

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation

Chapter 21

May 20, 2025

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Overview

- In chapters 21-22, John provides a preview of what awaits God's people, using Old Testament prophecies and symbolic language (341).
- Two visions that unveil the final phase of God's plan comprise all of Rev. 21 and the first paragraph of chapter 22 (341).

Vision	Explanation
21:1-8	Reports how God brings history to its goal and provides an overview of the new order.
21:9-22:11	Provides a close-up of the Lamb's Bride, the new Jerusalem, the polar opposite of the harlot Babylon.

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Eighth Vision

- Beginning in Rev. 19:11, John has seven visions that begin with the phrase, “And I saw.”

Verse	Explanation
19:11	Then I saw the heavens opened.
19:17	Then I saw an angel standing on the sun.
19:19	Then I saw a beast and the kings of the earth...
20:1	Then I saw an angel come down from heaven
20:4	Then I saw thrones...
20:11	Next I saw a large white throne and the one sitting on it
20:12	I saw the dead, the great and the lowly

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Eighth Vision

- Rev. 21:1: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.
- This is the eighth vision. Eight is associated with the Resurrection, salvation, and regeneration.
- God created the world in seven days. Christ rose from the dead on the third day or the first day of the new creation, the eighth day. Hence, baptismal fonts are often eight sided.
- The old creation has passed and a new creation is taking place. With the destruction of the old Jerusalem and the binding and defeat of Satan, now we see the new heaven and a new earth.

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New Heaven and New Earth

- New heaven and new earth: When God completes his redemption of the human race, he will radically renew creation so it can be “set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (342).
- Sea was no more: Refers to the sea as a symbol of unruly chaos (Gen. 1:1), the lair of the evil serpent (Isa. 27:1), the beast’s place of origin (13:1).
- New Jerusalem: In Isaiah’s prophecy of a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17), he prophesies that Jerusalem will be created with joy and its people will be a delight (Isa. 65:18).

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Beloved Bride

- Coming down out of heaven: The eternal home of God's people is the result not of mere human effort but of God's gracious provision (342).
- Prepared as a bride: Now that Christ, the King of kings, has defeated all his enemies, the royal wedding can occur (343).
- According to Jewish custom, the second stage of marriage is about to begin: the bride is brought to the home of her groom to begin their married life. The risen Christ has prepared a place for his Bride in a renewed creation, and now she comes to live with him forever (John 14:2-3) (343).

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Beloved Bride

- It is clear that we are dealing with the fully prepared beloved Wife. She is not yet the Bride but like a bride, that is, adorned as a bride.
- She will only be a Bride when she is possessed by her husband. Right now, we are only getting a glimpse of the fully prepared and decorated virgin Wife.
- The missing element, the element we will discover in the next segment when she is the Bride (21:9-22:5) is the glory. She still lacks the glory (McIlraith, 178).

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New Tabernacle

- God's dwelling is with the human race: The word dwelling literally means "tent" and is used in the Old Testament for the tabernacle in which God dwelt with Israel in the wilderness (344).
- In John's Gospel, he says the Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us (John 1:14, emphasis added).
- Key: The voice from the throne is promising that God's presence will be established in the new Jerusalem, making the city itself a temple (344).

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God's Covenant

- They will be his people: A phrase that sums up God's covenant with his people. The eschatological promise of Ezek. 36:28 is fulfilled: "You will be my people, and I will be your God." (344)
- Wipe away every tear: With the new Jerusalem comes the end of death and tears, things promised in the messianic banquet of Isaiah 25:6-8 (McIlraith, 179).
- By destroying death, God reverses the consequences of sin and the fall (Gen. 2:17; 3:16-19; Rom. 5:12), bringing an end to the old order (344).

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I Make All Things New

- Behold, I make all things new: Words that echo Isaiah 43:19, “Behold, I make new things.”
- In Mel Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ*, the Blessed Virgin Mary sees her Son fall as he carries the cross. She has a flashback of when he fell as a child and goes to help him.
- Falling to the ground, she says, “I’m here.” And Jesus looks her in the eyes and says, “See, Mother, I make all things new.”
- Key: God makes all things new through sacrificial love.

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God's Promises

- Alpha and Omega: The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It is similar God's declaration in Isaiah, "I am the first and the last" (Is. 44:6) (346).
- Spring of life-giving water: Literally, "water of life," which refers to the Holy Spirit and eternal life (Isa. 49:10). The Greek order emphasizes that this water is given as a gift, without payment (346).
- The victor: One who overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil to enjoy the extraordinary privilege of being God's son or daughter, destined to inherit gifts (346).

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List of Evil Works

- John provides a list of eight categories of sinners who do not qualify for entry in the New Jerusalem. We have seen that evil works such as these will not survive the final judgment (McIlraith, 179).

List of Evil Works	
Cowards (compromising our faith)	The unchaste (sexual immorality)
The unfaithful (refuse the good news)	Sorcerers (occult practices)
The depraved (detestable or polluted)	Idol-worshippers
Murderers	Deceivers of every sort (all liars)

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A Close-up

- After the introductory panorama of the new creation (21:1-8), John's final vision (21:9-22:5) provides a close-up, a symbolic explanation of the new Jerusalem and of life within it (347).

