of the earth' who will be a part of the eternal state." (Hocking)

ii. “Among the mysteries of this new heaven and earth this is set forth to us: that, besides the glorified church, there shall still be dwelling on the renewed earth nations, organized by kings, and [[Rev. 22:2](#)] saved by means of the influences of the heavenly city.” (Alford)

b. **There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles:** Does this mean that such people will threaten the city? It isn’t necessary to say that this is the idea, because all sinners and death have been cast into the Lake of Fire ([Revelation 20:11-15](#)). Instead, “The exhortation warns present readers that the only way to participate in the future city is to turn one’s loyalties to the Lamb now.” (Johnson)

COME, LORD JESUS

A. The interior of the New Jerusalem.

1. ([Rev 22:1](#)) A river flowing from the throne of God.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

a. **A pure river of water of life:** Through the Old Testament, prophets used the picture of a river as a powerful expression of richness, provision, and peace ([Isaiah 48:18](#), [Zechariah 14:8](#), [Ezekiel 47:1-9](#)).

i. Or, as expressed by the Psalmist in [Psalm 46:4-5](#): *There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.*

ii. “One of the gladdest things on earth is water. There is nothing in all the world so precious to the eye and the imagination of the inhabitant of the dry, burning and thirsty East, as a plentiful supply of bright, pure, and living water.” (Seiss)

iii. Poole wrote that this idea of this river was “To let us know, that in heaven there shall be no want of any thing that can make the saints happy.”

b. **Clear as crystal:** God’s provision in the New Jerusalem is described with pure, absolutely unpolluted waters. “Its waters are literal waters, of a nature and quality answering to that of the golden city to which they belong. Man on earth never knew such waters, as men on earth never knew such a city; but the city is a sublime reality.” (Seiss)

c. **From the throne of God and of the Lamb:** This river of provision comes right from God’s throne. Because it comes from God, it cannot be anything other than pure and abundant.

i. Ezekiel saw a glorious river ([Ezekiel 47](#)) flow down from the temple in Jerusalem and into the sea, but that river belongs to the millennial earth. It is perhaps the final preview of this heavenly river. This is a better river with better trees.

2. ([Rev 22:2](#)) The tree of life.

In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

a. **The tree of life:** The Bible begins with a tree of life ([Genesis 3:22-24](#)) which man was not allowed to eat from after the sin at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now we see **the tree of life** again.

i. **In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river:** It’s a little hard to picture this heavenly landscaping. John may be describing a large street with a river flowing down the middle, and a large tree – or series of trees – that grows with roots on either side of the river.

ii. This is how John Walvoord sees it: “The visual picture presented is that the river of life flows down through the middle of the city, and the tree is large enough to span the river, so that the river is in the midst of the street, and the tree is on both sides of the river.”

iii. Others see that the word **tree** as a collective reference, speaks of rows of trees that stand on either side of the river. “The picture presented to the mind’s eye would appear to be that of a wide street, with a river flow-

ing down the center, like some of the broader canals of Holland, with trees growing on either side, all of them of the same kind, all called the tree of life. I do not know how we can make the figure out in any other way." (Spurgeon)

iv. Seeing the **tree of life** again points to a restoration of all things. "Now at last, almost at the end of the great drama of the Bible, man may return and legitimately enjoy the blessing which he was banished for illegitimately desiring." (Preston/Hanson)

b. **Each tree yielding its fruit every month:** From all indications, this describes the world of the new heaven and the new earth, yet we are given a *time indicator*. Apparently, heaven will still mark time, but not be subject to it in the same way we are on this side of eternity.

i. Some people wonder if we will eat in heaven. The best answer is that we can eat, but will not have to. In His resurrection body, Jesus enjoyed food ([Luke 24:41-43](#), [John 21:12-14](#)). Angels ate with Abraham ([Genesis 18:6-8](#)). The great heavenly reunion between Jesus and His people is described as a marriage supper ([Revelation 19:9](#)). Even though man fell by what he ate, God will still allow us to eat in heaven.

ii. "Like the golden table of showbread which ever stood in the ancient Tabernacle and Temple for the priests to eat, so the Tree of Life stands in all the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, with its monthly fruit for the immortal king-priests of heaven." (Seiss)

c. **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations:** Why do the **nations** need **healing**? In the ancient Greek language, the word for **healing** can also mean "health-giving," and this may be the sense here.

