

There's a lot of talk that is just talk. People say, "We should get together sometime". Sure, "sometime". Have you noticed that "sometime" never comes. Pull up your calendar. You won't see "sometime" on there. Your spouse says, "I've been thinking about remodeling the entry way." You don't get stressed. It is just talk. You know it is more than talk when you have to write it down. I can forget about getting together "sometime", but if you say, "Sounds like a plan. I'll meet you there next Tuesday." I've got to write that down. I am pulling out my calendar. I can ignore that you are thinking about remodeling the entry way but when I hear that someone's contractor friend offered to do the work at cost, just to be nice, I'm going to write this down. I am pulling out my phone and taking down his name and number. When we know it is actually going to happen we write it down. When we don't want to forget it, we write it down. We trust that it is not just talk but it is a plan, when we write it down.

John got a vision of the holy eternal home of the redeemed. It looked perfect. The kind of ideal setting that for our whole lives has been just talk, a utopian dream. Then he heard a voice that said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:5) This is not just talking, John. No, this is a plan. This is going to happen. Go ahead, write it down.

God knew that this revelation would be flagged by human ears as "too good to be true". So he interrupts the revelation twice to remind John and all who would read this description that we can trust it.

**Revelation 21:5** Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

**Revelation 22:6** And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

A promise is as trustworthy as the one giving it. This promise comes from the one who was seated on the throne. Here is what we believe to be trustworthy and true about our eternal home.

### **Fundamental Belief #28**

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare

that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 11:15; 21:1-7; 22:1-5.)

This is the last in our study of the Fundamentals. We have talked about eternal life. We have answered the questions “how do we get it?” (*by grace through faith*) and “when will it happen?” (*at the second coming*) but we haven’t yet described what it will be like. This is what we will do now.

God showed John what it would be like and fortunately he wrote it down, in what we now call Revelation 21 and 22.

As we study what this life will be like, I hope that we might become more excited about that life and less fixated on this life. I hope that your attraction to the world decreases and your courage to face the struggles in the world increases. Receive this description as trustworthy and true. Go ahead, write it down.

This study divides the descriptions of eternal life in Revelation 21 and 22 into 7 realities that you can write down.

### **Reality #1: Eternal life will be new!**

Notice the repeating adjective in the first 6 verses of Revelation 21.

**Revelation 20:1-2** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

**Revelation 20:6** And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

The word “new” appears 4 times in verses 1-6. There are two Greek terms that are translated as “new”, the one used here speaks of the quality of being new as opposed to being new in a point in time. The suggestion is that the new heavens and new earth are not a new creation, ex nihilo. God will redeem his original creation by making it new. It may be something similar to how God will give us new bodies, but it will still be us. I cannot prove this interpretation, but I like to think that we will stand on redeemed dirt and breathe redeemed air. If he can give us immortal bodies in a moment he could work a transformation of all that we have polluted and destroyed.

When my family hiked through Washington state we passed through several burned areas. Wildfires can turn a lush forest into an exposed wasteland. These are some of the most pristine areas in the world, and they will never be the same. It was a painful decision for me to stop hiking. The final 2 sections of the trail are known to be the most stunning. I had hiked other parts of the trail. But I had never seen this final part. And this was the part that was on fire. I realized that it would be dangerous to hike it then, but I also realized that it wouldn't be the same if I hiked it later. God will make a new earth!

A dam was built 100 years ago to provide water to San Francisco. It flooded the Hetch Hetchy valley in Yosemite. Jon Muir says it was the best of the best. It will never be the same. Some of the most painful stories to me are stories of large-scale environmental disasters. I don't like to think of the irreversible damage caused in the Exxon spill. It hurts me to see creation ruined. God will make it new.

The earth made new is a relevant concept in the secular world. Are you familiar with the term geoengineering? Every university science department around the world is debating it.

Here is how Oxford Geoengineering Program defines it, "Geoengineering is the deliberate large-scale intervention in the Earth's natural systems to counteract climate change."<sup>i</sup>

The two categories that are generally discussed are Solar Geoengineering (reflecting sunlight away from the earth) and Carbon Geoengineering (removing carbon from the atmosphere). There are scientists right now discussing giant space mirrors and pumping aerosols into the upper atmosphere to give the earth some shade.

Leading minds around our world are fixated on how we can save our planet. They are all wrestling with solutions that will keep an aging planet from wearing out. It is not new anymore and we are destroying it fast. Glaciers recede, species go extinct, old growth trees won't come back in our lifetime. Praise God for the promise of a new earth.