Panoramic



Close-up



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The Wife of the Lamb

- Bride, the wife of the Lamb: John's presentation of the Bride of the Lamb stands in contrast with the vision of Babylon, the great harlot in 17:1 – 19:10 (348).
- John thus presents contrasting paradigms of feminine beauty. Babylon is garish and seductive, corrupt and immoral, the consort of the beast and the kings of the earth.
- Jerusalem is a radiant and pure bride, now married to the Lamb.... The Creator has married his creation, fulfilling the ancient prophecy, "Your husband is your Maker; the Lord of hosts is his name" (Isa. 54:5).

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High Mountain

- Great high mountain: Allusions to the prophet Ezekiel where he sees a city being built and an angel who measures the dimensions of a glorious temple – a temple that would replace the temple of Solomon that was destroyed in 586 BC – suggest that John is gazing on the fulfillment of a future temple built by God (348).
- According to Isaiah, the temple would be located on a high mountain (Isa. 2:2-3; 25:6-26:2; Mic. 4:1-2).
- Coming down out of heaven: God is its architect.

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The New Jerusalem

Characteristic	Description
Splendor of God	God's own presence fills the temple city
Massive, high wall	The city is completely secure
Twelve gates with twelve tribes	God will restore / gather his people
Foundation of twelve stones with twelve names of the apostles	The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone (Eph. 2:20). This is the apostolic Church.

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The New Jerusalem

Characteristic	Description
The city was square (perfect cube)	The New Jerusalem is depicted as a holy of holies – the heart of the temple
The city is twelve thousand stadia in all directions	Twelve (number of the people of God), times a thousand – signifies immensity
Wall is one hundred and forty-four cubits	144,000 (7:4; 14:1-5) – symbolizes God's army of truly faithful servants
The wall was constructed of Jasper, while the city was pure gold	Emphasizes the wealth and beauty of the New Jerusalem (like the temple)
Foundations of the city decorated with precious stone	High priest wore a breastplate with twelve engraved stones

~Williamson, 351 - 352

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The Wife of the Lamb

- In 21:22-27, we learn about God's glory in the city, how the city interacts with the world and just who qualifies for entry.
- Jerusalem without a temple is unthinkable. The temple was where God dwelled, but no more. There is no temple in the city.
- There is no need for a temple because God and the Lamb bring the divine presence to every part of the city and so function as a temple (McIlraith, 183).



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No Temple

- No temple in the city: In the new Jerusalem, there is no special location or house where God resides and where he may be approached, as in historic Jerusalem (353).
- The city as a whole is not merely a temple but the holy of holies itself, permeated by God's presence (353).
- Its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb: God and the Lamb have become the dwelling place; there is not a special place to seek them. All of life is lived in their presence. As elsewhere in Revelation, the Lamb manifestly shares the fullness of divinity with the Lord God almighty (353).

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No Need of Sun or Moon

Isaiah 60	Revelation 21
VV. 1-3: The Lord will dawn upon Zion; nations will walk by your light.	V. 23: The city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God gave it light, and its light was the Lamb
VV. 4-16: Zion's children will be gathered from distant places; the temple will be adorned from the wealth of the nations; the nations that refuse to submit will be destroyed and serve you	V. 24: The nations will walk by its light, and to it the kings of the earth will bring their treasure

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Totally Secure

- Key: Jerusalem will enjoy perfect security, and her people will be righteous and numerous, possessing the land for all time; God's glory will be their light forever, making superfluous the light of sun and moon (Isa. 60:17-22) (353).
- Verses 25 – 27 elaborate on the absolute security of the new Jerusalem and explain who and what can enter the city that is itself the holy of holies (354).
- The gates of the city were an essential element of its defense, open during the day, when an approaching enemy could be seen, and closed at night lest an enemy enter under cover of darkness. Hence, all threat of evil has been eliminated (354 – 355).

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Wealth of the Nations

- The new Jerusalem is not a literal city, but, as its immense cubical dimensions suggest, a symbol of the whole, new world where God will dwell with his people (355).
- No night there: Like the sea (Rev. 21:1), night serves as a symbol of evil, which has now been vanquished (355).
- Wealth of the nations: Some have speculated that this refers to the best of human culture, of literature and art and science, purified of every defect. Life in the new Jerusalem will have continuity with what is familiar and excellent and by what is so radically new that we cannot now imagine (355).

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Nothing Unclean

- Nothing unclean will enter it: Since this city/community is characterized by holiness, the unclean cannot enter.
- Two categories of people are not found in the Lamb's book of life and therefore cannot enter and share in the New Jerusalem. There are those who practice abomination and falsehood. Both these terms are linked to idolatry (McIlraith, 184).
- Lamb's book of life: This refers to those redeemed by Christ (Eph. 1:4), who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb through repentance and baptism and have persevered in faith (7:14) (356).

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Images of Heaven

Image	Description
New Jerusalem	God's chosen city; glimpse of dynamic life in heaven
Bride, the wife of the Lamb	Perfect marriage where partners are totally one and totally other; they are totally one in love (McIlraith, 184).
High Mountain	Place of divine banquet; death destroyed and tears wiped away
Jerusalem Temple	God's house; God's presence permeates heaven entirely

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Next Time

- Tuesday, May 27th



Revelation 22	
Life-Giving Water / Tree of Life	22:1 - 5
Epilogue	22:6 - 21