

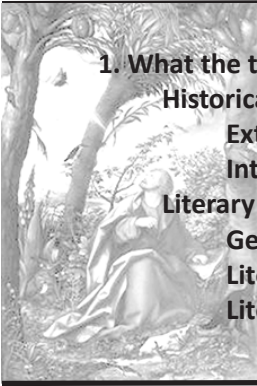


# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 50

Text: Rev. 21:9-21

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1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀρνίου ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἃ δεῖ γίνεσθαι διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ εἰρηνοφρονῆ, 2 καὶ μαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀρνίου ὅσα εἶδεν. 3 Πνεῦμα καὶ νύμφη λέγουσιν καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες λέγουσιν ἄκουε, καὶ οἱ διψῶντες ἔρχεσθε ἕρθετε, καὶ ἢ γενναίως ἔρχεσθε.

### QUICK LINKS

#### Exegesis of the Text:

- A. [What John saw](#), vv. 9-14
- B. [New Jerusalem: size & materials](#), vv. 15-21

#### 1. What the text meant.

##### Historical Aspects:

External History

Internal History

##### Literary Aspects:

Genre

Literary Setting

Literary Structure

#### 2. What the text means.

# The New Jerusalem, pt. 1

### Greek NT

### La Biblia de las Américas

### NRSV

### NLT

9 Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τῶν γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων· δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοὶ τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου. 10 καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλήμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ 11 ἔχουσαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ φωστὴρ αὐτῆς ὅμοιος λίθῳ τιμιωτάτῳ ὡς λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι κρυσταλλίζοντι. 12 ἔχουσα τεῖχος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, ἔχουσα πυλῶνας δώδεκα καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν ἀγγέλους δώδεκα καὶ ὀνόματα ἐπιγεγραμμένα, ἃ ἔστιν [τὰ ὀνόματα] τῶν δώδεκα φυλῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ· 13 ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν πυλῶνες τρεῖς. 14 καὶ τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως ἔχων θεμελίους δώδεκα καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα ὀνόματα τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῦ ἀρνίου.

9 Y vino uno de los siete ángeles que tenían las siete copas llenas de las últimas siete plagas, y habló conmigo, diciendo: Ven, te mostraré la novia, la esposa del Cordero. 10 Y me llevó en el Espíritu a un monte grande y alto, y me mostró la ciudad santa, Jerusalén, que descendía del cielo, de Dios, 11 y tenía la gloria de Dios. Su fulgor era semejante al de una piedra muy preciosa, como una piedra de jaspe cristalino. 12 Tenía un muro grande y alto con doce puertas, y en las puertas doce ángeles; y en ellas había nombres escritos, que son los de las doce tribus de los hijos de Israel. 13 Había tres puertas al este, tres puertas al norte, tres puertas al sur y tres puertas al oeste. 14 El muro de la ciudad tenía doce cimientos, y en ellos estaban los doce nombres de los doce apóstoles del Cordero.

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 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 has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

9 Then one of the seven angels who held the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 So he took me in spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. 11 It was filled with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious gem, crystal clear like jasper. 12 Its walls were broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. 13 There were three gates on each side -- east, north, south, and west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 Καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶχεν μέτρον κάλαμον χρυσοῦν, ἵνα μετρήσῃ τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς πυλῶνας

15 Y el que hablaba conmigo tenía una vara de medir de oro, para medir la ciudad, sus puertas y su muro. 16 Y la ciudad está asentada en forma de cuadro, y su longitud es igual que su anchura. Y midió la ciudad con la vara, doce mil estadios; y su longitud, anchura y altura son

15 The angel who talked to 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, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also mea-

15 The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16 When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, it was in the form of a cube, for its length and width

αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς. 16 καὶ ἡ πόλις τετράγωνος κεῖται καὶ τὸ μῆκος αὐτῆς ὅσον [καὶ] τὸ πλάτος. καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὴν πόλιν τῷ καλάμῳ ἐπὶ σταδίων δώδεκα χιλιάδων, τὸ μῆκος καὶ τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτῆς ἴσα ἐστίν. 17 καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τεσσάρων πηχῶν μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου. 18 καὶ ἡ ἐνδῶμησις τοῦ τείχους αὐτῆς ἴασπις καὶ ἡ πόλις χρυσίον καθαρὸν ὅμοιον ὑάλῳ καθαρῷ. 19 οἱ θεμέλιοι τοῦ τείχους τῆς πόλεως παντὶ λίθῳ τιμῷ κεκοσμημένοι· ὁ θεμέλιος ὁ πρῶτος ἴασπις, ὁ δεύτερος σάπφειρος, ὁ τρίτος χαλκηδῶν, ὁ τέταρτος σμάραγδος, 20 ὁ πέμπτος σαρδόνυξ, ὁ ἕκτος σάρδιον, ὁ ἕβδομος χρυσόλιθος, ὁ ὄγδοος βήρυλλος, ὁ ἕνατος τοπάζιον, ὁ δέκατος χρυσόπρασος, ὁ ἐνδέκατος ὑάκινθος, ὁ δωδέκατος ἀμέθυστος, 21 καὶ οἱ δώδεκα πυλώνες δώδεκα μαργαρίται, ἀνὰ εἰς ἕκαστος τῶν πυλώνων ἦν ἕξ ἐνὸς μαργαρίτου. καὶ ἡ πλατεῖα τῆς πόλεως χρυσίον καθαρὸν ὡς ὕαλος διαυγῆς.

iguales. 17 Y midió su muro, ciento cuarenta y cuatro codos, según medida humana, que es también de ángel. 18 El material del muro era jaspe, y la ciudad era de oro puro semejante al cristal puro. 19 Los cimientos del muro de la ciudad estaban adornados con toda clase de piedras preciosas: el primer cimiento, jaspe; el segundo, zafiro; el tercero, ágata; el cuarto, esmeralda; 20 el quinto, sardónice; el sexto, sardio; el séptimo, crisólito; el octavo, berilo; el noveno, topacio; el décimo, crisopraso; el undécimo, jacinto; y el duodécimo, amatista. 21 Las doce puertas eran doce perlas; cada una de las puertas era de una sola perla; y la calle de la ciudad era de oro puro, como cristal transparente.

sured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18 The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every 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 are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

and height were each 1,400 miles. 17 Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (the angel used a standard human measure). 18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. 19 The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve gems: 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 The twelve gates were made of pearls -- each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.



## INTRODUCTION

In 21:2, John saw the new Jerusalem descending out of the sky. He provides only minimum descriptive comment about it in v. 2 while the Voice from the throne in vv. 3-4 interprets the meaning of the new Jerusalem in terms of the ancient tabernacle in the exodus by the Israelites. But in 21:9-22:7 John comes back to elaborate the description of the new Jerusalem against the background of the religious significance of the tabernacle in 21:2-4.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This is one of the numerous places in Revelation that signal a much shorter original draft of Revelation into which John subsequently added additional elements in order to provide a more complete depiction of what he had seen in the initial apocalyptic vision asserted in chapter one. Thus 22:9-22:5 stands as an editorial expansion of the initial image described in 21:2-4. A continuous reading from 21:1-8, 22:6-7 flows in an unbroken pattern.

Those those interested in exploring this aspect of the compositional history of the text of Revelation, commentaries dealing with Source Critical issues for Revelation will provide the very complex analysis of the Greek text and how to identify these signals

Interpretatively 22:9-22:7 must be understood in its descriptive details within the framework of the more spiritual significance perspective given by John in 21:2-4. John's description in 21:9-22:7 centers on an apoc- of later additions to the original rough draft. One caution: a fairly good knowledge of biblical Greek is necessary to understand these signals clearly. Most every translation into modern languages wash the signals completely out of the translation of the text.

This kind of editorial expansion of ancient Greek and Latin writings was very common and widely expected by most all readers. Normally important documents underwent numerous revisions before being put in finalized form for release to their intended readers. Some of the Latin and Greek rhetoricians of this period provide detailed descriptions of step-by-step procedures for doing these revisions.

I haven't included these discussions in this commentary due to their very complex nature and the necessity of a fairly thorough knowledge of Greek in order to understand how these assessments are made. David Aune's three volume set on Revelation in the *Word Commentary* series provides detailed analysis from an evangelical Protestant perspective.

alyptic city that combines aspects of the ancient historical cities of Jerusalem and Babylonia with a modified depiction of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1-2. In the background stands Ezekiel's description of the new Jerusalem in his vision found in chapter 48. Also close parallels of several elements in 21:9-22:7 are found in 17:1-19:10. These we will examine in the exegesis section.

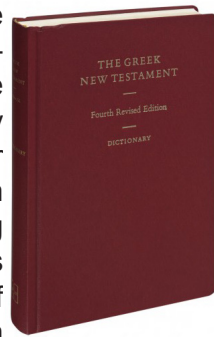
What we encounter here is a dramatic approach to affirming in a highly visual manner just how deeply God cares for and provides for His people.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

Again the background aspects will play a helpful role in the interpretive process. And thus we need to examine them in order to more correctly interpret 21:9-21.

#### Historical Aspects:

**External History.** In the Transmission History of vv. 9-21 variations of wording inevitably surface with the hand copying of the text by hundreds of different individuals prior to the time of the printing press. Yet in comparing the many now still existing manuscripts containing these verses only one surfaces that the editors of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed.) considered important enough to possibly impact the translation of the passage.



**21:12 [τὰ ὀνόματα], [the names], {C}.**<sup>3</sup> The insertion or possibly the omission of τὰ ὀνόματα, the names, is a stylistic issue that has no impact on the meaning of the larger statement.<sup>4</sup> Thus the splitting of evidence

<sup>2</sup>Because of the extra length of 21:9-22:7, the study will be divided into two parts in order to cover the four subunits of text more adequate. 21:9-21 will be the focus of this study, # 50 in the series, and 21:22-22:7 will follow in study # 51.

<sup>3</sup>{C} τὰ ὀνόματα A 1611 1841 1854 2030 (2050 τὰ ὀνόματα after Ἰσραήλ) 2053 2329 2377 // ὀνόματα 1006 2062 Byz [046] // omit κ P 051 205 209 arm Andrew

[Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).

<sup>4</sup>“The variant reading is not significant for translation since the difference is one of style and not of meaning. A literal translation reads ‘and at the gates twelve angels, and the names inscribed, which are [the names] of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.’ Possibly copyists considered the words τὰ ὀνόματα unnecessary in the context, and therefore omitted them. Or copyists may have thought that the words were needed for the sense and therefore added them. To indicate uncertainty regarding the original text, the words τὰ ὀνόματα are put in brackets.” [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 550.]

both externally and internally leaves some uncertainty about its exclusion or inclusion. Therefore brackets [–] are placed around τὰ ὀνόματα in order to indicate the uncertainty about the wording of the text.

