

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Revelation 21:9-14, 22-27

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, November 13, 2016

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 13, 2016**, is from **Revelation 21:9-14, 22-27**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

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Revelation 21:9-14, 22-27

(Revelation 21:9) 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."

The angels involved in God's just judgment thrilled at the fact that they had been given a share in preparing the earth and God's people for the coming of the Holy City from heaven to earth. One of these angels was chosen to show and tell what would happen next. The bride is the Church which is united to Jesus Christ, the Lamb. Jesus and the Church have become spiritually one, similar to a husband and wife. However, the Church is not yet what it will be in the future.

(Revelation 21:10) 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.

The Holy Spirit took John spiritually to a high mountain from which he saw Jerusalem, the Holy City, descend. The physical location is not given, and if the reader thinks too physically instead of spiritually, they would need to assume that the mountain was at

least 750 miles away from Mount Zion (the location of the current city of Jerusalem), because of the physical size of the city as given in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 21:16 reveals that the city is a 1500-mile cube). God is the One who makes the Church through those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God is the One who makes the Church holy and prepares it as a witness for His Son, Jesus Christ.

(Revelation 21:11) It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.

John could only use physical and visual descriptions to reveal spiritual realities. The glory of God shines forth from the Church today, but the glorious, perfect, righteous, and pure splendor of the Church is something for which believers still wait and God will finish preparing for His Son someday. For comparison, the spiritual beauty of the Church can only be described by using beautiful physical gems that maintain their color (jasper is most commonly red and multicolored) and are pure (clear as crystal instead of being opaque). As multicolored, a very precious jasper jewel may represent the variety of God's children from every nation that God has called into the Church and is sanctifying for His Son).

(Revelation 21:12) 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;

In Biblical times, all great cities had walls to establish and reveal their boundaries. City walls protected those within and guards at the gates could call an army to defend the city if attacked. On the new earth, the Holy City does not need walls except as a display of beauty and as a symbol of security for all those within and without. Nothing and no one will be able to take anyone out of the Church, and no evil will ever be able to enter it. The angels at the gates remind the children of God that God will protect His children from all evil. The twelve gates could be closed and protected by angels, but they will never be closed because no one or nothing evil exists on the new earth or in the new heaven to threaten those within the Holy City. God's revelation and promises through the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament opened the gates for people to be prepared to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior when John the Baptist preached and Jesus came and fulfilled Biblical prophecies. The Church will always reveal these truths about the role of Israel in preparing the way for the coming of God's Son, Who was born of the tribe of Judah and reigns as Messiah.

(Revelation 21:13) on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

Nothing and no one can ever threaten the Church that comes down from heaven, so the Holy City has three open gates on all four sides of the city (a cube: representing spiritual perfection). Each wall has three gates to welcome anyone who comes into the city from any direction by way of these gates. Each gate represents the Way to eternal life God that has made through His Son as revealed by His promises to the twelve tribes of Israel. There are enough gates to welcome and receive anyone and everyone who comes to Jesus and into His Church by faith in Him. God's word to the twelve tribes of Israel are part of the Biblical beginnings of the Church. God's fulfilled promises to the twelve tribes of Israel inspire, reassure, and help believers understand that the Bible is true and Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

(Revelation 21:14) And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

God has revealed the truth about Himself through the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments. The walls between each gate are set on foundations that represent the teaching of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb of God. Judas was eliminated because he betrayed Jesus Christ. Matthias or Paul may have replaced him as one of the twelve apostles/foundations revealed here in John's vision. Since Paul wrote so much of the New Testament, he may be one of the twelve Apostles represented here. The important fact is that the gospel of Jesus Christ recorded in the New Testament was preached and taught by the Apostles as faithful witnesses. The Apostles pointed repentant sinners to the Way (to Jesus), Who is the source of eternal life for all who place their faith in Him. The Church is built on the teachings of the Apostles with Jesus as the cornerstone. [See especially: "Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone'" (Acts 4:11); "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20); "For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame'" (1 Peter 2:6).]

(Revelation 21:22) I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

John saw no physical temple where God could be worshiped; such as the Temple in Jerusalem. John saw the Church, the bride of Christ, and to use a physical description for a spiritual reality, the Church, the children of God, reside spiritually within God the Father and Jesus Christ the Lamb, who is their Savior. The Holy Spirit on the mountain was revealing to John these truths about the Church and its relationship with God. The Temple in Jerusalem contained the Holy of Holies that the high priest could only enter once a year. The presence of God and the Holy City (a cube, as was the Holy of Holies) can be entered anytime by those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

(Revelation 21:23) And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

God created the sun and the moon through Jesus Christ when He created the earth, and He called them good. We may have a beautiful sun and moon in the new heavens that will shine upon the new earth. But John makes the point that the sun and moon are not needed in the Holy City. God does not need them to illuminate the city or to reveal His glory in the Church. God the Father works through His Son to illumine His Church; similar to a light that shines through a lamp. Wherever one looks, they will see the glory of God in Jesus Christ, and the Church will reveal the glory of God. Day and night the truth and presence of God will be all around those who trust in Jesus to guide their steps and give them wisdom.

(Revelation 21:24) The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

Today, the nations of the earth do not walk (or make decisions and take actions) based on the light (the truth of God) as revealed in the Holy Bible through the Church. On the new earth, after the Church has been prepared and descends from God, earth's leaders and those of every nation will glorify God in the Church by obeying God and offering God gifts – not because God “needs” these gifts, but because they want to honor God and express their love for God. They will honor God and bring Him gifts for eternity whether they are within or outside of the city's walls.

(Revelation 21:25) Its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there.

In John's day, gates were shut at night and guarded to protect the city and its inhabitants from those who would do evil. On the new earth, closing the city's gates will not be needed. No enemies exist outside the gates of the Church to threaten the inhabitants. People in the Church are totally surrounded by and protected by the Father. They will never be threatened again night or day. In the Church, there will never be spiritual darkness again.

(Revelation 21:26) People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

In the new heavens and on the new earth, everyone will love, adore, and obey the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; therefore, every nation and every person will live in righteousness and peace. National leaders will not use their position to acquire more power and wealth. Instead, leaders will give the glory

and honor, that they once avidly sought, to God – the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

(Revelation 21:27) But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Today, churches divide against one another and sometimes against God and the Bible's clear teachings; the world is not attracted but sometimes repelled by their bad example. Of course, those of this world are sometimes repelled by a church that upholds the holiness of God as they preach the truth, grace, and mercy of God as revealed through Jesus Christ in the Bible. Such divisions will not be in the Church prepared by God in heaven to come to earth. Today, people are still tempted by what is impure, shameful or deceitful, but none of that will be in the new heavens, on the new earth, or within the Holy City, the Church. God gives eternal life to those who come and bow before Him by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The followers of Jesus, the Lamb Who died a sacrificial death for them, will enter the Church from every tribe and nation in order to worship and glorify God forever.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Who is the wife of the Lamb? Who is the Lamb? What does their relationship mean to you?
2. What is the Holy City, Jerusalem?
3. What precious jewel did John compare to the brilliance of the Holy City? Since John did not tell us, what might the stone's qualities represent?
4. What did the Holy City's walls and gates represent since the gates were never shut?
5. What are some of the benefits of the Holy City coming down from heaven to the new earth?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.
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