The text mentions four things specifically that will be new, 1. Heavens, 2. Earth, 3. Jerusalem, 4. All things. If it is not included in the "heavens" and "earth" of verse one, it is covered in the "all things" of verse 6. "Heavens" simply means the sky or the atmosphere.

## Reality #2: Eternal life will be pure!

**Revelation 21:27** But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

**Revelation 21:8** But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

**Revelation 22:3** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

Since nothing unclean will enter the New Jerusalem, there are a lot of things that need to pass away. This term pops up twice in the first four verses of Revelation 21.

**Revelation 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

**Revelation 21:4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

In eternity, everything that is good is made new and everything that is not good is thrown out. It is true that all sin will pass away. But it is notable that God names some specific aspects of sin that will not be with us forever. There is some overlap in the list and a few overarching terms. I count 22 specifically mentioned things that will be no more: old heaven (v1), old earth (v1), sea (v1), death (v4), mourning (v4), crying (v4), pain (v4), old order (v4), people who are wicked(v8), cowardly, unbelieving, vile, murderous, sexually immoral, magic arts, idolaters, liars, temple (v22), night (v25, 22:5), impure things (v27), detestable and false acts, and the curse (v3).

The description of eternal life contains echoes of Eden. In the fall the curse was given. In the New Jerusalem the curse is lifted.

I see a need to get rid of death, but what is so bad about the sea? Some of these are not what I would consider to be impure (i.e. night, sea). What will eternity be like for all the beach lovers?

This is a good time to consider the best practices for interpreting Revelation 21 and 22. In all of prophecy we have the interpretive challenge of discerning

when something is intended to be literal and when something is intended to be symbolic or when it is both. We should understand that these descriptions are speaking of a literal place. We will have new physical bodies. When we read of a throne and trees and gates we should expect those things to be literally. We also recognize that there is a great deal of imagery and symbolism necessary for God to reveal to our limited minds the glories of eternal life. The descriptions of Revelation 21 and 22 parallel the descriptions of the new temple in Ezekiel 40-48, but they don't perfectly agree. There are different dimensions and materials. This should clue us in that not every aspect of this description is to be taken literally. We should be careful not to get over precise with our interpretations of scripture. This description is trustworthy and true but that doesn't mean that overly specific interpretation is true.

My best understanding of "no more sea" is that it is both literal and figurative. There will be no more sea as we know it. We will still have beaches because there are going to be bodies of water (Revelation 22:1). Any disappointment you feel in saying goodbye to the Pacific Ocean will fade away when you spend a day on the shore of the River of Life. Figuratively, seas represent chaos and evil (Revelation 13:1). John received this revelation from the Island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). He was surrounded by a sea. Imagine what a sea would have been like for him. It represented captivity. I have read arguments that link the "sea" in Revelation 21 with the "abyss" in Revelation 20. Fallen Babylon sits on "many waters" (17:1). So there are suggestions that sea is a representation of the abode of evil. But it is not all bad. The sea is featured in Revelation as something God made (14:7) and we are told that there will be a Sea of Glass (15:2). Beach lovers will be just fine!

All the bad things will pass away. If there is anything we like that will not be there, there will be something better.

Isaiah tells us that the passing away of the bad stuff will be so complete that we won't even think about them. They won't even be present in our mind.

**Isaiah 65:17** For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

When God says it passes away we can trust that they are gone. Write it down. Actually, don't bother. You don't need to remember it.

The next verse describes what replaces these memories.

**Isaiah 65:18** But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

The measurements show an anti-image of Babylon, which also had square measurements that were reported by Herodotus in stadia or furlongs. Everything that Babylon represents, Jerusalem will not include.

Eternal life will be pure! Write it down!

**Reality #3: Eternal life will be urban!**

I am not a city guy. But I plan to be one for eternity. The home that God has prepared for us is a city.

**Revelation 20:2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The home that God made for Adam and Eve was a garden. The home he makes for us is a city. How is this good news? I suppose that all the reasons I might list for not preferring the city will not be true of this city. But, initially, a city is a disappointment to me. Some people love the city. They love it because they buzz with energy. There are people everywhere. There is diversity. There are endless options. In the purest forms, these things are positives.

1. It is a city designed by God.

**Hebrews 11:10** For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

It comes down “from God”. Imagine a city that is designed by God. The great cities of the world are wonders. They are stunning even though everywhere you look you see something man made. We refer to nature as the things that God made. In the new Jerusalem, the city will be nature. It will be made by God.

2. Cities have lots of people!

The main reason I don't like the city is a main reason why it is good news. There are lots of people in cities. That is what I don't like about Anchorage. But it is a good thing that lots of people will be saved.