As we have consistently noted, this one place is not the only spot where variations of wording surface in these verses. The Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (28th rev. ed) Text Apparatus lists some 35 places where text variation occurs in vv. 9-21.<sup>5</sup> Close ex-



- <sup>5</sup>9  
 ° 051s. 1006 M<sup>A</sup> (ἐκ is omitted)  
 \* τας (– 046 M<sup>K</sup>) γεμουσας 046. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2377 M<sup>K</sup> latt sy (τῶν γεμόντων is replaced)  
 °1 046 M<sup>K</sup> (τῶν before ἐπτά is omitted)  
 \* 1 2 5 6 3 4 051s M<sup>A</sup> (variation in sequence of τὴν νόμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου)  
 | 3 4 1 2 5 6 046. 2050 M<sup>K</sup>  
 | 3–6 2053. 2062  
 | txt κ A P 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2329. 2377 lat sy  
 co; Cyp  
 10  
 ° 1854. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> (καὶ before ὑψηλόν is omitted)  
 \* μεγαλην και 051s. 1854. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> (before ἀγίαν is inserted μεγάλην και)  
 \* εκ 046. 2053. 2062 M<sup>K</sup> (ἀπό is replaced)  
 11  
 \* A 2062 (ἔχουσιν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ is omitted)  
 \* και 2329 M<sup>A</sup> t vg<sup>cl</sup> sy<sup>ph</sup>; Prim (καὶ is inserted before ὁ φωστῆρ)  
 \*1 051s. 2050 M<sup>A</sup> t (sy<sup>ph</sup>) (ὡς λίθω is omitted)  
 12  
 \* A 051s\*. 2030. 2050. 2377 t (καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν ἀγγέλους δώδεκα is omitted)  
 \* αυτων κ sy<sup>ph</sup> (after καὶ ὀνόματα is inserted αὐτῶν)  
 \* γεγραμμενα κ (ἐπιγεγραμμένα is replaced)  
 \* ονοματα 046. 1006. 2062 M<sup>K</sup> (τὰ ὀνόματα is replaced or omitted)  
 | – κ P 051s M<sup>A</sup> t  
 | txt A 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. (2050). 2053. 2329. 2377  
 \* των υιων Ισραηλ P 051s. 2050 (υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ is replaced)  
 | του Ισραηλ 1006. 1854 M<sup>A</sup>  
 | Ισραηλ 2030. 2062. 2377 sy  
 | των Ισραηλιτων 1611  
 | txt κ A 046. 1841. 2053. 2329 M<sup>K</sup>  
 13  
 \* ανατολων 046 M<sup>K</sup> (ἀνατολῆς is replaced)  
 ° 051s. 1611. 2329 M<sup>A</sup> t vgmss; Prim Bea (καὶ after τρεῖς is omitted)  
 °1 051s. 1611. 2329 M<sup>A</sup> t vgmss; Prim Bea (καὶ after second τρεῖς is omitted)  
 \* δυσμων πυλωνες τρεις και απο νοτου A vg<sup>ms</sup> sa (νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς και ἀπὸ δυσμῶν is resequenced)  
 °2 051s M<sup>A</sup> t vgmss; Prim Bea (καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν is omitted)  
 14  
 \* εχον κ2 051s. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2050. 2053. 2062 M  
 Page 1024

amination of each of the places reveals a variety of difficulties that copyists some centuries later had in understanding the details of the description of the new Jerusalem, since the dimensions etc. so hugely exceeded any known city of that day and time. This depiction was highly unusual and growing unfamiliarity with the OT visionary texts by many of the copyists led to numerous isolated efforts to clarify and/or correct perceived depictions. But the vast majority do not significantly alter the meaning of the text.

We can exegete the adopted reading with full confidence that it best represents the original wording of what was first written.

**Internal History.** Central to this text is the depiction of Jerusalem as a new spiritual dwelling place<sup>6</sup>

(ἔχων is replaced or omitted)

| – κ\*

| txt A P 046. 1006. 2329. 2377

15

° M<sup>A</sup> ar bo (μέτρον is omitted)

\* 046. 051s. 1854. 2377 M<sup>K</sup> (καὶ τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς is omitted)

16

\* ὄσον κ P 046. 051s. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329. 2377 M  
gig sy<sup>ph</sup> (ὄσον καὶ is replaced)

| txt A 1006. 1611. 1841. 2050 lat syh

\* εν P 051s. 2030. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> (ἐν is inserted before τῶ καλάμῳ)

\* σταδίους (κ²) A<sup>vid</sup> P 046. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030.  
2050. 2329. 2377 M<sup>K</sup> t (σταδίων is replaced)

| txt κ\* 051s. 2053vid. 2062 M<sup>A</sup>

\* δεκαδυο (+ και 046) χιλιάδων δωδεκα 046. 1854 M<sup>K</sup> (δῶδεκα  
χιλιάδων is replaced)

\* αωτης 2050 (t) sy<sup>ph</sup> (after τὸ πλάτος is καὶ inserted)

\* 2329 vg<sup>mss</sup> (καὶ τὸ ὕψος is omitted)

17

° 046. 1854 M<sup>K</sup> (ἐμέτρησεν is omitted)

18

\* ην η (- κ\*) κ\* 046. 051s. 1006. 1841. 1854. 2050. 2329 M  
lat (before ἡ ἐνδύμησις is ἦν inserted)

| txt κ2 A P 1611. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2377 gig t

\* ομοια υαλω καθαρω 051s M<sup>A</sup> ar t; Prim (ὄμοιον ὑάλω  
καθαρῶ is replaced)

| – 2030. 2377 vg<sup>ms</sup> bo<sup>ms</sup>

19

\* και κ\* 051s. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2377 M<sup>A</sup> t vg<sup>cl</sup> sy<sup>ph,h\*\*</sup> bo  
(before οἱ θεμέλιοι is καὶ inserted)

20

\* σαρδιος 051s M<sup>A</sup> (ar t); Prim (σάρδιον is replaced)

\* αμεθυσος κ² 1006. 1841. 1854. 2050. 2344 M (ἀμέθυστος,  
is replaced)

| αμεθυστινος κ\* 2053. 2062

| txt A P 046. 1611. 2030. 2329. 2377

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 785–786.]

<sup>6</sup>“The concept of the New Jerusalem derives from the OT exilic and postexilic prophetic expectation of the restoration of Jerusalem, the return of God to his Temple, and his acknowledgment by all the nations. The restoration of Jerusalem is the focus of the promises and the salvation of God (Isa 2:1–5; 49:14–18; 52; 54; 60–62; 65:17–25; Jer 31:38–40; Mic 4:1–4; Zechariah 14). The



**JER.07.** Excavations at SW Corner of Temple Mount in Jerusalem (El-Aqsa Mosque in upper right corner). Remains of “Robinson’s Arch” can still be seen (left). In the foreground are the remains of Umayyad structures beneath which were found remains of the Herodian plaza leading up to the temple. See Fig. TEM.03. (Photograph by Z. Radovan, by permission, Biblical Archaeology Society Jerusalem Archaeology Slide Set.)

[Philip J. King, “Jerusalem (Place),” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 750.]

that replaces the historical city of Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> One should note the many variations of spelling in both the Hebrew and the Greek.<sup>8</sup> The historical city has a

actual restoration in the Persian Period was disillusioning, and in later Jewish literature the expectation of Jerusalem restored was replaced by Jerusalem supernaturally transformed by God (Tob 13:8–18; T. Dan. 5:12–13; Sib. Or. 5.420–27; 1 Enoch 90:28–29) or a Jerusalem from heaven which would replace the earthly Jerusalem altogether (2 Esdr 7:26; 10:25–28; 13:36; 2 Bar. 4; 32:1–4). The idea of a Jerusalem in heaven was appropriated by the NT (Gal 4:26–27; Heb 11:10; 12:22; 13:14; cf. Phil 3:20).” [Duane F. Watson, “New Jerusalem,” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1095.]

<sup>7</sup>“Despite Jerusalem’s centrality in biblical history, the city was little known in modern times until the 19th century. As a consequence of Ibrahim Pasha’s conquest of Jerusalem, Western travelers found it easier to visit Jerusalem with safety. Much of the credit for the rediscovery of Palestine, especially Jerusalem, in the 19th century belongs to the American biblical scholar, E. Robinson (1856). As the first scientific explorer of Palestine, he inaugurated a new era in the geographical study of the Holy Land. Robinson is associated especially with three monuments in Jerusalem: he was the first person in modern times to explore Hezekiah’s tunnel; he discovered the remains of Jerusalem’s reputed third wall, built but not completed by Herod Agrippa I; and he found the spring of an arch, bearing his name today, near the SW corner of the Temple platform.” [Philip J. King, “Jerusalem (Place),” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:748.]

<sup>8</sup>“JERUSALEM ji-roo’suh-luhm [ירושלם *yerushalam*, ירושלים *yerushalayim*; Ἱεροσόλυμα *Hierosolyma*, Ἱερουσαλήμ *Ierousalēm*]. The consonantal text of the OT is consistently *yrvshlm* (ירושלם). The Masoretic vowel points indicate that in Hebrew it was pronounced *yerushalayim*, whereas in Aram. it was vocalized *yerushalam*. Similarly in the Gk., *Ierousalam* accurately reflects the Aram. pronunciation and is the most common in the LXX.

long and often turbulent history.<sup>9</sup> But for the Jewish people the hope of restoring the destroyed city continued through each successive destruction. In the early Christian perspective the understanding shifted from an earthly restored city to a heavenly image of the dwelling place prepared by God for His people to live throughout eternity. But the connections of the historical city to the heavenly city remain strong in that understandings of both help shape the respective image of both.

In the two references to Ἱεροουσαλήμ καινήν, **the new Jerusalem** (3:12; 21:2), the detailed depiction in 21:9-22:7 stands in stark contrast to the evil Babylon that is destroyed.<sup>10</sup> For John's first century readers this was a critically important point since Babylon is a symbol of Rome that lay at the source of human evil in their world.

Babylon, the great prostitute	New Jerusalem, the holy city
The harlot with whom the kings of the earth fornicate (17:2)	The chaste bride, the wife of the Lamb (21:2, 9)
Babylon's glory comes from exploiting the empire (17:4; 18:12-13, 16)	New Jerusalem's glory from God's glory (21:11-21)
Her corruption and deception of the nations (17:2; 18:3, 23; 19:2)	The nations walk by her light, which is the glory of God (21:24)
Babylon rules over the kings of the earth (17:18)	The kings of the earth bring their glory into the new Jerusalem as worship and submission to God (21:24)
Babylon's luxurious wealth extorted from the nations (18:12-17)	The nations bring their glory and honor into the new Jerusalem (21:26)
Babylon's abominations, impurities, deceptions (17:4, 5; 18:23)	Uncleanness, abomination and falsehood are excluded (21:27)
Babylon's wine make the nations drunk (14:8; 17:2; 18:3)	The water of life and the tree of life heal the nations (21:6; 22:1-2)

Later books of the OT prefer the Hellenized form *Hierosolyma*. Both forms occur in the NT and are used together in Acts and in the letters of Paul.” [Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, “Jerusalem,” ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 3:259.]

<sup>9</sup>“JERUSALEM The city of God, which was destroyed twice by an evil counterpart — first by Babylon in 586 B.C. and then by Rome, the symbolic equivalent of Babylon in A.D. 70. Jerusalem is the holy city of the faithful, who suffer at the hands of the rulers of Babylon/Rome. To them, the promise of Revelation is the renewal of Jerusalem. The faithful saints will live eternally in the New Jerusalem, where they will rule with Christ the Lamb over their former oppressors.” [John R. Yeatts, *Revelation, Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 469.]

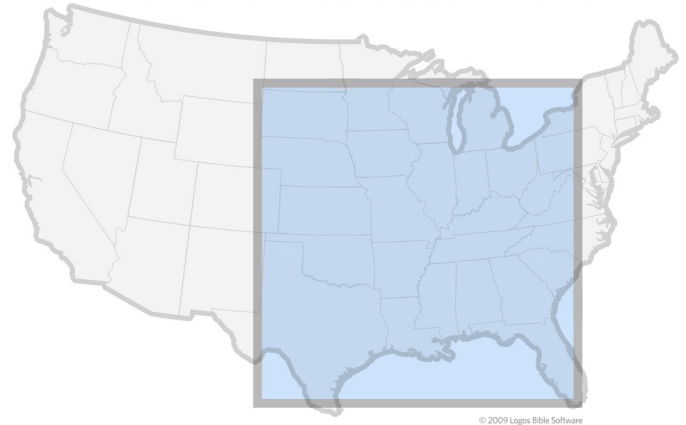
<sup>10</sup>J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, and C. Marvin Pate, *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2007), 311.

Babylon, the great prostitute	New Jerusalem, the holy city
Babylon contains the blood of slaughter (17:6; 18:24)	New Jerusalem contains life and healing (22:1-2)
God's people are to come out of Babylon (18:4)	God's people are called to enter the new Jerusalem (22:14)

Behind the description in Rev. 21-22 stands Isaiah 61-62 with its idealistic depiction of the restored Jerusalem after the exile. The dimensions of this new city in vv. 15-17 are enormous as the comparative map below illustrates. Add to the 1,500 square miles is the same height as width and length. Now that's some big city!

## The Golden City in Revelation

The new Jerusalem in Revelation 21:9-27 is a square 12,000 stadia (approximately 1,380 miles) on each side.



Also the idea of a new Jerusalem surfaces in several Jewish writings: 2 Esdr 7:26; 10:25–28; 13:36; 2 Bar. 4; 32:1–4. Note especially 1QpIsa<sup>d</sup> from the Dead Sea Scroll materials. This text is a commentary on Isa. 54:11-12:<sup>11</sup>

- 1 [ ]k all Israel like mascara around the eye. AND I SHALL ESTABLISH YOU AS LAPIS [LAZULI. The interpretation of the passage is]
- 2 [that] the council of the community was established [among the] priests and the p[people in the midst of]
- 3 the congregation of his chosen one, like a stone of lapis lazuli in the midst of the stones [ AND I SHALL MAKE (OF) RUBY (?)]
- 4 ALL YOUR PINNACLES. The interpretation of it concerns the twelve [men of the council of the community, who]
- 5 give light by the decision of the Urim and Thummim [ ]
- 6 the ones that are absent from them, like the sun with all its light. AND A[LL YOUR GATES AS STONES OF BERYL (?)]
- 7 The interpretation of it concerns the heads of the tribes of Israel at the e[nd of days ]
- 8 his lot, the offices of [ ]<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1146–1147.

