

A GLIMPSE OF THE CAPITAL CITY OF HEAVEN
 Tuesday Night Bible Study, March 10, 2009

--INTRODUCTION

--the New Jerusalem, the capital city of heaven, is where God lives, and as Jesus said, there is a place there prepared for us to live with Him.

--John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." (NIV)

--our interest in the New Jerusalem is analogous to someone who just got a new job in a foreign country wanting to learn all they can about where they are moving.

--Hebrews ch. 11 talks about examples of faith in the Old Testament and states that "they were longing for a better country-a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:16)

--and that city is the New Jerusalem described in Revelation ch. 21

--God gave John the visions of Revelation while he was banished on the Island of Patmos by the Roman government.

--when John wrote the book of Revelation he was probably the only surviving apostle as the other apostles had probably been executed by this time; if John was the only surviving apostle then he would have been the only person living in the entire world who carried the apostolic commission given by Jesus and was therefore the only person in the world qualified to write an authoritative book of prophecy such as Revelation (Jesus personally gave the 12 apostles a special commission for their apostolic ministry while He was still on the earth – Acts 1:2-9)

--further credence is given to the apostle John's vision of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation by parallel realities in the Old Testament and the ministry of Christ. You can gain deeper insights into the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation ch.21 by looking at it in light of the parallel realities that precede it.

--just as the ministry of Christ was the fulfillment of the vast landscape of prophecy in the Old Testament, so John's vision of the New Jerusalem isn't really anything new but rather an elaboration on and fulfillment of what God had already revealed.

--continuity between the Old and New Testament books is a key mark of authenticity of the New Testament books, unlike many writings of false prophets (such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even official doctrine of the Roman Catholic church) which go off on wild tangents which end up completely changing the meaning of the Old Testament!

--OVERVIEW OF MAJOR PARALLELS BETWEEN REALITIES ON EARTH AS WE KNOW IT AND REALITIES IN THE NEW JERUSALEM:

reality on earth as we know it	>>	parallel reality in the New Jerusalem
<u>1.</u> light of the sun	>>	<u>1.</u> light of the glory of God emanating from the New Jerusalem
<u>2.</u> the tabernacle through which God dwelled in Spirit among Israel and the "tabernacle" of the heart in which His Spirit dwells	>>	<u>2.</u> the New Jerusalem is the "tabernacle" of heaven through which God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will dwell among His people
<u>3.</u> the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle was a holy place which required atonement for all sin	>>	<u>3.</u> the New Jerusalem is a holy place which requires atonement for all sin
<u>4.</u> dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle	>>	<u>4.</u> dimensions of the New Jerusalem building (same proportions but 1500 square miles)
<u>5.</u> inside of Holy of Holies overlaid with pure gold	>>	<u>5.</u> composed of heavenly element described as transparent gold

6. 12 gems in the square breastplate of the High Priest who alone could enter the Holy of Holies	>>	6. 12 types of gems in the square foundations of the wall around the New Jerusalem building
7. inside the breastplate... were the mysterious Urim and Thummim (literally translated "lights and perfections" and were used to discern God's will)	>>	7. inside the wall... is the building of the New Jerusalem (which contains divine perfection and light and from which God's perfect will is known)
8. sacrifice of Christ which opened a "new and living way" into the Holy of Holies (and literally caused the veil into the Holy of Holies to be torn in two)	>>	8. 12 pearl gates through the wall which allows anybody to enter the New Jerusalem through Christ.

***and I'm sure there are many other parallels that further study would reveal!*

--PARALLEL 1: the light of heaven

--when looking at the New Jerusalem from afar one of the first characteristics that would be noticed is the blazing light emanating from it that replaces the light of the sun!

--Revelation 21:23: "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light."

--the Old Testament prophet Isaiah spoke of this characteristic:

--Isaiah 60:19-22: "**The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light**, and your God will be your glory. 20 Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. 21 Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever..."

--according to Greek scholars, the Greek word translated "illuminated" (*efoótisen* – Rev. 21:23) carries the idea of a concentrated source of light, like a light bulb – or the sun!

--in our world today the sun shines down on the earth, but on the new earth where the New Jerusalem will be it will be an inverse reality... the light of the universe will radiate from the capital city of heaven on the earth!