In Adam and Eve's garden they were told to be fruitful and multiply. Their garden would have grown into a city. Cities are populated areas. Cities are places of connections and cooperation.

We have an idea that it is going to be hard to get into heaven. God has not prepared us a holy village but a holy city. He expects a large population to be saved!

3. There will be plenty of space!

I have heard people say, “make heaven crowded.” I agree with the concept, but I also like my space. Lots of people means less space. I spent some time on this to reassure myself, and I am convinced that we will have plenty of space in the New Jerusalem. The city will have lots of people and the people will have plenty of space.

First, the city is big!

The measurement of the city is 12,000 stadia (v.16). This is a number that has symbolic significance. I am not sure if it is to be taken literally. But it doesn't matter. If you take it symbolically, the message is that it is big. If you take it literally, well it is really big.

The text does not specify if this is the circumference or the measurement of each side. Either way it is big. But the general consensus is that this is the measurement of each side. Which makes it even bigger. A stadia is a little more than 600 feet. If you calculate it at 616, 12000 stadia equals an even 1400 miles.

You ready for some math?

If each side is 12000 stadia, the city is just short of 2 million square miles (1,960,000).

The largest cities in the world are in Greenland. I have decided they don't count. For example, Sermersooq is considered the largest city in the world by area. It was formed in 2009 by merging five smaller cities. See, not fair. It is 205,400 square miles and has a population of just 23,123 people. It's population density 0.11 persons per square mile. We are not going to use Greenland in our comparisons.

Any guess what the largest city is in the US by area? Sitka, Alaska, Followed by Juneau, the Wrangell, then Anchorage.<sup>ii</sup>

When I read through the list of the world's largest cities, the first city name I recognize is Beijing China. It comes in number 22 after a bunch of obscure cities with borders that stretch far beyond normal city limits.

Beijing is a legitimate candidate and it is massive. 6,489.5 sq mi. To give a comparison. You can fit 21 New York City's inside the area of Beijing. Are you ready

for this? You can fit 300 Beijing's into the New Jerusalem. That means you would fit over 6000 New York Cities into it. It is a big city, about 3 times the state of Alaska.

That is a big city, but it needs to be a big city to fit all the saved. You might be a realist and find that you are not impressed with that size. Sure, it is a big city, but it is not a giant country only about 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the continental US. I don't like traffic. I did a bit more math to assure myself that there would be enough space.

The number that matters here is population density. It might be big but how crowded will that big city be? We need some estimate of how many people will be saved. Let's be optimists and assume that everyone will be saved. The Bible tells us that some won't, but we are going to be very conservative on our space estimate and assume the largest crowd possible. So now we need the number of people ever born. I have a number from the Population Reference Bureau.<sup>iii</sup> They estimate that total number of people to be born in the history of the world is 117 billion. The number is on the high end because it is estimated with an evolutionary timeline. They get their figure based on a model that starts 190,000 years before Christ. They estimate that the population in 190,000 was around 2 people. I believe the earth is significantly younger than this which would mean that the 117 billion is a very high estimate. But let's take that number, again, just to give us the most crowded scenario possible to see if we could live with it.

There are some populated cities right now. The most populated is Tokyo Japan. Tokyo has over 37.4 million people living in it.<sup>iv</sup> That is crazy. Like 130 times the population of Anchorage. But it is not quite 117 billion. With 117 billion people spread out over nearly 2 million square miles we would have a population density of 59,500 people per square mile. That is pretty thick. About twice as crowded as New York City. Let me offer some perspective to calm your claustrophobia.

First, remember that my estimate was based on the largest possible numbers so it is a ridiculous over estimate.

It may be crowded but it is now impossible. Manila Philippines has the highest population density of any city at 119,000. Twice as much as my estimate for the New Jerusalem. So it is possible. In fact, it would had a lower population density than the 20 most crowded cities in the world.<sup>v</sup>

The New Jerusalem is not the only city, but it is the capitol of a new world that God is creating for us. The city has gates. We are not locked in the city. If you feel you just have to get out of the city, the gates are never closed (Revelation 21:25; Isaiah 60:11). We read that kings come into it to worship (Revelation 21:25; Jeramiah 3:17). This suggests that there will be other populated areas on the earth.



In Romans 4 Paul speaks of a promise given to Abraham and his offspring. Any idea what that promise is? Read it in verse 13.

**Romans 4:13** For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

We don't just get a city, we get the world.

The population density estimate assumes that everyone will live at ground level. The city is a cube. It extends 1400 miles into the sky. There will be space like we have never experienced before.

Finally, Jesus promised that there would be space for me. In John 14:1, Jesus assures us that in his father's house, there are many rooms.