<sup>12</sup>“Some of the more striking parallels between 4QpIsa<sup>d</sup> and

What to make of the meaning of this depiction in 21:9-22:7 is the focus of the exegesis below. But it is important to understand the existence of the different images in John's world that provided him with a frame of reference for assembling his depiction of a Christian view.

**Literary Aspects:**

**Genre:** Clearly we continue to deal with apocalyptic vision in 21:9-22:7. This is perhaps the largest single cohesive unit of such visionary material inside the entire book of Revelation. John, in eloquent style, pictures life with God in eternity here using images out of his Jewish religious heritage in order to communicate to his readers what he had seen in his vision.

In 21:9-21, a depiction of this massive city of God

Rev 21:9-21 are as follows (see Grappe, "Le logion," 207-8): (1) Both texts concern the heavenly Jerusalem. (2) Both texts describe the foundations of the city as represented by a precious stone. (3) In 4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>, the twelve (priestly?) leaders of the community render judgment by using the Urim and Thummim; in Rev 21:9-21 the names of the twelve apostles are inscribed on the walls constructed of precious stones, which evoke the pectoral of the Israelite high priest (Exod 28:17-20)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1147.]

<sup>21.9</sup> And

597       **came one**  
               out of the seven angels  
   of those holding the seven bowls  
   full of the seven plagues  
   last

and

598       **he spoke**  
               with me  
               saying,

**A**                                       **Come,**  
**B**                                       **I will show you the bride**  
   the wife of the Lamb.

<sup>21.10</sup> And

599       **he carried me**  
               in the spirit  
               to a large and high mountain,  
               and

600       **he showed me the holy city**  
   Jerusalem  
   | coming down  
   | out of heaven  
   | from God  
<sup>21.11</sup>                                       | having the glory of God,  
   its radiance  
   | like a very rare stone  
   | as a jasper stone crystal clear.  
<sup>21.12</sup>                                       having a wall large and high,  
   having twelve gates  
   | and

is presented with elaborate detail. In 21:22-27, the presence of God in the city eliminates the need of a temple. In 22:1-5, the throne of God provides a river flowing through the center of the city much in the fashion of the Garden of Eden. What is fascinating here is the backdrop of ancient Babylon with its luxurious gardens stands as a paradigm. The historical Babylon, however, turned into a symbol of evil as presented in chapters 17-18 that had to be destroyed. But elements of the physical city of Babylon help give framing to some of the details of the new beautiful heavenly Jerusalem as the city of God.

**Literary Setting:** The literary context of 21:9-22:7 has already been alluded to with this cohesive unit inserted between 21:8 and 22:8 as an amplification of the 'header' statement about the new Jerusalem in 21:2-4. What is introduced in 21:1-8 about God's eternal provision for His people is now expanded graphically into a detailed picture of a luxurious city bigger and more beautiful than any city known in John's world -- and in our world as well for that matter.

**Literary Structure:** In the block diagram below a visual picture of the internal connection of primary and secondary ideas can hopefully become clear.

21.13 | upon the gates  
| twelve angels  
| and  
names written down,  
| which are [the names] of the twelve tribes  
| of the sons of Israel  
(having) three gates  
| and  
| from the north  
(having) three gates  
| and  
| from the south  
(having) three gates  
| and  
| from the west  
(having) three gates.

21.14 And  
601 **(he showed me) the wall of the city**  
having twelve foundations  
and  
upon them  
twelve names  
of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

21.15 And  
602 **the one speaking . . . had a measuring rod of gold,**  
with me |  
so that he might measure the city  
and  
its gates  
and  
its wall.

21.16 And  
603 **the city lay with four equal corners**  
and  
604 **its length (is) equal [also] to its width.**

and  
605 **he measured the city**  
with the rod  
at one thousand two hundred stadia,  
606 **the length and the width and the height are equal.**

21.17 And  
607 **he measure its wall**  
each one being 44 cubits  
by human measurement,  
which is by the angel.

21.18 And  
608 **the construction of its wall is of jasper**  
and  
609 **the city is of pure gold**  
like clear glass.

21.19  
610 **the foundations of the wall of the city**  
with every precious stone are adorned:

21.20

the 1st foundation of jasper,  
the 2nd of sapphire,  
the 3rd of agite,  
the 4th of emerald,  
the 5th of onyx,  
the 6th of carnelian,  
the 7th of chrysolite,  
the 8th of beryl,  
the 9th of topaz,  
the 10th of chrysoprase,  
the 11th of jacinth,  
the 12th of amethyst,

21.21

and

**611 the twelve gates are twelve pearls,**  
each one of the gates was  
out of one pearl.

and

**612 the streets of the city are pure gold**  
as clear glass.

### Summary of Rhetorical Structure

This unit of text centers on a description of the new Jerusalem. The first emphasis, #s 597 to 601, sets up the description with some general details. The second unit, #s 602 to 612, stresses size and construction materials.

### Exegesis of the Text:

The above natural divisions of the text will serve as the foundation for our exegetical outline.

#### A. What John saw, vv. 9-14.

9 Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τῶν γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων, Δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου. 10 καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ 11 ἔχουσαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ φωστὴρ αὐτῆς ὁμοῖος λίθῳ τιμιωτάτῳ ὡς λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι κρυσταλλίζοντι. 12 ἔχουσα τεῖχος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, ἔχουσα πυλῶνας δώδεκα καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν ἀγγέλους δώδεκα καὶ ὀνόματα ἐπιγεγραμμένα, ἃ ἔστιν [τὰ ὀνόματα] τῶν δώδεκα φυλῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ 13 ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν πυλῶνες τρεῖς. 14 καὶ τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως ἔχων θεμελίους δώδεκα καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα ὀνόματα τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῦ ἀρνίου.

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11

It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 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 has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angels of the seven bowls of wrath (cf. 15:1-16:21) seem to have more responsibility than the other angels who have appeared on the scene in Revelation. Just as in 17:1, one of them now appears to John with a summons to go with him to a large, high mountain so that John can see the τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου, [the bride, the wife of the Lamb](#).<sup>13</sup> In 17:1, one of these seven angels summoned John to go with him so that John could see τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς τῆς μεγάλης τῆς καθημένης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν, [the judgment of the great whore who sits upon many waters](#).<sup>14</sup> In this earlier

<sup>13</sup>“In v 9 two important mss. (2053 and 2062) have only τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου (‘the wife of the Lamb’) instead of τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου (‘the bride, the wife of the Lamb’). The omission resulted from a copyist’s eye unintentionally jumping from the first τὴν to the second, though ‘the bride’ might have dropped out because it was considered redundant, especially in the light of 21:2, where only one title is given to the Lamb’s spouse.” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1065.]

<sup>14</sup>“In Rev 21:9, as in 17:1, a bowl angel offers to show John a special sight. While in chap. 17 the vision centered on the great whore of Babylon (i.e., Rome) and her fate, here it focuses on the bride, the wife of the Lamb (i.e., the people of God under the metaphor of a city). Rome and the Church are carefully presented as antithetical realities using feminine imagery. The New Jerusalem, Page 1029

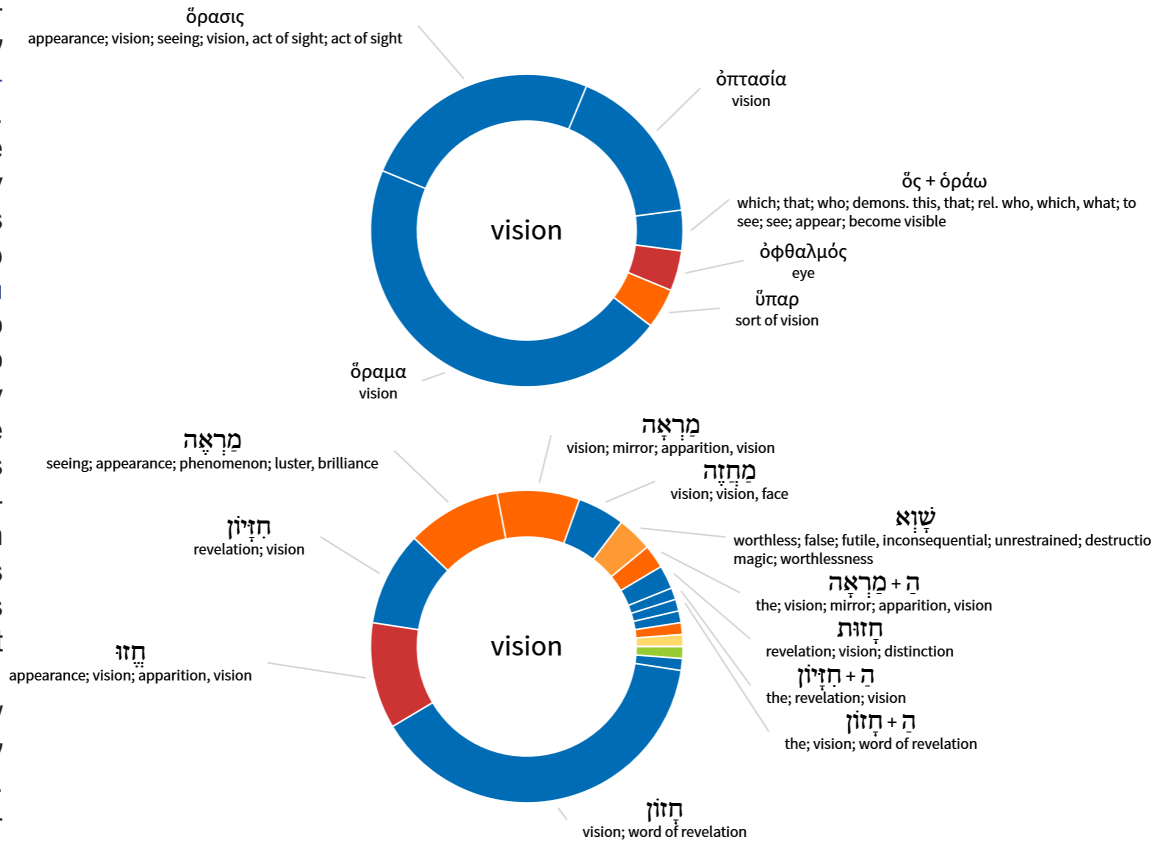


instance the angel carried John εἰς ἔρημον ἐν πνεύματι, into the wilderness in the spirit (v. 3). One should note that the principle duty of these angels was to show John, δείξω σοι, I will show to you (21:9), rather than to explain meaning to him. John then simply writes down what he saw through using bits and pieces of symbolic images mostly from OT prophetic visions so that his readers can understand what he saw.

What John saw was while he was ἐν πνεύματι, the spirit (v. 10). This is repeated from 1:10, and in 4:2; 17:3. In the background of this formula expression for prophetic vision stands Ezek. 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 11:1; 43:5.<sup>15</sup> In the

which John sees descending from heaven, is then described in some detail (21:9–22:9). The contrived nature of these details indicates that the city is a transparent symbol for the people of God, the Church. The idea of a heavenly Jerusalem as a city in which Christians are enrolled as citizens is not unique to Revelation, for it is found in both early Christian (Heb 12:22–24; 13:14; Gal 4:26) and early Jewish thought (2 Apoc. Bar. 4:1–6; 2 Enoch 55:2). The twelve gates of the city are labeled with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (see Ezek 48:34; 11QTemple, in describing the eschatological temple, similarly mentions twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel, gates located between the middle and outer courts).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1187.]

<sup>15</sup>“The angel ‘carried’ John ‘in the Spirit’ to convey him to another dimension where he could perceive yet another vision (ἐν πνεύματι is a dative of instrumentality and of sphere: ‘in and by the Spirit’). This prophetic commission formula is based on the similar formulas for Ezekiel’s repeated prophetic commissions (Ezek. 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 11:1; 43:5; see on Rev. 17:3). As with Ezekiel, John’s repeated rapture into the realm of the Spirit further underscores his prophetic commission and authority (see 1:10; 4:2; and esp. 17:3, which allude to Ezekiel’s commissions in the same manner). In all but one of the parallel passages in Ezekiel, God commissions the prophet to announce judgment to disobedient Israel. The exception, Ezek. 43:5, is part of a vision of the end-time establishment of Israel’s temple, in which God’s presence will dwell forever. Rev. 21:10 combines Ezek. 43:5 (‘And the Spirit took me up’) with 40:1–2 (‘the hand of the LORD was on me and brought me ... and set me on a very high mountain, and on it was, as it were, the edifice of a city before [me]’). This combination indicates beyond doubt



dream or trance defined elsewhere as a vision: חזון *kha-zon*; ὄραμα *horama*, ὄρασις *horasis*,<sup>16</sup> John was transported in his mind to the high mountain that was not located geographical on the earth, similar to what Ezekiel experience (40:1-2) during the 25th year of exile

that the vision following in Rev. 21:11ff. is to be identified with the blissful vision of the future temple in Ezekiel 40–48, which was located “on a very high mountain.” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1065.]