--and as Isaiah 60:19 points out the glory of the Lord will be an "everlasting light"... in the context of eternity, the light of the sun that we experience today is but a blip on the screen compared to the everlasting light of God's glory!

--later in our study tonight when we get to the composition of the New Jerusalem we'll see the light of heaven in a whole new light! No pun intended!

--PARALLEL 2: living in the presence of God in the New Jerusalem...

--for a brief time God dwelled on the earth through His Son, and throughout history God has dwelled on the earth through His Spirit...

--in particular, He dwelled in the **tabernacle (and temple) in Israel** through His Spirit and today He dwells in the **tabernacle of our heart** through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)

--but in the New Jerusalem we will live in the light of the full glory of God and full presence of God – Father, Son, and Spirit!

--Revelation 21:3: "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men**, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God..."

--Revelation 22:4-5: "**They will see His face**, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."

--brief Old and New Testament glimpses of God's glory that foreshadow His glory and presence in the New Jerusalem...

--Mt. Sinai... caused the face of Moses to glow

--Exodus 33:18-23: "And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." 19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." 20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." 21 And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22 So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23 Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

--God's Words to Moses about Moses not being able to see God's face is in stark contrast us being able to see God face to face in heaven - "They will see His face..." (Revelation 22:4)

--the dedication of Solomon's temple...

--a limited manifestation of God's glory filled Solomon's temple when it was completed and the Ark of the Covenant was first brought into the Holy of Holies: "And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD." (1 Kings 8:10-11)

--the transfiguration of Jesus... when His face shined like the sun

--Matthew 17:1-2: "After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. **His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.**"

--the apostles saw a faint glimpse of what it will be like to see His face in all it's glory in heaven!

--after John was given the vision in Revelation, at some point he probably remembered back to seeing the face of Jesus during the transfiguration!

--His face shined like the sun...in heaven His glory will be the sun that we will live in forever!

--take all these manifestations of God's glory... through the tabernacle, before Moses on Mt. Sinai that caused Moses' face to glow, through the transfiguration of Jesus before three of the apostles, moments of euphoria because of the joy of the Lord through His Spirit dwelling in our hearts...

take all of these and multiply them by infinity and that is what it will be like in heaven!

--PARALLEL 3: holiness in the New Jerusalem....

--the reason we will be able to see God face to face and live in His presence and the full manifestation of His glory is because we will be free of sin – not only in our spirit but also in our bodies, our resurrected, glorified bodies.

--just as it was for Moses, if we were to see God face to face in our current bodies we would completely disintegrate!

--living in the light of heaven in our sinful, fallen bodies could be compared to staring at the sun and going blind!

--at some point we all have to pass through death so that we can receive new, glorified bodies!

--Revelation 21:27: "But there shall by no means enter it [*the New Jerusalem*] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

--this verse confirms that we will be living in perfectly sinless bodies in heaven because nothing that causes defilement can be there.

--and as this verse points out, we will be sinless not because we made ourselves sinless (as most false religions teach) but because God makes us a new creation in Christ – "those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." (22:27b)

--the connection between our sinless bodies and seeing the face of God in all His glory helps put sin in the right perspective...

--main difference between the bodies we live in now and our glorified bodies in heaven is that our glorified bodies will be perfectly sinless...and this will allow us to see God face to face in all His glory!

--all sin that we are tempted by in this life is a lie that promises false glory but in reality prevents us from seeing the glory of God in our life! (limited manifestations of His glory)

--and for those who do not place their trust in Christ, their sin and life of living for false glory will ultimately prevent them from seeing the glory of God in heaven!

--sin is a cheap rip-off!! – as Jesus said, "The thief [*Satan*] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

--that is why Paul said, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!" (Romans 6:1-2)

--sin robs us from experiencing the glory of God in this life – from experiencing the "abundant life"!

--which, as a side note, does not mean material wealth and prosperity, but spiritual wealth and prosperity... priceless peace and joy deep in our heart that endures even through persecution where all material wealth can be lost!

--PARALLELS 4 - 8: dimensions and composition of the New Jerusalem...

--when you compare the picture of the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament tabernacle (or temple) to the picture of the New Jerusalem in heaven there are several striking parallels!

--perfect cube dimensions...

--both the shape of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and the shape of the New Jerusalem are cubes...

