

The Church of the Servant King

www.cotask.org

PROPHECY SERIES

(Proph21BB_Revelation 21-22_Conclusion)

Chapter 21

THE GLORY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (21:22-27)

22 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple 23 and the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. 25 And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; 26 and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Verse	Phrase	Notes
22-23, 25	"...the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple 23 and the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb." "...and in the daytime (for there shall be no night there)..."	The presence of God is pervasive throughout the whole city. "This fact separates this part of the book from the former part, where the temple is seen (iii.12; vii.15; xi. 1, 16-19; xiv. 15, 17; xv. 4, 6, 8; xvi.1, 17); and shows that we are here carried far beyond millennial times." ¹ In the Messianic Kingdom, the restored <u>earth</u> will be illumined by the sun and moon while the Messiah's capital city, <u>Jerusalem</u> , is illumined by the brightness of His presence (Isa 30:26 cf. Isa 60:19, 20). And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day that lord binds up the fracture of his people and heals the bruise He has inflicted. (Isa 30:26) John's observation notes a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy recorded in Isaiah 60:19-20. ² No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory. 20 Your sun will set no more, neither will your moon wane; for you will have the Lord for an

¹ E.W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1984), 665-6.

² This passage is most commonly interpreted to be a reference to the Millennial Kingdom and the glories of the Messianic reign. I believe that is a correct interpretation. However, it is also true that there are some aspects of the Messianic reign that seem to also be true of the eternal state (or vice versa). See comments in my previous studies regarding the effect that a more distanced view of eschatological events had upon the manner in which Old Testament prophets wrote (e.g. the dual mountain top effect). In addition, we have frequently noted the use of "forever" in reference to certain promises of God to Israel – promises that, at a minimum, find their initial fulfillment in the Kingdom Age.

		<p>everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be finished. (Isa 60:19-20)</p> <p>In reality, the entire city is a Temple and the pattern of the Holy of Holies in Israel's Temple (cf. v. 16) reflected the reality of the heavenly city – the “New Jerusalem” in John's terminology.</p> <p>In the earthly tabernacle and temple, there was, to be sure, artificial lighting (the seven-branched lampstand in the OT tabernacle and the temple); yet the Most Holy Place had no such lighting because of the shekinah glory, the light of God's own presence.</p>
24 & 26	<p>“And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it.”</p> <p>“And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.”</p>	<p>See APPENDIX A for notes regarding the key to understanding God's purpose in separating a people (Jews) and nation (Israel).</p> <p>Are there nations in eternity? Evidently so. Why or what purpose do they serve? See APPENDIX B for comments.</p> <p>Instead of the nations bringing their wealth and precious possessions to the harlot city Babylon of Revelation 17 & 18, the redeemed nations of eternity will bring these offerings to the throne of God (cf. Isa 60:3 ff; Rev 18:3, 11-19).</p> <p>And the nations will come to your light, and the kings to the brightness of your rising. 4 Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms. 5 Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you. 6 A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord. (Isa 60:3-6)³</p>
25	<p>“...its gates shall never be closed...”</p>	<p>There is no threat from a hostile enemy in eternity, thus unlike walled and gated cities of human history that are designed to protect inhabitants from threats, the open gates are symbolic of total security (cf. Isa 60:11).</p> <p>And your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. (Isa 60:11)</p> <p>This imagery should not be allegorized as some have done to indicate some sort of perpetual invitation to salvation. That is not the intent of the passage.</p>
27	<p>“And nothing unclean and no one</p>	<p>This does not mean that in the heavenly New Jerusalem,</p>

³ This, too, is a passage that in its context is a reference to the Millennial Kingdom Age. However, as previously noted in an earlier footnote, there are some aspects of the Messianic reign that seem to be true of the eternal state. Why? Because the Messianic reign of Christ, the Messiah, is a foretaste of the glories and blessings of eternity. The Temple of the Messianic Age, a Temple whose dimensions and construction will have never previously been matched, will be the closest earthly “shadow” or image of the heavenly New Jerusalem and seat of the Lamb's eternal reign that there will ever be (cf. Ezek 40-48; Heb 8:5).

	<p>who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."</p>	<p>there will be unsaved who roam around outside the city and who may now and then enter it by repenting.</p> <p>Instead, the intent of the exhortation was and is to warn readers that the only way to insure one's place in this future city is to accept Jesus as the Messiah and reject the idolatry and demonically inspired practices of the future Tribulation period (Rev 21:7 cf. 9:20-21; 13:4, 14-15; 14:9a, 11b; 16:2b, 14).</p>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The River of Life (22:1-5)

And He showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; 4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.

These verses are the complement to Genesis 1 and 2. Here we see Paradise regained. The beginning and ending harmonize and complement each other. The Paradise of Genesis 1 and 2 have been completely regained and once again, one will exist in all of God's creation order. Harmony has replaced the discord associated with rebellion and an alternate will or purpose within God's created order. The Millennial era provides a foretaste; however, the eternal state are as far beyond the Millennial City as that City is beyond any prior Jerusalem.