<sup>16</sup>“Ancient Jewish and Christian visions may be grouped into five types:

1. Visions of the enthroned deity or the divine council (Exod. 24:9–11; 1 Kings 22:19–23; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1:1–3:15; Rev. 4:2–11).
2. Visions of some other heavenly reality or of an earthly reality present, threatened, or to come (1 Kings 22:17; Amos 7:1–3, 4–6; Jer. 4:23–26; Ezek. 8–11; 40–48; Zech. 1:7–17; 3; 6:1–8; 1 Enoch 57, 66; T. Levi 8; 2 Bar. 6–8; 2 Esd. 13; Luke 1:11, 21).
3. Visions based on a play on words or a symbol (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer. 1:11–12, 13–14; Jer. 24; Ezek. 37:1–14; Zech. 2:5–9; 5:1–4; 1 Enoch 61:1–5).
4. Allegorical visions, i.e., visions in which each object, being, or event represents in a figurative or pictorial way a corresponding entity in reality (Zech. 1:18–21; 4; 5:5–11; Dan. 8; 1 Enoch 85–90; 2 Bar. 36–37; 53; Rev. 12, 13, 17; 2 Esd. 9:38–10:59; 11–12).
5. Visions that combine two or more of the above types (Dan. 7; 1 Enoch 14:8–36:4; 40:1–41:7; 43–44; 46; 52; 53:1–54:6; 60:1–6; 71; T. Levi 2:5–5:7; 2 Bar. 22–30).”

[Adela Yarbro Collins, “Vision,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated) (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 1089.]

in Babylon. Inter-600 estingly 1 Enoch 24-25 asserts that Ezekiel's high mountain is actually God's throne elevated above all other mountains.<sup>17</sup> But John's experience simply plays off Ezekiel's experience to affirm the ability to see the full image of the city, which itself is a 1,500 square mile cube (v. 16). Even further beyond Ezekiel in John's Jewish heritage lay the rich expressions of a post exilic idealized Jerusalem where the peoples of the world would come to worship God in His temple there: Isa. 2:2-3; 4:1-5; 25:6-26; Mic. 4:1-2; cf. Ps. 48:2; Jubilees 4:26; 1 Enoch 24-25.

The view of this gigantic city descending out of the sky to earth, Ἱερουσαλήμ καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, *Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God* (v. 10b), repeats 3:12 (τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, *of the new Jerusalem which descends out of heaven from my God*), and 21:2 (Ἱερουσαλήμ καινὴν εἶδον καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, *new Jerusalem I saw coming down out of heaven from God*). The descending aspect of the image underscores God's reaching out to His people in protection and care. He does this repeatedly, and now at the end this final time gathers up His people for all eternity. This picture of a descending Jerusalem is unique to Revelation, although a heavenly Jerusalem is rather common.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup>The mountain that God set Ezekiel on in his vision contained the city and the prophet was situated to the north of it at a higher elevation so he could see the city (Ezek. 40:2). Both mountain and city were located in the land of Israel (40:2). But Ezekiel's city is a different size and design from the one John sees.

<sup>18</sup>"The notion of a heavenly Jerusalem is found throughout early Judaism and rabbinic Judaism. A close parallel, which includes the descent of the heavenly city to Zion, is found in 4 Ezra 13:35-36:

he showed me the holy city

Jerusalem  
 | coming down  
 | out of heaven  
 | from God  
 21.11 | having the glory of God,  
 its radiance  
 | like a very rare stone  
 | as a jasper stone crystal clear.  
 21.12 | having a wall large and high,  
 having twelve gates  
 | and  
 | upon the gates  
 | twelve angels  
 | and  
 names written down,  
 | which are [the names] of the twelve tribes  
 | of the sons of Israel  
 21.13 | from the east  
 (having) three gates  
 | and  
 | from the north  
 (having) three gates  
 | and  
 | from the south  
 (having) three gates  
 | and  
 | from the west  
 (having) three gates.

21.14 And

(he showed me) the wall of the city

having twelve foundations  
 and  
 upon them  
 twelve names  
 of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

But he will stand on the top of Mount Zion. And Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, prepared and built, as you saw the mountain carved out without hands.

"Similarly in 2 Apoc. Bar. 4:2-7 Jerusalem is a preexistent reality, which God showed to Adam, Abraham, and Moses and which 'will be revealed.' Elsewhere in the NT the conception is found in Gal 4:26; Heb 11:10, 14-16; 12:22; 13:14; cf. Phil 3:20. In Gal 4:25-26 Paul somewhat awkwardly contrasts ἡ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ, 'the present Jerusalem,' with ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ, 'Jerusalem above.' The first phrase, using the adjective of time νῦν, 'now,' presupposes the eschatological dualistic framework of present/future, while the second phrase, using the adjective of place ἄνω, 'above,' presupposes a spatial dualistic framework of above/below. Paul nowhere speaks of the descent of this heavenly Jerusalem; presumably those who will live in it must ascend to it (Betz, Galatians, 246); see Par. Jer. 5:35, 'May God guide you to Jerusalem the city which is above [τὴν ἄνω πόλιν Ἱερουσαλήμ].' Similarly, the author of Hebrews speaks of a heavenly Jerusalem but nowhere suggests that it will descend to earth (Heb 11:10, 14-16; 12:22; 13:14).

"The conception of an 'ideal city' is also found in Platonism, Stoicism, and Christianity in late antiquity (for the latter, see Maz-zolani, *Idea*, 242-79). An important source of this conception in later philosophical literature is Plato Republic 9.13 (592A-B; LCL tr.):

"I understand," he said; "you mean the city whose establishment we have described, the city whose home is in the ideal;  
 Page 1031

Verses 11-13 then add a list of descriptive qualifiers to the reference to Jerusalem in v. 10b, as the diagram illustrates. The radiance of the city, its wall, and the twelve gates in this wall are depicted in generalized terms. Then in verse 14 with special focus the twelve foundations of the city are linked to the twelve apostles. The twelve gates of the wall are linked to the twelve tribes of Israel. Here is a distinctly Christian image of the new Jerusalem much different from those images in the Jewish literature beginning with the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah's picture in 62:1-12 presents idealized post exilic rebuilt Jerusalem in the idealized image of divine vindication of His righteous judgment in having destroyed the city earlier due to its waywardness. Ezekiel's image of a post exilic rebuilt Jerusalem (40:2) in chaps. 40-48 is much more detailed but with a carefully measured temple (40-46) in the middle of the city (47-48) with its measurements in 48:15-22, although the emphasis is upon the land property belong to the city rather than just the city itself.<sup>19</sup> What one must re-

for I think that it can be found nowhere on earth." "Well," said I, "perhaps there is a pattern of it laid up in heaven [ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα ἀνάκειται] for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen."

"Platonic influence is evident in Hermas Sim. 1.1-6, where the metaphor of two cities with their respective systems of law is used to illustrate the obligations Christians have to their own 'city' (heaven) and the often conflicting demands of their earthly 'city' (see Ap. Jas. 11.20 and Anaxagoras in Diogenes Laertius 2.7). Among Stoics the ideal city is referred to by Marcus Aurelius (9.29), and Philo too reflects this conception (Som. 2.250-51). Clement of Alexandria quotes the Stoic view in a passage that concludes with an explicit reference to Plato's city, though only the first part is quoted here (Strom. 4.26; see Arnim, SVF 3:80-81): 'For the Stoics say that heaven is properly a city [τὸν μὲν οὐρανὸν κυρίως πόλιν], but places here on earth are not cities; for they are called so, but are not'."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1152-1153.

<sup>19</sup>"This final section of the book is organized around a series of visionary narratives. In chaps. 40-42 the prophet is transported to the area of Jerusalem and taken by a supernatural guide on a tour of a restored, holy temple. The temple area stands empty and unused until in 43:1-5 it is energized by Yahweh's glory, returning to take up permanent royal residence. The divine coming enables the temple to come to life, so that the text can move from an anatomical description to a physiological one. The altar is dedicated as the hub of atonement and worship (43:13-27). Now the clock of temple ritual can start ticking again so as to reflect and to maintain the holiness of Israel's God. The flow of the visionary narrative is then diverted to a series of divine revelations as to the running of the temple (44:5-46:18). First, temple personnel are described, in a two-tier system of priests and Levites (44:6-16). The text concentrates upon the priests as prime representatives of the divine holiness, and outlines their holy lifestyle (44:17-31). The practical matters of the support of the priests and of the regular provision of sacrifices for the temple are dealt with (45:1-17). Finally within chaps 43-46, rulings are laid down for temple procedure, in terms of annual, monthly, weekly and daily rites and of the participation of people and head of state (45:18-46:15).

member is that these three very different depictions are uniformly symbolic of the common point of God's identification with and care of His true people. The dramatic differences in details, often contradictory to one another, are made by each writer to stress certain distinctive points to three very different audiences.

Ezekiel gives dimensions and specification of a city wall with twelve gates.<sup>20</sup> The circumference of the city wall is stated (40:35) as approximately 18,000 cubits, or about five miles all the way around it, a much smaller city than John envisioned. Both indicate three gates on each of the four sides of the walls, but Ezekiel names each of the gates after a specific tribe,<sup>21</sup> including the tribe of Levi.<sup>22</sup>

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"In the last part of the overall vision, chaps. 47-48, the temple is set within a larger perspective. The vision of 47:1-12 draws upon older Zion symbolism to describe in apocalyptic-like vein the blessing that flows from the temple graced by God's presence. Life and healing are brought by a powerful river of blessing. Then in 47:13-48:29 the relation of temple and land is revealed in a new geographical configuration of tribal territories. Concentric bands are arranged around a reservation that itself has at its heart the temple. Within this buffer zone there are also areas for the temple staff, the new Jerusalem and crown property. The city receives added recognition in 48:30-35."

[Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, vol. 29, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 212-213.]

<sup>20</sup>**Ezekiel 48:30-35a.** 30 These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, 31 three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. 32 On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. 33 On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. 34 On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. 35 The circumference of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits.

<sup>21</sup>"The west side is regarded as the least significant, being allocated to three of the concubines' children. The south side is represented by three of Leah's sons: there may be an echo of the geographical placing of these tribes, to the south of the city, as indeed in the case of the north side. The east side is shared by Rachel's two children, while Dan, a concubine's son, is promoted to join them. The genealogical factor has clearly influenced the ordering, but not in the same way as in vv 1-29. The main point is that, as in the case of the city's population at v 19, all the traditional tribes are represented in the capital." [Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, vol. 29, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 284.]

<sup>22</sup>"A superscription in the style of the superscriptions of 48:1, 16 is followed by a description of the city, visualized as a square, and its sides which face the four points of the compass. The structure recalls the description of the four national boundaries in 47:15-20. Still closer, however, is the description in 48:16, where the four outer sides of the city are measured with the same measurement. One can hear the double echo of the מדידת ('measure-Page 1032

The symbolical point of the gates is to stress accessibility to all of God's people. Everyone belonging to God can enter the city.

The really unique aspect of John's general depiction is of the twelve separate foundations, one under the other, in verse fourteen. This parallels the twelve gates for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The image here somewhat echoes Eph. 2:20, ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, **having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with its cornerstone Jesus Christ.**<sup>23</sup> Additionally, in the background of John's non-Jewish readers stood traditions of astrological gates surfaces in the ancient literature.<sup>24</sup>

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ments') of the superscription of v 16 in the affixed πημ ('measurement') in vv 30, 33. But the sequence of the points of the compass corresponds to neither of the two parallels. The (unrealistic) enumeration of the gates with final πηα ('one'), however, corresponds once again to the tribal enumeration in vv 1-7, 23-27. When, on each occasion, the reference to the direction is followed first by the measurement of the city wall and then by the list of the gates, this scarcely gives us the right, with Jahn and Hölscher, abruptly to abbreviate and critically eliminate the measurements of the city walls which are added together to give a total circumference in v 35a. Thus in the formal structure, the dependence on the pattern given in chapters 47f should not be overlooked. The conclusion of the whole in the giving of a name recalls the frequent occurrence of this element of the new name in Trito-Isaiah (58:12; 60:14, 18; 61:3; 62:2, 4, 12)." [Walther Zimmerli, Frank Moore Cross, and Klaus Baltzer, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979-), 545.]