God has prepared for us a city and that is ok with me! Write it down!

#### **Reality #4: Eternal life will be attractive!**

**Revelation 21:2** And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The word translated "adorned" is the Greek word *kosmeo* from which we get the word cosmetics. Apparently make up is allowed in heaven? When I think of painted faces and flashy cities, I have an image of Las Vegas. The New Jerusalem is going to be very different than Las Vegas. The city itself is adorned and the artist is God. Like a skilled makeup artist working backstage on intricate details, God has prepared each tiny detail of our eternal home to pop with attraction. The phrase "as clear as crystal" is used to describe the city (21:10; 22:1). It literally means to flash forth. The various gems and precious stones used to describe the city (Revelation 21:18-21) give us the impression that this place sparkles. I don't know what they all mean but is sure sounds pretty. Heaven will have an abundance of things we consider rare and precious.

Babylon is also adorned (Revelation 17:4) but her sparkle is an expression of her impurity. The sparkle of New Jerusalem is an expression of her purity. There are imitations but nothing will compare to the attractiveness of the New Jerusalem.

The best estimation we have of the attractiveness of the New Jerusalem is Alaska in the summertime without mosquitoes. Both the New Jerusalem and Alaskan summers are pristine, and they have no night!

Write it down! It will be attractive.

**Reality #5: Eternal life will be with God!**

Notice that the word “with” is used three times in Revelation 21:3.

**Revelation 21:3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Consider how radical the following description is of living in God’s presence.

**Revelation 21:22-23** And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

And another description...

**Revelation 22:3-4** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

The final line of the description of the new temple in Ezekiel 48:35 tells us that the name of the city will be “the Lord is there” (pronounced something like “Yahweh Shamah). His presence is the main feature of the city. London has bridges. Cairo has pyramids. New Jerusalem has Yahweh! You can swim with dolphins in Cancun. You can tour the Vatican in Rome. You will live every moment in the presence of God in the New Jerusalem.

When Peter spoke of the new heavens and new earth his main descriptor is that it is the place where righteousness dwells.”

**2 Peter 3:3** But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The dimensions of the city also give us a picture of God’s presence. Remember, the city is a cube. Notice what else was a cube.

**1 Kings 6:19-20** The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid an altar of cedar.

The “inner sanctuary” is the most holy place. The description is written to be suggestive of associations like this. This is where the ark was and where God’s shekinah glory rested. It was a sacred place of the presence of God that only the high priest was allowed to go into. The New Jerusalem will be infused with the glory of God and it will not just be the high priest who has access but all of us who will live in his presence.

Being with God is the culmination of every desire in all of history.

God longs to be with His people. (John 1:14; 15:1-11; 17:24, Mark 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Luke 10:38-42; 13:34)

Believers have longed to be with God (Psalm 16:11; 42:2; 84:10, 1 Thess. 4:17-18; Philippians 3:7-8)

Just seeing God from a distance is priceless (Ex. 33:18-23; Jn. 14:8; Lk. 2:28-30)

Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” That is not enough for Jesus. He has something better. He intends to introduce us to the Father and to invite us live in his presence forever.

Write it down.

### **Reality #6: Eternal life will be satisfying!**

If you are thirsty, you cannot find a better deal than verse 6. God will give you water. It will come from the spring of the water of life. And it is free.

**Revelation 21:6** And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

We are always turning to something to satisfy our thirst. Nothing else satisfies. Satan claims that it will. If we could sue Satan for false advertising we would win the case. You know what I mean. There is a longing in you. Nothing has ever quite hit the spot.

**Psalm 63:1-5** O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have

looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.

**Psalm 42:2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

**Matthew 5:6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

There is another city that offers a beverage to the thirsty. Notice the sad contrast of the drink offered by Babylon.

**Revelation 17:2** With whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.

**Revelation 17:6** And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

This beverage doesn't satisfy, it intoxicates. The source is not the water of life but the blood of the saints. It is not pure, but it is the wine of adulteries. Nothing satisfies like what God has for us.

There are few things, if any, that impact a city more than the quality of its drinking water. New Jerusalem has the stuff that satisfies.

The New Jerusalem will exude satisfaction in its overcoming culture. There are cultures that communicate defeat, but New Jerusalem will have a winners culture. All rewards ever promised are given.

**Revelation 21:7** The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

There is the satisfaction of conquering and the satisfaction of receiving the heritage of intimacy with God.

The messages to the seven churches make promises of satisfaction to the overcomer. The New Jerusalem satisfies each specific promise.