--although the New Jerusalem is 1500 miles long, wide, and high (Revelation 21:16)

--transparent gold...

--Revelation 21:18 states that the building of the New Jerusalem is made out of a heavenly element described as transparent gold!

--Revelation 21:18: "the city [*the New Jerusalem*] was pure gold, like clear glass."

--many components of the tabernacle and temple were made out of gold, including the Ark of the Covenant that was made out of Acacia Wood overlaid with pure gold.

--the entire 1500 mile cubed city is made out of transparent gold so that the glory of God (which replaces the sunlight) can radiate through every component of the city and out of the city through the entire universe!

--and we will be living inside this city in this light...which suggests that heavenly eyesight will be totally different than eyesight on earth...heavenly dimensions and color spectrums!

--12 types of colorful gems adorn the wall around the city...

--Revelation 21:19-20: "The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second **sapphire**, the third chalcedony, the fourth **emerald**, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth **sardius**, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth **beryl**, the ninth **topaz**, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh **jacinth**, and the twelfth **amethyst**."

--the full glory of God that replaces the sun and shines out of New Jerusalem bounces off these gems creating a dazzling rainbow of color around the New Jerusalem!

--think of all the glorious moments of life... watching a brilliant sunset, flowers in bloom, an athlete crossing the finish line pushing the limits of physical achievement, moments of love... "the glory of love" (Peter Cetera song) ...all the moments in life where your heart leaps for joy ... all of the glory we experience in this life is but a faint glimpse, only scratching the surface, of the dazzling, mind-boggling, full glory of God that awaits us in heaven...glory that our mortal frames could not even take in...glory that only our glorified bodies can behold.

--connection between the square wall around the New Jerusalem and the square breastplate of the High Priest in ancient Israel...

--the 12 types of gems on the wall are similar (7 are identical) to the 12 gems on the breastplate of the High Priest who entered the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle once a year... Exodus 28:15-21: "You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it. 16 It shall be doubled into a square: a span shall be its length, and a span shall be its width. 17 And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a **sardius**, a **topaz**, and an **emerald**; this shall be the first row; 18 the second row shall be a turquoise, a **sapphire**, and a diamond; 19 the third row, a **jacinth**, an agate, and an **amethyst**; 20 and the fourth row, a **beryl**, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. 21 And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes."

--the Urim and Thummim of the Old Testament high priests...

--the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:15-21) was like one big pouch which contained the mysterious "Urim and Thummim" through which God gave the High Priest counsel for judicial matters in Israel.

--after King David the higher revelation of prophets superceded the Urim and Thummim and they were never again used.

--the Urim and Thummim may have been some kind of diamonds, but their names literally mean "lights and perfections".

--parallel...

12 gems that adorned the square breastplate of the High Priest	12 gems that adorned the square wall around the New Jerusalem
inside the square breastplate were the "lights and perfections"... through which God's will was discerned.	inside the square wall is the light of the glory of God and the city of divine perfection...from which God's will is made known for all eternity

--12 pearl gates through the wall around the New Jerusalem...

--all the materials described as comprising the structure of the New Jerusalem could be categorized as inorganic elements, but the 12 gates into the city are each made out of solid pearls, which are organic...

--why did God choose to make the gates out of pearls? There may be a deeper significance than simply their beauty!

--pearls are the result of a wound in an oyster

(oysters are surprisingly complex...with a mouth, stomach, heart, and muscles for movement across the ground)

--when a foreign substance becomes embedded in the flesh of an oyster it then deposits calcium and other chemicals around the substance to form a pearl.

--just as pearls are the result of a wound so the pearl gates into heaven are the result of the wound of Christ dying on the cross!

--the 12 gates through the wall is a picture of how we can pass through the limits of the Old Testament law and freely enter God's presence...

--only the high priest, once a year, was able to enter the Holy of Holies – the dwelling place of God in Spirit on the earth.

--if we lived in Old Testament times, the reality of the New Jerusalem being our home would be comparable to the Holy of Holies being our home – living in the place where only one person once a year under strict ceremonial law could enter!

--and while the High Priest offered sacrifices under the ceremonial law to make atonement, while living in heaven we will be offering the sacrifice of praise!

--Hebrews 13:14-16: "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.
15 **Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."