<sup>23</sup>"This verse reflects the idea found in Eph 2:20 that the Church is built ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, 'on the foundation of the apostles and prophets' (cf. Matt 16:18; see Lohse, 109-10). The phrase in Eph 2:20 may be understood to mean 'the foundation that consists of apostles and prophets' (taking the genitive as a genitive of apposition), i.e., a single foundation that consists either of the apostles and prophets as persons or in terms of their activity (the latter view is defended by Sandnes, Paul, 227-29). Here the emphasis is apparently on their persons, for analogous texts emphasize persons as founders, not their activities. Paul, for example, speaks of Jesus Christ as the basic θεμέλιος, 'foundation' (1 Cor 3:11). However, it is awkward to resort to the notion of twelve separate foundations, a feature nowhere even remotely paralleled in early Jewish descriptions of the eschatological Jerusalem. Hippolytus maintained that the twelve disciples were chosen from the twelve tribes of Israel (Ref. 5.8.12; ed. Marcovitch, Hippolytus), a tradition that may have arisen to explain why the twelve disciples will sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel according to Matt 19:28 and Luke 22:30 (see Ps 122:3-5 and Gos. Eb. frag. 3). According to Epiphanius Pan. 30.13.3, the twelve apostles were chosen to be a testimony to Israel. There is a similar focus on the foundations of the walls of Uruk in the Gilgamesh epic, in which they are attributed to the activity of seven wise men (Heidel, Gilgamesh, 16-17)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1157.]

<sup>24</sup>"The seven gates of Thebes are given an astrological association by comparing their number to that of the seven planets (Non-

This general depiction provides a basis for John to then move into a more distinctive approach of specifying the construction materials for this city, as well as providing his own set of measurements.

## **B. New Jerusalem: size and materials, vv. 15-21.**

15 Καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶχεν μέτρον κάλαμον χρυσοῦν, ἵνα μετρήσῃ τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς πυλῶνας αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς. 16 καὶ ἡ πόλις τετράγωνος κεῖται καὶ τὸ μῆκος αὐτῆς ὅσον [καὶ] τὸ πλάτος. καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὴν πόλιν τῷ καλάμῳ ἐπὶ σταδίων δώδεκα χιλιάδων, τὸ μῆκος καὶ τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτῆς ἴσα ἐστίν. 17 καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τεσσάρων πηχῶν μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου. 18 καὶ ἡ ἐνδῶμησις τοῦ τείχους αὐτῆς ἴασις καὶ ἡ πόλις χρυσίον καθαρὸν ὅμιον ὑάλῳ καθαρῷ. 19 οἱ θεμέλιοι τοῦ τείχους τῆς πόλεως παντὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ κεκοσμημένοι· ὁ θεμέλιος ὁ πρῶτος ἴασις, ὁ δεύτερος σάπφειρος, ὁ τρίτος χαλκηδών, ὁ τέταρτος σμάραγδος, 20 ὁ πέμπτος σαρδόνυξ, ὁ ἕκτος σάρδιον, ὁ ἕβδομος χρυσόλιθος, ὁ ὄγδοος βήρυλλος, ὁ ἔνατος τοπάζιον, ὁ δέκατος χρυσόπρασος, ὁ ἐνδέκατος ὑάκινθος, ὁ δωδέκατος ἀμέθυστος, 21 καὶ οἱ δώδεκα πυλῶνες δώδεκα μαργαρίται, ἀνὰ εἷς ἕκαστος τῶν πυλώνων ἦν ἐξ ἐνὸς μαργαρίτου. καὶ ἡ πλατεῖα τῆς πόλεως χρυσίον καθαρὸν ὡς ὕαλος διαυγῆς.

15 The angel who talked to 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, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18 The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every 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 are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

This unit of material naturally divides into two sub-units, one of the measuring of the city (vv. 15-17) and the other of the construction materials for the city (vv. 18-21).

In the parallel of 21:9-22:7 to 17:1-19:10, i.e., of Jerusalem to Babylon, emphasis is given to the luxurious appearance of Babylon as the whore in:

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17:4-5, 4 καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἣν περιβεβλημένη πορφυροῦν nos Dionysiaca 5.70-71)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1157.]

καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίταις, ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς γέμον βδελυγμάτων καὶ τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς 5 καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, μυστήριον, Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς. 4 *The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; 5 and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations."*

This is alluded to later 18:9, οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς οἱ μετ' αὐτῆς πορνεύσαντες καὶ στρηνιάσαντες, *the kings of the earth who committed immorality and lived in luxury with her*. Then in 18:11-19 the excessive wealth she possessed from trade with the merchants and through naval trade is detailed. Babylon, i.e., ancient Rome, was a beautiful city from its appearance, somewhat like the new Jerusalem that John describes. But it not appearance that ultimately matters. Morality and spiritual conditions are the bottom line. Babylon in her wealth collapsed and disappeared. Jerusalem in her glory from God will continue on forever.<sup>25</sup>

**Measuring the city, vv. 15-17.** 15 Καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶχεν μέτρον κάλαμον χρυσοῦν, ἵνα μετρήσῃ τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς πυλῶνας αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς. 16 καὶ ἡ πόλις τετράγωνος κεῖται καὶ τὸ μῆκος αὐτῆς ὅσον [καὶ] τὸ πλάτος. καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὴν πόλιν τῷ καλάμῳ ἐπὶ σταδίων δώδεκα χιλιάδων, τὸ μῆκος καὶ τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτῆς ἴσα ἐστίν. 17 καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς ἑκατὸν τεσσαράκοντα τεσσάρων πηχῶν μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου. 15 *The angel who talked to 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, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using.*

Somewhat parallel to this is 11:1-2

Καὶ ἐδόθη μοι κάλαμος ὅμοιος ῥάβδῳ, λέγων· ἔγειρε

<sup>25</sup>“While the similarities between the framing portions of 17:1–19:10 and 21:9–22:9 are evident, there are material differences between these two textual units as well. First, while the angelic guide in 17:1–19:10 functions as an angelus interpres, “an interpreting angel,” the angelic guide in 21:9–22:6 only speaks at the beginning (21:9) and at the end (22:6) of that unit. Though the angel of 21:9–22:9 measures the holy city, unlike the angelic guide in 17:1–19:10, he provides no commentary on the vision John sees. Second, the metaphor of Babylon-Rome as a prostitute is much more central to 17:1–19:10 than is the metaphor of the New Jerusalem as the bride and wife of the Lamb in 21:9–22:9, which is used only superficially just three times, once in 21:9 and twice earlier in 19:7–8 and 21:2.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1146.]

καὶ μέτρησον τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν αὐτῷ. 2 καὶ τὴν αὐλὴν τὴν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ναοῦ ἔκβαλε ἔξωθεν καὶ μὴ αὐτὴν μετρήσῃς, ὅτι ἐδόθη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν πατήσουσιν μῆνας τεσσαράκοντα [καὶ] δύο. 1 *Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, 2 but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.*

But here no measurements are provided, nor is there a description of John measuring the temple.<sup>26</sup> Also in 11:1, John was given κάλαμος ὅμοιος ῥάβδῳ, *a measuring rod like a staff*, but in 21:15 the angel has μέτρον κάλαμον χρυσοῦν, *a measuring rod of gold*. The action of measuring enables the reader to understand the immense size of the city, and is commonly found in texts describing a future city.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>“There is a parallel to this passage in Rev 11:1, where the seer was given a measuring rod and commanded to measure ‘the sanctuary and the altar and those who worship there,’ though no measurements are given there (nor does John actually carry out the command to measure the temple), suggesting that the procedure was metaphorical, symbolizing the protection of what was to be measured. Here, however, it is the angel and not the seer who does the measuring, and he does it with a measuring rod of gold, appropriate for measuring a city of heavenly origin. While to my knowledge no measuring instruments from ancient Israel have yet been discovered, a cubit measuring stick from Egypt, overlaid with gold, contains the name of Amen-hotep II, from the Eighteenth Dynasty, 1570–1310 B.C. (pictured in IDB 4:836).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1158–1159.]

<sup>27</sup>“An interpreting angel with a measuring rod is mentioned in Ezek 40:3 and in recently published fragments from Qumran of an apocalypse concerning the heavenly Jerusalem (the seven fragments that have been published are referred to in Beyer, *Texte*, 214–22, and published with a German translation in Beyer, *Ergänzungsband*, 95–104; the largest fragment, 5Q15 = 5QNJ ar, is translated in Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 271–73; Fitzmyer-Harrington, *Aramaic Texts*, 54–61; and García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 131–33). In the fragment (the following summary is based on Beyer, *Texte*, 214–16), an unnamed visionary has been transported to the heavenly world and stands before the heavenly Jerusalem with an angel who has a measuring rod. The narrative is written in the first person singular of the visionary. The interpreting angel measures the rectangular wall enclosing the city at 140 res by 100 res (singular רר or ררסא; plural ר[א]ר[א]). The Mishnah uses the term *res* for *stadion* (equivalent to the length of a stadium, which the Greeks divided into 600 feet or 400 cubits). However, in the *Description of the New Jerusalem* texts, the *res* measurement is different from the Greek measurement and is divided into 352 royal or long cubits (Chyutin, *New Jerusalem Scroll*, 75). The units of measure in the *Description of the New Jerusalem* texts are normally the reed followed by the equivalent in cubits, with seven cubits per reed. The precise metrical length of this cubit, however, is not known (García Martínez, “‘New Jerusalem,’” 190–91). The exact length of the *res*, therefore, is uncertain, and scholars have

The measuring of the city only included three items: τὴν πόλιν καὶ τοὺς πυλῶνας αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς, *the city and her gates and her wall*. This is very different from Ezekiel's measuring that included the territory for each tribe (48:1-14), the land for the city (48:15-20); and the city with its temple (48:21-22). The city wall with the 12 gates is also measured (48:30-35).<sup>28</sup> The measure- had to resort to speculation to determine its length. M. Broshi uses a rounded figure of 1 cubit = 50 centimeters, close to the average of two estimates of the short and long cubits, and estimates that the city wall of 140 × 100 *res* is (rounded) 21 kilometers x 30 kilometers = 6,300 square kilometers, clearly a mathematical error for 630 square kilometers ("Visionary Architecture and town Planning," in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls* by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–1990, ed. D. Dimant and L. H. Schiffman, STDJ 16 [Leiden: Brill, 1995] 12). García Martínez (" 'New Jerusalem,' " 192–93) calculates that 1 *res* = 63 reeds = 441 cubits = 229 meters, so that the length and width of the rectangular wall surrounding the New Jerusalem would be 32 kilometers x 23 kilometers = 736 square kilometers. The wall has twelve strong gates, three on each side (cf. Ezek 48:33–34; 11QTemple 39:12–13; 40:11–14; 4Q554 = 4QNJa ar). The city is orthogonal (i.e., the streets intersect at right angles), a design with origins in ancient Egypt and with more immediate antecedents in Hellenistic town planning introduced by Hippodamus (see Chyutin, DSD 1 [1994] 71–97).

Six groups of fragments of the document called the Description of the New Jerusalem have been published: (1) 1Q32 = 1QNJ ar (DJD 1:134–35, plate XXXI); (2) 2Q24 = 2QNJ ar (M. Baillet, "Fragments araméens de Qumrân 2: Description de la Jérusalem Nouvelle," RB 62 [1955] 222–45; DJD 3:84–89, plate XVI); (3) 4Q554 = 4QNJa ar (J. Starcky, "Jérusalem et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte," Le Monde de la Bible 1 [1977] 38–40); (4) 4Q555 = 4QNJb ar (Eisenman-Robinson, Facsimile, 1541); (5) 5Q15 = 5QNJ ar (DJD 3:184–93, plates XL–XLI); and (6) 11Q18 = 11QNJ ar (B. Jongeling, "Publication provisoire d'un fragment provenant de la grotte 11 de Qumrân [11QJérNouv ar]," JSJ 1 [1970] 58–64). Texts and translations may be found in Beyer, *Texte*, 214–22; Beyer, *Ergänzungsband*, 95–104; Fitzmyer-Harrington, *Aramaic Texts*, 46–55; and a translation only in F. García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 129–35. These six groups of fragments (representing many parts of at least six copies of the Description of the New Jerusalem text) have been reconstructed into a single composition of twenty-two columns by M. Chyutin, *The New Jerusalem Scroll from Qumran* (see pp. 144–46 for notes on the reconstruction of the scroll).