i. "The word for 'healing' is *therapeian*, from which the English word *therapeutic* is derived, almost directly transliterated from the Greek. Rather than meaning 'healing,' it should be understood as 'health-giving,' as the word in its root meaning has the idea of serving or ministering." (Walvoord)

d. **Street... river... tree... fruit... leaves:** Are these pictures of heaven literal or symbolic? It may be that you can't describe another dimension like heaven without using symbols, but they are symbols *connected* to their reality. What John saw may or may not be exactly like a river on earth, but when we see it we will also say, "That looks like a river."

i. Even though this great chapter of the Bible tells us of heaven, we should think deeply about it and take in now what we can. "We do not suppose that a man is shooting at a target if he does not look that way; nor can we imagine that a man's ambition is fixed on heaven if he has no heavenward thoughts or aspirations." (Spurgeon)

3. ([Rev 22:3-5](#)) What it will be like and what the saints will do.

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

a. **There shall be no more curse:** In heaven, the curse is gone. Since the fall, man and creation have lived with the effect of the curse described in [Genesis 3:16-19](#): sorrow and pain in childbirth for women, friction between the sexes, the necessity of hard and often futile work for man's sustenance, and most of all *death*.

i. These aspects of the **curse** will even be present during the Millennium, though they will be greatly mitigated by the perfect rule of Jesus. [Isaiah 65:20](#) shows us that it is still possible for a sinner to be accursed in the millennial earth. But in the new heaven and new earth they are done away with forever. Instead of the **curse, the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it**. That's quite an exchange.

ii. **The throne of God and of the Lamb:** "Henceforth, eternal praises to his name, the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. It is a throne of righteousness, but no less a throne of grace. There, on the throne of the Almighty, mercy reigns. According to the merit of the sacrifice and the virtue of the atonement all the statutes and decrees of the kingdom of heaven are issued. The altar and the throne have become identical. From that throne no fiery bolt can ever again be hurled against the believer, for it is the throne of the Lamb as well as the throne of God." (Spurgeon)

b. **His servants shall serve Him:** Heaven will be a place of work and service for God's people. However, this is a picture of the pure blessedness of service rather than arduous, curse-stained toil.

i. "Heaven is not a place of indolent leisure, but a place where service is done, centering on God." (L. Morris)

c. **They shall see His face:** Heaven will be a place where God's people **see His face**, a place of intimate, face to face fellowship with God. Moses was denied the privilege of seeing God face to face ([Exodus 33:20-23](#)), but everyone in heaven **shall see His face**.

i. **They shall see His face:** "By which I understand two things: first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand him, his work, his love, his all in all, as they never understood him before." (Spurgeon)

ii. Because of Jesus, we can know something of the face of God right now: *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* ([2 Corinthians 4:6](#)).

iii. Yet, Paul also anticipated a greater fulfillment of our seeing the face of God: *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I am also known* ([1 Corinthians 13:12](#)). In that day there will be nothing that obscures our vision of Jesus:

- We will see Jesus clearly because sin is done away with
- We will see Jesus clearly because care and worry are gone
- We will see Jesus clearly because idols are done away with

iv. This will be the greatest glory of heaven: to know God, to know Jesus, more intimately and wonderfully than we ever could on earth. "It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus." (Spurgeon)

v. "To look into the face of Christ signifies to be well acquainted with his person, his office, his character, his work. So the saints in heaven shall have more knowledge of Christ than the most advanced below. As one has said, the babe in Christ admitted to heaven discovers more of Christ in a single hour than is known by all the divines of the assemblies of the church on earth." (Spurgeon)

d. **His name shall be on their foreheads:** Heaven will be a place where God's people will forever be identified with their God, and there will never be any doubt that they belong to Him.

e. **There shall be no more night there:** Heaven will be a place where the darkness of this age will be forever gone. The light is not artificial, even from the sun – God Himself is the light.

f. **They shall reign forever and ever:** Heaven will be a place where God's people enjoy an eternal reign, in contrast to the limited duration of the Millennium. It will never end.

i. "As the Bible opens with the story of 'Paradise Lost,' so it here closes with the story of 'Paradise Regained.'" (Erdman) We see the return of Paradise in the ideas of a river, a tree of life, revocation of the curse, intimacy restored, and reigning resumed. It is a perfect consummation:

No more curse Perfect *Restoration*

Throne in their midst Perfect *Administration*

Servants shall serve Perfect *Subordination*

Shall see His face Perfect *Transformation*

Name on foreheads Perfect *Identification*

God is the light Perfect *Illumination*

Reigning forever Perfect *Exultation*