<b>New Jerusalem satisfies the promises to the seven churches!</b>
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<p><b>Revelation 2:7</b> To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God</p>	<p><b>Revelation 22:5</b> on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 2:11</b> The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.</p>	<p><b>Revelation 21:3</b> There will be no more death. The heritage in verse 7 is in contrast with the second death of verse 8</p>
<p><b>Revelation 2:17</b> To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it</p>	<p><b>Revelation 21:5</b> Behold, I am making all things new.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 2:26</b> The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,</p>	<p><b>Revelation 22:5</b> They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 3:5</b> The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.</p>	<p><b>Revelation 21:27</b> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 3:12</b> The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.</p>	<p><b>Revelation 21:2</b> And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.</p>
<p><b>Revelation 3:21</b> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also</p>	<p><b>Revelation 22:3</b> No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will</p>

conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.	be in it, and his servants will worship him.
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Eternal life will be satisfying! Write it down.

**Reality #7: Eternal life will be united and diverse!**

Diversity is an increasing value in our culture. Unfortunately, the diversity and inclusion flag is being waved in ways that are divisive. The core desire is unity, but we are so divided that our efforts for unity are divisive. Diversity and inclusion may have taken on a negative meaning for you. Our culture shows that we instinctively long for unity in diversity. The New Jerusalem is the only city in history that will get it right. There will be a peaceful diversity and a glorious inclusion.

One of the reasons why people like the city is its diversity and the New Jerusalem will have it.

**Revelation 21:14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

This city is built on the representatives of God’s people in both the old and the New Testament. Have you ever heard someone say they are a New Testament Christian? There will not be any New Testament or Old Testament believers in the New Jerusalem. We will be united. The diversity of the New Jerusalem includes God’s people from every age. There will be no denominational division. There will be no friction between conservative and liberal. There will be no era that will be excluded. Diversity and inclusion are at the very foundation of the city.

The measurements of the city are suggestive of its inclusion. Since the city is a cube, there are 12 sides. Each side is 12000 stadia. Twelve twelve-thousands is 144,000. This is the number of the redeemed (Revelation 14:1-5). The anxiety of believers for centuries has been the uncertainty that they will be included in the 144,000. In the New Jerusalem we will be enveloped in a space with measurements that represent 144,000. This city is for the totality of God’s people. We will belong. There is an adequacy to the space and unity among its population.

The description includes a really thick wall. I am not sure what it is there for but I know that its purpose is not to divide. It is not to keep people in or to keep people

out. The wall has twelve gates that are never closed. There will be no dividing line. There will be no closed border.

If there literally will be no sea then there will be no bodies of water separating people, oceans divide continents. English speakers recognize a difference between “seas” and “oceans” but the Bible does not make this differentiation. Ironically, our English word for “ocean” comes from the ancient Greek word "Ὠκεανός" (Ōkeanós). But the New Testament does not use this term. Keeping people separated is one of the interventions of God to lessen the impact of evil (Genesis 11:1-9). Heaven will have no barrier of separation among people groups.

**Revelation 22:1-2** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

If there is no more disease. What do the leaves heal us from? The text tells us. It is healing for the nations. Oh, the nations need healing. There is a DMZ that divides North and South Korea. There will be healing of the nations. There will be a Russian in the New Jerusalem who meets the Ukrainian who launched the bomb that ended his life. Russia and Ukraine will meet at the Tree of Life and the nations will be healed. The millennium will answer all of our questions about God’s justice but we will still have to learn how to get along with each other. There will be healing for the nations.

The tree is not just medicinal. Like a pill you take but don’t enjoy. We will eat from the tree too. A similar description is made in Ezekiel 47:12 but it includes eating, “Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” Eating is part of eternity! It is not just a function of survival.

It is significant that the food is placed right where the nations need healing. Food is bonding. We will bond with those nations we opposed over food. The holocaust Jew and the believing Nazi soldier can go to the tree together and share a feast. The native American and the American colonizers can reenact that “thanksgiving” meal but this time the bond will last.

The name Jerusalem means “city of peace”. That is what God has prepared for us.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.geoengineering.ox.ac.uk/www.geoengineering.ox.ac.uk/what-is-geoengineering/what-is-geoengineering/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://propertyclub.nyc/article/largest-cities-by-area-in-the-united-states#:~:text=1.,by%20area%20is%20Sitka%2C%20Alaska>.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.prb.org/articles/how-many-people-have-ever-lived-on-earth/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.sciencefocus.com/planet-earth/in-pictures-the-largest-cities-in-the-world>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.titlemax.com/discovery-center/the-ultimate-road-trip/the-25-cities-with-the-highest-population-density-in-the-world/>