"In Syria-Palestine, cities were characteristically enclosed by irregular walls because of the uneven topography. In the plains of Egypt and Babylonia, however, cities could be enclosed with square or rectangular walls (e.g., Babylon). During the Hellenistic period, rectangular or gridiron form was common in town planning (supposedly influenced by Hippodamus of Miletus, born ca. 500 B.C.). Alexandria was the largest Hellenistic city constructed in this orthogonal form. However, even such large ancient cities as Babylon and Alexandria were surrounded by walls just 15 kilometers or 9 miles in circumference. While Nineveh is described in Jonah 3:3 as 'an exceedingly great city three days' journey in breadth,' excavations indicate that the city had a circumference of 7.75 miles (12.5 kilometers)."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1159–1160.]

<sup>28</sup>In Ezek 48:30–35, the walls of the eschatological Jerusalem

are dramatically different than those given by John for the new Jerusalem.

John's measurements describe a square cube that is σταδίων<sup>29</sup> δῶδεκα χιλιάδων (12,000 cubits or stadia, ca. 1,416–1,566 miles) long, wide, and high for the city.<sup>30</sup> This immense size given here has been described as forming a gigantic square 4,500 cubits on each side, with three gates on each side named (clockwise) after the tribes of Israel: north, Reuben, Judah, Levi; east, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan; south, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulon; and west, Gad, Asher, Naphtali. 11QTemple from Qumran certainly reflects a familiarity with the biblical accounts of Solomon's temple and Ezekiel's eschatological temple. Nevertheless, the author-editor of 11QTemple chose to conflate the twelve gates of Ezekiel's city wall with the outer and middle walls surrounding the future temple, each of which had twelve gates named (clockwise) after the twelve sons of Jacob, not the tribes of Israel (11QTemple 39:12–13; 40:11–14): east, Simeon, Levi, Judah; south, Reuben, Joseph, Benjamin; west, Issachar, Zebulon, Gad; and north, Dan, Naphtali, Asher. The same order, though without the mention of directions, is found in the fragmentary text 4Q364–65 = 4QRpb c 28 ii 1–4 (García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 223). Rev 21:13 does not specifically name the gates on each side, nor does it describe the gates in a clockwise or counterclockwise manner; rather it mentions three gates on the east, north, south, and west. This suggests that John is not using a source or tradition that actually named the gates, nor can it be assumed (as some do) that the names would conform to his mixed list of tribes of Israel and sons of Jacob in 7:4–8." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1155–1156.]

<sup>29</sup>“The στάδιον, 'stadium,' varied from 190 to 210 meters and equaled 600 Greek feet (the Attic stadion was 607 feet, while the Olympic stadion was 630.8 feet). The Roman stadium equaled 625 Roman pedes, 'feet,' or 125 passus, 'steps' or 'paces' (Pliny Hist. nat. 2.85; Herodotus 2.149; Kleine Pauly 5:336–38). While the stadion was in origin a Greek measure, it was used in early Judaism and early Christianity (LXX Dan 4:12; 2 Macc 11:5; 12:9–10, 16–17, 29; Matt 14:24; Luke 24:13; John 6:19; 11:18).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1161.]

<sup>30</sup>“καὶ ἡ πόλις τετράγωνος κεῖται καὶ τὸ μῆκος αὐτῆς ὅσον καὶ τὸ πλάτος, 'The city is arranged with four equal sides; that is, its length and width are the same.' This alludes to Zech 2:2 (LXX 2:6), where the angel with the measuring stick tells Zechariah that he is going to measure the width and length of Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem, however, is not only square but cubical (see v 16b). In both Ezek 40–48 (41:21; 43:16; 45:1; 48:20) and 11QTemple, the square is certainly the dominant shape (see Yadin, *Temple Scroll* 1:190). According to Ezek 42:20 (cf. m. Mid. 2:1), the temple mount of the eschatological temple will measure 500 cubits on each side (i.e., ca. 175–280 meters). The holy of holies or *dēbîr* in the temple of Solomon was reportedly square, i.e., 20 cubits in length and width (1 Kgs 6:20; 2 Chr 3:8–9 [the height is omitted]), while the vestibule of the temple is given as 20 cubits wide and 120 cubits high (2 Chr 3:4). The breastplate of the high priest, which contained twelve precious stones (see below on v 19), is similarly described as square. On the other hand, the city described in the New Jerusalem texts from Qumran is an enormous rectangle 140 by 100 *res*, or 32 by 23 kilometers, with a total perimeter of 110 kilometers or nearly 70 miles (García Martínez, " 'New Jerusalem,' " 194). A rabbinic tradition in b. B. Bat. 75b describes the future

difficult for some to accept even symbolically.<sup>31</sup> The wall

Jerusalem as a cube, three parasangs (i.e., 17 kilometers) in each direction. Many ancient cities are described as square, including Nineveh (Diodorus 1.3), Babylon (Herodotus 1.178), and Nicaea (Strabo 12.4.7). According to Roman tradition, Romulus founded Roma quadrata on the Palatine hill, and Greek writers translated the term quadrata with τετράγωνος, “square” (Dionysius Hal. Ant. Rom. 2.65.3; Plutarch Romulus 9.4; Appian Bas. frag. 1a.9 [ed. P. Viereck and A. G. Roos, Appiani historia Romana, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1905–39)]), though quadrata almost certainly referred to the four quarters into which the city was divided (Müller, Die heilige Stadt, 22–35). On Rome as a gigantic square of 300 × 300 parasangs (b. Meg. 6b), see Comment on v 16b.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1160–1161.]

<sup>31</sup>“The city is depicted as an enormous cube measuring ca. 1,416–1,566 miles in each direction. Since the fantastic size of Jerusalem is atypical of the author’s tendency elsewhere in Revelation, Topham proposes several possible alterations (Topham, Exp-Tim 100 [1989] 417–19): (1) He proposes that 12,000 might be the total length of all four sides, thus making each side 3,000 stadia long. (2) Another alternative is the deletion of the word χιλιάδων, “thousand,” with a figure remaining of 12 stadia. (3) The emendation he finds most attractive is the emendation of “stadia” to “cubits,” with the result that the city would measure a more modest 3.5 miles each direction. These are all highly speculative emendations, however, and there is no convincing reason to reject the author’s intention to depict a city of gigantic dimensions.

“There is some evidence to suggest that the second Jewish temple was intended to be cubical in shape (dedicated ca. 516 B.C.). In Ezra 6:2–3, a letter of Cyrus is quoted authorizing the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple and specifying that its height and width should be 60 cubits (perhaps a limitation to avoid cost overruns). While the length is missing, the dimensions of the first temple were reportedly 60 cubits long, 20 wide, and 30 high (1 Kgs 6:2; cf. 2 Chr 3:3). If these two texts are correlated, it is possible that the second temple was intended to be a large cube measuring 60 cubits (ca. 90 feet or 27.4 meters) in length, width, and height (see J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988] 123–25). The cubical shape also occurs in the Gilgamesh Epic 11.28–30, 57–59, where the boat used by Utnapishtim to survive the flood is 120 cubits (ca. 60 meters) in length, width, and height, forming a huge cube (see Heidel, *Gilgamesh*, 82 n. 173, for Babylonian cubits).

“The fantastic dimensions of the eschatological Jerusalem were an occasional subject for speculation in early Judaism. According to Sib. Or. 5.252, in the future the wall around Jerusalem will reach to Joppa (a Mediterranean coastal city), while in Cant. Rab. 7.5.3 it is said that Jerusalem will extend to the gates of Damascus (eschatological urban sprawl?), and it will expand and ascend until it reaches the throne of glory. According to b. B. Bat. 75b, the future Jerusalem will have a thousand gardens, two towers, palaces, and mansions, each the size of Sepphoris, and Jerusalem will be elevated to a height of three parasangs (the size of the original Jerusalem). Very close to the enormous dimensions of the New Jerusalem are the talmudic dimensions of Rome, described as a square, 300 × 300 parasangs (b. Meg. 6b). Since the παρασάγγελος, ‘parasang,’ is a unit of measure derived from Persia, equal to 30 stadia, the dimensions of Rome would then be 9,000 stadia, 75 percent of the size of the New Jerusalem at 12,000 stadia. Given the antithesis that the author of Revelation posits between the New Jerusalem and Babylon-Rome, it is possible that he has been influ-

is τεσσαράκοντα τεσσάρων πηχῶν, 144 cubits, or about 75 yards high.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, a shift to πῆχυς, cubit, from στάδιον, stadion, is made with the measurement length. This is probably due to the influence of Ezek. 40:5.<sup>33</sup> A

enced by this tradition in his depiction of the enormous size of the holy city.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1161–1162.]

<sup>32</sup>πῆχυς, εως, ὁ (Hom.+; ins, pap, LXX, En, TestSol, TestAbr; TestJud 3:7; GrBar, ApcEsdr, EpArist, Philo, Joseph., apolog.) gen. pl. πηχῶν (un-Att.: X., An. 4, 7, 16; Polyb., Diod S, Hero Alex., Plut.; SIG 1231, 14; pap [Mayer p. 267]; LXX [s. Thackeray p. 151, 21]; En 7:2; Jos., Bell. 6, 166, C. Ap. 2, 119; SibOr 5, 57.—Phryn. p. 245 Lob.; Schwyzer I 573; Dssm., B 152 [BS 153f]; B-D-F §48; Mlt-H. 140f) orig. ‘forearm’ then cubit or ell as a measure of length (Poll. 2, 158: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ὠλεκράνου πρὸς τὸ τοῦ μέσου δακτύλου ἄκρον, τὸ διάστημα πῆχυς=a cubit is the distance from the elbow to the end of the middle finger; about 45–52 cm.—KHermann, *Lehrb. der griech. Antiquitäten* IV3 1882, 438ff; FHultsch, *APF* 3, 1906, 438ff) **Rv 21:17** (Lucian’s marvelous city [Ver. Hist. 2, 11] is measured not by the ordinary human cubit, but by the πῆχυς βασιλικός). ὡς ἀπὸ πηχῶν διακοσίων about ninety meters away (s. ἀπὸ 4) **J 21:8**. προσθεῖναι πῆχυν (cp. Epicharmus in Diog. L. 3, 11 μέτρον παχυαῖον ποτθήμειν): προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ π. (ἔνα) **Mt 6:27; Lk 12:25** (Damasc., Vi. Isid. 166 of spiritual growth: αὔξεσθαι κατὰ πῆχυν; Epict. 3, 2, 10 γέγονέ σου τὸ ψυχάριον ἀντι δακτυλίου δίπηχυ=your little soul, as long as a finger, has become two cubits in length [because you were praised]). This expression has produced two major lines of interpretation: as ref. to length of life (s. ἡλικία 1a and cp. Mimnermus 2, 3 Diehl2 πῆχυιον ἐπὶ χρόνον=‘for only a cubit of time’) add a single hour to your span of life NRSV; cp. Betz, *SM* p. 475f; as ref. to bodily growth add one cubit to your height / add a cubit to your stature NRSV mg. The former has been commended because the addition of a cubit in the sense of time appears to be a small matter, whereas a πῆχυς of bodily stature is monstrously large (Alcaeus, Fgm. 50 D.2 gives the measurement of an enormous giant as less than 5 cubits). But this objection fails to take account of freq. use of hyperbole in the dominical discourse. Moreover, the context of both pass. deals with food and clothing. Food provides the nourishment that sustains growth as well as life. Disciples do not grow to their present heights by worrying. The description ἐλάχιστον (**Lk 12:26**) appears to be an exquisite bit of irony climaxing the hyperbole.—B. 236f. DELG. M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 812.]

<sup>33</sup>“The Hebrew cubit, called ἀμμά, a term meaning both ‘forearm’ and ‘cubit,’ corresponds to the Greek term πῆχυς, which also means both ‘forearm’ and ‘cubit,’ though the English word ‘cubit’ itself is derived from the Greek word κύβητον, ‘elbow’ (cf. *cubitum*, a Latin loanword from Greek). This verse is in part inspired by Ezek 40:5, in which the length of the six-cubit-long rod used to measure the new temple follows the archaic long cubit (seven palms breadth = 28 fingers = 20.6 inches), rather than the ‘newer’ Egyptian short cubit (six palms breadth = 24 fingers = 17.5 inches); in Ezek 41:8 this archaic long cubit is called a ‘noble’ cubit. The *Vitae Prophetarum* preserves an interesting tradition that Ezekiel, like Moses, saw the heavenly model of the temple, ‘where the walls would be and the wide outer wall [τὸ τεῖχος καὶ

challenge here is the discontinuity of the measurement of the city and of the wall. The cubical city of 1,416–1,566 miles for each part, height, width, and length, but the wall around the outside is about 75 yards.<sup>34</sup> Although John doesn't specify what this measurement applies to, it seems to refer to the width of the wall, rather than either height or length.

The phrase μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου, human measurement, which is of an angel, presents some challenges also. Several possibilities for interpreting this phrase exists.<sup>35</sup> The simplest is that human

περίτειχος πλατύ), just as Daniel said that it will be built.' This can only refer to Theod Dan 9:25, καὶ οἰκοδομηθήσεται πλατεῖα καὶ τεῖχος (Codex A: περίτειχος), 'and the streets and the wall [Codex A: outer wall] will be built' (see Schwemer, "Vitae Prophetarum," 260–61)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1162.]

<sup>34</sup>"The size of the wall appears to be ridiculously small when compared with the gigantic size of the cubical city that it encloses (Charles, 2:164). However, it is not immediately evident whether the height or the width of the wall is described as measuring 144 cubits. Rev 21:9–22:5 is modeled in part after Ezek 40–48, and in Ezek 40:5 the 'man' in Ezekiel's vision measured both the height and the width of the wall surrounding the temple area, while in Ezek 41:5, 9, 12, only the widths of the temple walls are measured. In descriptions of ancient cities, the thickness of the walls is often emphasized (Neh 3:8; 12:38; Jer 51:58 [Babylon]; Herodotus 1.178 [Babylon's walls are 50 cubits wide]; Jdt 1:2 [Ecbatana's walls are 50 cubits wide and 70 cubits high]) since walls of sufficient thickness were less liable to be undermined or breached during a siege. The translation of the two adjectives μέγα and ὑψηλόν in v 12 as "wide and high" reflects the judgment that both the width and height of the wall are referred to, and in the present case it appears likely that it is the width of the wall that measures 144 cubits, not the height (the size of which is unmentioned)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1162.]

<sup>35</sup>"The meaning of the phrase μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου, 'the unit of measure used by a person, that is, an angel,' is also problematic because it appears contradictory. There are several possible ways of understanding this phrase. (a) The simplest solution is to assume that the author has followed the model of Ezek 40–48, where the person who measures the eschatological Jerusalem is referred to simply as an ἄνθρωπος 'man,' though it seems evident that an angel is in view. The author wants to make it clear that the 'man' of Ezek 40–48 is actually an angel. There are other biblical texts in which the term 'man' is used of an angelic being (Gen 18:2, 16 [cf. 4Q180 = 4QAgnesCreat 2–4 ii 3 (tr. García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 212): 'The three men [who] appeared to [Abra]ham in the oak wood of Mambre are angels']; 19:5, 8; Ezek 9:2, 3; Mark 16:5). (b) Following the argument used above under (2), the author may have wanted to stress that the cubit measure used was the one used in human society. (c) The author may have wanted to emphasize the mysterious or symbolic significance of the number 144, perhaps similar to the number 666 in 13:18. In line with the rabbinic attempt to link the name 'Menahem' with 'Messiah' because of the numerical equivalence of the letters of those terms, Dornseiff (*Alphabet*, 92) has suggested that 144 is the number of the messianic deliverer who will restore Jerusalem. Following this approach, Topham has suggested that here the num-

measurements were used by an angel to do the measuring.

And although he says indicates the gates are to be measured, no measurement of them is given. No reason is given for omitting the measurements, although none are found with the gates in Ezekiel's measurements either.

**Construction materials for the city, vv. 18-21.** Various precious stones are listed as the construction material for the new Jerusalem. The idea of the idealized Jerusalem have precious stones incorporated into it stems from Isa. 54:11-12

11 Ταπεινὴ καὶ ἀκατάστατος, οὐ παρεκλήθης, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐτοιμάζω σοὶ ἄνθρακα τὸν λίθον σου καὶ τὰ θεμέλιά σου σάπφειρον† 12 καὶ θήσω τὰς ἐπάλλξεις σου ἴασπιν καὶ τὰς πύλας σου λίθους κρυστάλλου καὶ τὸν περίβολόν σου λίθους ἐκλεκτοῦς†

11 O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. 12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones.

This became the launch pad of numerous depictions of the construction materials used in the idealized Jerusalem depictions.<sup>36</sup> Numerous Jewish writings depict an idealized Jerusalem made with various precious stones.<sup>37</sup> For example, *Tobit 13:16-17*

ber 144 represents the Hebrew spelling of 'son of God' (יהוה ה' *bn 'lwhym*, a designation for the Messiah (כ = 2; י = 50; א = 1; ל = 30; ו = 6; ה = 5; ו = 10; מ = 40; total = 144). (d) Since no human measuring tool held in the hand could possibly reach 12, 000 stadia (v 16), the author needs to mention that the measuring was done by an angel (Zahn, 2:610 n. 54). (e) Behind this statement may lurk the ancient view that two different systems were operative in the world of mortals and the world of the gods (on the notion that the gods have special names for themselves and aspects of the cosmos unknown to humans, see Comment on 19:12)." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1163.]

<sup>36</sup>"The tradition that the walls of the New Jerusalem would be constructed of precious stones is found in Isa 54:11–12, Tob 13:16, and the New Jerusalem texts from Qumran, where rubies and sapphires are prominent. Lucian (*Verae historiae* 2.11) describes a city of gold surrounded with an emerald wall with seven gates, each made of a single plank of cinnamon; see Excursus 21B: *Ancient Utopias and the Paradise Myth*, where the text is cited in translation. This city also has a river of the best myrrh flowing through it, one hundred royal cubits wide and five royal cubits deep." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1163.]

<sup>37</sup>"Several early Jewish texts, such as Isa 54:11–12 (elaborately interpreted in Pesiq. Rab Kah. 18.4–6), Tob 13:16–17, and the New Jerusalem texts from Qumran (García Martínez, "'New Jerusalem,'" 199), expect Jerusalem to be embellished with various kinds of jewels and precious metals. Fragments of Tobit, nearly the entire book of Tobit in Aramaic from Qumran, have been published (4Q196–99 = 4QTob ar [4Q200 = 4QTob hebr]; Beyer, *Ergänzungsband*, 137–47), including 13:16–17, in a text closer to



ὅτι οἰκοδομηθήσεται Ἱερουσαλημ σαπφείρῳ καὶ σμαράγδῳ καὶ λίθῳ ἐντίμῳ τὰ τεῖχη σου καὶ οἱ πύργοι καὶ οἱ προμαχῶνες ἐν χρυσίῳ καθαρῷ, καὶ αἱ πλατεῖαι Ἱερουσαλημ βηρύλλῳ καὶ ἄνθρακι καὶ λίθῳ ἐκ Σουφίρ ψηφολογηθήσονται.† καὶ ἐροῦσιν πᾶσαι αἱ ῥῦμαι αὐτῆς Ἀλληλουῖα καὶ αἰνέσουσιν λέγοντες Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός, ὃς ὕψωσεν πάντας τοὺς αἰῶνας.†

For Jerusalem will be built as his house for all ages. How happy I will be if a remnant of my descendants should survive to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir. The gates of Jerusalem will sing hymns of joy, and all her houses will cry, 'Hallelujah! Blessed be the God of Israel!' and the blessed will bless the holy name forever and ever."

Additionally in the Greco-Roman literary traditions, the idealized city of Utopia is constructed in similar manner.<sup>38</sup> Lucian's *Verae Historiae* written in the middle of

the longer text in codex  $\aleph$  than to the shorter text in codices A and B. In the Qumran fragment of Tob 13:16–17, the precious stones sapphire (ספיר) [*b/spyr*], gold (בד) [*bd/hb*], and ophir (ופיר) א די ובאב די *wb'bn dy* [*wpyr*] are mentioned, though the Aramaic terms for 'gates,' 'walls,' and 'streets' are missing. The phrase 'And I shall lay your foundations in lapis lazuli' from Isa 54:11 is quoted and interpreted in 4QpIsad (J. M. Allegro, ed., Qumran Cave 4, DJD 5 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968] 27–28), to refer to the 'congregation of his elect, like a stone of lapis lazuli among the stones,' i.e., as a metaphor for the Qumran community itself." [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1164.]

<sup>38</sup>"The term 'utopia,' from the Greek phrase οὐ τόπος meaning 'no place' (coined by Thomas Moore in the early sixteenth century), refers to a variety of ideal times and places, either in the primordial past (e.g., the Israelite garden of Eden; Hesiod's Golden Age) or in some distant place on the earth (the Greek Islands of the Blessed; Homer's island of the Phaeacians; Euhemerus' island of Panchaea), or in the future (the restoration of Edenic conditions in Jewish apocalyptic; the transformed or re-created world of Christian millenarianism). The description of such a place contains features that make it pleasing, usually including the features of an idyllic landscape: trees, shrubs, fields, flowers, fruits, spring water, sunshine and shade (in appropriate proportions), and refreshing breezes. The Greek conception of Olympus, the dwelling place of the gods, is itself a utopian ideal; see the brief sketch of conditions on Olympus in *Odyssey* 6.43–46 (LCL tr.):

Neither is it shaken by winds nor ever wet with rain, nor does snow fall upon it, but the air is outspread clear and cloudless, and over it hovers a radiant whiteness. There the blessed gods are glad all their days.

"This description became, not unexpectedly, paradigmatic for later authors and was amplified in a variety of ways by many writers (e.g., Lucretius 3.18–22; Lucan 2.271–73; Seneca *De ira* 3.6). The language of utopia was also used by Hesiod to describe the experience of just people (*Works and Days* 230–37; LCL tr.):

the second century provides a vivid depiction of the Island of the Blessed (2:11–13):

[11] τούντεῦθεν αὐτομάτων ἡμῖν τῶν στεφάνων περιρρυνέντων ἐλελύμεθα καὶ εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἠγόμεθα καὶ εἰς τὸ τῶν Μακάρων συμπόσιον. αὐτὴ μὲν οὖν ἡ πόλις πᾶσα χρυσοῦ, τὸ δὲ τεῖχος περικείται

Neither famine nor disaster ever haunt men who do true justice; but lightheartedly they tend the fields which are all their care. The earth bears them victual in plenty, and on the mountains the oak bears acorns upon the top and bees in the midst. Their woolly sheep are laden with fleeces; their women bear children like their parents. They flourish continually with good things, and do not travel on ships, for the grain-giving earth bears them fruit.

"Greek conceptions of the ideal state often involved the redistribution of functions within a hierarchically arranged civic body, but no provision was made for increased sources of income or any reduction of the needs of society (Garlan, *Slavery*, 127).

"Greek utopias include: (1) the Elysian fields (*Odyssey* 4.561–69; 6.42–46), where Rhadamanthys is ruler and life is free from cares; there are no snow, storms, and rain, but only gentle breezes; (2) the myth of the golden age or golden race (*Hesiod Works and Days* 111–20; quoted in *Diodorus* 5.66.5); (3) the myth of the easy life during the reign of Kronos (linked to the Kronia festival), which existed independently of the golden-age myth and was probably even more popular (Baldry, *Utopias*, 83–92); (4) the Islands of the Blessed (*Hesiod Works and Days* 161–73; *Theogony* 215–16; *Pindar Olymp.* 2.61–78), where Cronus is king, fertile soil produces three crops annually, and heroes lead lives of ease; (5) the land of the Hyperboreans (*Pindar Olymp.* 3.13–16, 26–34); (6) Calypso's island of Ogygia (*Odyssey* 5.55–74) with lush vegetation and the natural beauty of Calypso's cave; (7) the Garden of Alcinoos (*Odyssey* 7.112–32), a place of ever-bearing vines and fruit trees, flowers, two springs, and gentle breezes; and (8) the land of the Phaeacians (*Odyssey* 6.262–72; 7.108–32).

"Yet these places should be distinguished from idyllic natural scenes such as the love scene between Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida (*Iliad* 14.283–360) or Sappho's description of Aphrodite's grove (frag. 2; see frag. 96; *Iliad* 2.301–21; *Odyssey* 9.116–41; *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 6–17, 422–28). Thesleff (*Temenos* 22 [1986] 132) suggests that these examples are based on two main original schemes that soon mutually influenced each other: (1) the Elysian fields type was a flowering meadow on the banks of the river Okeanos in a land where those chosen by the gods live in unending bliss, and (2) the sacred garden or grove with trees (or a single tree) had a spring of running water, flowers and fruits, a cave or rock, sometimes a snake, the perfect setting for eating, drinking, love, and sleep.

"Iambulus wrote a travel account, preserved only in *Diodorus* 2.55–60 (see 60.3), of his trip to the Islands of the Sun (actually a group of seven similar islands, 58.7), where he lived for seven years, a place children are held in common (58.1). The utopian conception of Iambulus is strikingly egalitarian, in sharp contrast to prevailing utopian conceptions in which ideal societies were organized hierarchically (Braunert, *Utopia*, 15–17). Though people have more than they need, they are never overindulgent (59.1). The lives and societies of the natives are depicted as primitive and yet as ideal in every respect."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1192–1193.]

σμαράγδινον πύλαι δέ εἰσιν ἑπτὰ, πᾶσαι μονόξυλοι κινναμώμινοι· τὸ μέντοι ἔδαφος τὸ τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἡ ἐντὸς τοῦ τείχους γῆ ἔλεφαντίνη· ναοὶ δὲ πάντων θεῶν βηρύλλου λίθου ὠκοδομημένοι, καὶ βωμοὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς μέγιστοι μονόλιθοι ἀμεθύστινοι, ἐφ’ ὧν ποιοῦσι τὰς ἑκατόμβας. περὶ δὲ τὴν πόλιν ῥεῖ ποταμὸς μύρου τοῦ καλλίστου, τὸ πλάτος πήχων ἑκατὸν βασιλικῶν, βάθος δὲ πέντε ὥστε νεῖν εὐμαρῶς. λουτρὰ δὲ ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς οἴκοι μεγάλοι ὑάλινοι, τῷ κινναμώμῳ ἐγκαιόμενοι· ἀντὶ μέντοι τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ταῖς πυέλοις δρόσος θερμὴ ἔστιν. [12] ἐσθῆτι δὲ χρῶνται ἀραχνίοις λεπτοῖς, πορφυροῖς. αὐτοὶ δὲ σώματα μὲν οὐκ ἔχουσιν, ἀλλ’ ἀναφεῖς καὶ ἄσαρκοί εἰσιν, μορφὴν δὲ καὶ ἰδέαν μόνην ἐμφαίνουσιν, καὶ ἀσώματοι ὄντες ὁμῶς συνεστᾶσιν καὶ κινοῦνται καὶ φρονοῦσι καὶ φωνὴν ἀφιᾶσιν, καὶ ὅλως ἔοικε γυμνὴ τις ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτῶν περιπολεῖν τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὁμοιότητα περικειμένη· εἰ’ γοῦν μὴ ἄψαιτό τις, οὐκ ἂν ἐξελέγξειε μὴ εἶναι σῶμα τὸ ὀρώμενον· εἰσὶ γὰρ ὡσπερ σκιαὶ ὀρθαί, οὐ’ μέλαιναί. γηράσκει δὲ οὐδεὶς, ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ ἧς ἂν ἡλικίας ἔλθῃ παραμένει. οὐ’ μὴν οὐδὲ νύξ παρ’ αὐτοῖς γίνεται, οὐδὲ ἡμέρα πάνυ λαμπρά· καθάπερ δὲ τὸ λυκαυγὲς ἤδη πρὸς ἔω, μηδέπω ἀνατείλαντος ἡλίου,

21.18 And  
the construction of its wall is of jasper  
and  
the city is of pure gold  
like clear glass.

21.19 the foundations of the wall of the city  
with every precious stone are adorned:  
the 1st foundation of jasper,  
the 2nd of sapphire,  
the 3rd of agate,  
the 4th of emerald,  
the 5th of onyx,  
the 6th of carnelian,  
the 7th of chrysolite,  
the 8th of beryl,  
the 9th of topaz,  
the 10th of chrysoprase,  
the 11th of jacinth,  
the 12th of amethyst,

21.20 and  
the twelve gates are twelve pearls,  
each one of the gates was  
out of one pearl.

21.21 and  
the streets of the city are pure gold  
as clear glass.

608 μέντοι καὶ ὥραν μίαν ἴσασιν τοῦ  
609 ἔτους· αἰεὶ γὰρ παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἔαρ  
ἐστὶ καὶ εἷς ἄνεμος πνεῖ παρ’  
αὐτοῖς ὁ ζέφυρος. [13] ἡ δὲ χώρα  
610 πᾶσι μὲν ἄνθεισιν, πᾶσι δὲ φυτοῖς  
ἡμέροις τε καὶ σκιεροῖς τέθηλεν·  
αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄμπελοι δωδεκάφοροι  
εἰσιν καὶ κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον  
καρποφοροῦσιν· τὰς δὲ ῥοιάς καὶ  
21.20 τὰς μηλέας καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ὀπώραν  
ἔλεγον εἶναι τρισκαιδεκάφορον·  
ἐνὸς γὰρ μηνὸς τοῦ παρ’ αὐτοῖς  
Μινώου δις καρποφορεῖν· ἀντὶ δὲ  
πυροῦ οἱ στάχυες ἄρτον ἔτοιμον  
ἐπ’ ἄκρων φύουσιν ὡσπερ  
611 μύκητας. πηγαὶ δὲ περὶ τὴν πόλιν  
ὕδατος μὲν πέντε καὶ ἐξήκοντα  
καὶ τριακόσiai, μέλιτος δὲ ἄλλαι  
τοσαῦται, μύρου δὲ πεντακόσiai,  
μικρότεραι μέντοι αὗται, καὶ  
612 ποταμοὶ γάλακτος ἑπτὰ καὶ οἴνου  
ὀκτώ.<sup>39</sup>

The city itself is all of gold and the wall around it of emerald. It has seven gates, all of single planks of cinnamon. The foundations of the city and the ground within its wall are ivory. There are temples of all the gods, built of beryl, and in them great monolithic altars of amethyst, on which they make their great burnt-offerings. Around the city runs a river of the finest myrrh ... Nobody grows old, but stays the same age as on coming there. Again, it is neither night among them nor yet very bright day, but the light which is on the country is like the gray morning toward dawn, when the sun has not yet risen ... The grape-vines yield twelve vintages a year, bearing every month; the pomegranates, apples and other fruit-trees were said to bear thirteen times a year.<sup>40</sup>

Such projections of idealized cities were extremely widespread and popular throughout the Roman empire of John’s day. With such a rich background of projections of an idealized city all through John’s world, that he would pick up on Isaiah 54 with the mentioning of the idealized Jerusalem and then extend the image according to what he had seen in his vision should in no

<sup>39</sup>Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*, written shortly after the middle of the second century A.D., provides indirect evidence of the popularity of utopian views in the eastern Mediterranean world. In a parody ultimately modeled on the fantastic adventures of Odysseus (a parody that the scholiast thought was aimed at the eschatological Jerusalem [Schol. 14 on *Ver. hist.* 2.11; H. Rabe, *Schol. in Lucianum* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1971) 21]), Lucian narrates his arrival at the Island of the Blessed (the location where certain Greek heroes enjoyed a blissful afterlife), where the breezes were both perfumed and musical (2.5). After a preliminary judgment by Rhadamanthys

way be surprising. Note from the above diagram how he goes about giving this depiction. The twelve foundation stones in vv. 19-20 compare to the twelve pre-

(2.6–10), Lucian and his party are freed and taken into the city to the table of the Blessed Ones, i.e., the gods.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1193.]

<sup>40</sup>For a complete translation of the entire text see [http://lucianofsamosata.info/downloads/lucian\\_true\\_history.pdf](http://lucianofsamosata.info/downloads/lucian_true_history.pdf). Page 1039

precious stones arranged in four rows of three each on the breastplate of the high priest, with each representing one of the twelve tribes (Exod. 28:21; 39:14). But in v. 14 John has indicated the twelve foundations represent the twelve apostles, which shifts basis for the people of God from covenant Israel to the true church based on the teachings of the apostles. The listing of twelve different precious stones represents stones coming from as far away as Ethiopia and India in John's world.<sup>41</sup> The huge gates each made of a single pearl was no problem to imagine in John's world with Jewish traditions alluded to gigantic pearls, especially in idealized descriptions.<sup>42</sup> Although now completely clear in its specification, ἡ πλατεῖα τῆς πόλεως probably refers to an open plaza in the center of the city, rather than to a main street or all the streets of the city.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup>“ὁ πέμτος σαρδόνυξ, ὁ ἕκτος σάρδιον, ὁ ἕβδομος χρυσόλιθος, ὁ ὄγδοος βήρυλλος, ὁ ἕνατος τοπάζιον, ὁ δέκατος χρυσόπρασος, ὁ ἐνδέκατος ὑάκινθος, ὁ δωδέκατος ἀμέθυστος, ‘the fifth, onyx, the sixth, carnelian, the seventh, yellow topaz, the eighth, beryl, the ninth, topaz, the tenth, chrysoprase, the eleventh, jacinth, the twelfth, amethyst.’ The term χρυσόλιθος (Latin chrysolithos), literally ‘golden stone,’ is mentioned by Pliny Hist. nat. 36.126 as an export of Ethiopia, though the stones from India were particularly highly regarded. The report of Pliny and Isidor (Orig. 16.15.2), supplemented by Propertius (who refers to the flavo lumine, ‘tawny luster,’ of the stone in 2.16.44), indicates that the stone was yellow in color. The word is usually translated ‘topaz’ or ‘yellow sapphire,’ but it can also refer to ‘peridot’ (Casson, *Periplus*, 190, 260). The beryl was a stone favored for magical amulets and was called the ‘stone of Zeus’ (apparently only in Cyranides 1.2.20–26).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1165.]

<sup>42</sup>“Some have rationalized that the gates of pearl referred to inlaid mother-of-pearl. Since there are (admittedly late) Jewish traditions that refer to gigantic pearls, there is no need to rationalize the details of this city, which is already fabulous in most other respects. In 1 Enoch 18:7, a mountain of pearl is mentioned. There are several rabbinic traditions concerning enormous pearls; see Str-B, 3:851–52. R. Johanan is quoted in b. B. Bat. 75a, ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, will in the time to come bring precious stones and pearls which are thirty [cubits] by thirty and will cut out from them [openings] ten [cubits] by twenty, and will set them up in the gates of Jerusalem’ (for parallel traditions, see b. Sanh. 100a; Midr. Pss. 87.2). Pesiq. Rab Kah. 18.5 contains the tradition that the east gate and its two wickets would be made from a single pearl hollowed out by the Holy One. For further references in rabbinic literature, see Burrows, *JTS* 43 (1942) 177–79.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1165–1166.]

<sup>43</sup>“More probably, however, it can be understood as referring to an open plaza or square in the center of the city (Schlatter, *Apokalypse*, 335; Sickenberger, *Erklärung*, 194; Reader, “Stadt Gottes,” 147–48). This understanding of ἡ πλατεῖα solves the problem of how the complex geographical features of 22:2 should be visualized (see Comment on 22:2). On the use of gold in the eschatological Jerusalem, see Comment on v 18b.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1166.]

The composite picture emerging from this depiction is of a fabulously beautiful place for God's people to live throughout eternity. While the Greeks and the Romans often day dreamed of an idealistic place to live perhaps located somewhere on earth, John presents this glorious picture of the eternal home for God's people. The Jews projected a fantasy idea of a future city of rebuilt Jerusalem but only for the select few who sufficiently obeyed the Torah. John counters that with his image of Heaven for people from all the nations who have come to Christ in genuine faith commitment.

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

How can one describe Heaven? Particularly the eschatological Heaven as the future dwelling place of God's people for eternity? [A study of many of the older hymns](#) that were sung half a century or so ago reflects that Heaven is usually understood in terms of things familiar to the hymn writer in his or her world. John described Heaven out of his vision from God using familiar language to folks in his day. Interestingly, my study thus far suggests that John's world may have been more curious about an idealized dwelling place than our modern western world -- not something I realized beforehand.

The picture of Jerusalem as a luxurious city with splendid beauty is not intended to be understood in crass materialistic terms. Some church leaders later on after the era of the apostles tried to take the picture of the new Jerusalem this way and such mistaken approaches almost cost the book of Revelation a place in the NT canon. In fact, it did so in many of the Syriac speaking regions of the northeastern Mediterranean Sea area. The Peshitta translation, among the earliest of all the translations of the Greek text of the NT, did not include Revelation until the nineteenth century, and even still not all groups accept Revelation as canonical.

The point of this marvelous picture is to underscore the generous provision of God for His people. While the rest of humanity suffers in the never ending torments of Hell along with Satan and the beasts, God's people will experience the complete fullness of God's blessings as they live in His presence throughout eternity.

In that we can rejoice and give praise to our God!