Verse	Phrase	Notes
1-2a	<p>And He showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 in the middle of its street.</p>	<p>Jesus referred to Himself as the provider of the water of life (or "living water") on many occasions and it is this water of life that will flow forth from the throne that is jointly occupied by both God the Father and the "Lamb" – Jesus Christ. See John 4:10, 13-14; 7:37-39).</p> <p>The eternal river of the water of life is foreshadowed in the Millennium by "living waters that flow out of Jerusalem" (Zech 14:8).</p> <p>And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. (Zech 14:8)</p>
2b	<p>And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations</p>	<p>The healing leaves of the tree of life do not imply the presence of disease or suffering or pain. Rather, in contrast to the constant strife and war between nations since their establishment after the Fall, the eating of the leaves of the Tree of Life is a reference to the prolonging of life forever.</p> <p>The Tree of Life was present in the Garden prior to the Fall and involved the preservation of life. When Adam and Eve fell and acquired a sinful nature, they were driven from the Garden to prevent them from partaking of the Tree of Life in a fallen state (see Gen 2:9; 3:22-24).</p>
3-5	<p>3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it,</p>	<p>Since then, the very mention of the Tree (i.e. the "Tree of knowledge of good and evil") in the Garden brings to mind the curse, but when the eternal order is re-instituted, the Tree will</p>

<p>and His bond-servants shall serve Him; 4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.</p>	<p>once again be the source of life and blessing – a purpose for which it has been waiting in the interim.</p> <p>John’s statement that “they shall see His face” refers back to our first parents who hid their faces from Him after their disobedience and acquisition of a sinful nature – a nature prone to independence from God.</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

How shall man return to “paradise lost?” The remainder of chapter 22 will inform us.

APPENDIX A – WHAT WERE THE JEWS AND ISRAEL DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE?

Dispensationalists of all varieties are characterized by recognizing to one extent or another, and with varying degrees of consistency, the distinction between Israel and the Body of Christ. Distinctions are frequently highlighted in regard to the requirements of Jews based upon the Mosaic Law and the freedom from the requirements of the Law during the present Age. When viewed from this side of eternity only, we can easily miss God’s purpose in calling out a special race of people through Abraham and His establishment of a special people through Moses. We must keep an eternal perspective towards all matters – including our understanding of dispensational distinctions.

What were the Jewish people and the nation of Israel really designed to illustrate? While it is true that God desired to evangelize the world and He established a “set-apart” or “called-out” people and nation for that purpose through Abraham and Moses, respectively, there is another angle that must be considered.

We are informed by God through His instructions to Moses and the writer to the Hebrews that the Levitical priesthood and the earthly temple and artifacts are mere shadows (reflections) of the heavenly realities (see Heb 8:5; 9:23-24 cf. Ex 25:40 in particular).

Who [*Levitical priesthood – v. 3*] serve a **copy and shadow of the heavenly things**, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “See,” He says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.” (Heb 8:5)

Therefore it was necessary for the **copies of the things in the heavens** to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, **a mere copy of the true one**, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. (Heb 9:23-24)

Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and **under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire**, as clear as the sky itself. (Exod 24:9-10) [*Note the similarities to John’s description of the heavenly or New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 & 22*]

And Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. (Exod 24:18) [*Moses received specific instructions from God with very detailed instructions regarding the tabernacle, its contents, and the Levitical priesthood. He was also provided visual examples – perhaps he was transported in a vision to the New Jerusalem*]

and heaven in similar fashion to the Jewish Apostle John and the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul].

And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. (Exod 25:8) [*The Shekinah Glory of God was manifest to the children of Israel on several occasions and was a visible manifestation of the presence of God among them. God desired to manifest Himself to the world, Jews and Gentiles, in a way that illustrated the reality of His permanent dwelling – the heavenly Jerusalem*].

And see that you [*Moses and Israel*] make them [*artifacts of the Tabernacle, specifically the details of the lampstand*] after **the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain**. (Exod 25:40)

Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan **which you have been shown in the mountain**. (Exod 26:30)

You shall make it [*the bronze altar*] hollow with planks; as it was shown to you in the mountain, so they shall make it. (Exod 27:8)

So, when we combine the statements of the writer of Hebrews with John's description of the heavenly, New Jerusalem in the eternal state (Rev 21:1-22:5) and all that we know regarding God's setting apart of a people and nation, we can draw some inductive conclusions.

- The Tabernacle (later replaced by Solomon's Temple), the artifacts of the Tabernacle, and the Levitical priesthood were all designed to be a "pattern" or an illustration of heavenly realities.
- God desired that the Jews be a "set-apart" and redeemed people from the remainder of humanity.
- Through this "set-apart" people, God desired to establish a theocratic nation with a Temple and worship infrastructure that was an earthly counterpart to heavenly realities.
- God's purpose in setting Israel and the Jews apart included more than creating a distinct people (race) and nation.
- Through these earthly counterparts, God would provide a picture of heaven on earth.
- God's purpose in setting Israel and the Jews apart was multi-faceted:
 - Establish a theocracy through which the nations of the earth might be convicted by Israel's example.
 - Evangelize successive generations of Jews.
 - Evangelize the nations and Gentile peoples of the earth.
 - Bless an obedient and set-apart people with His presence and with spiritual and temporal prosperity.
 - Illustrate heavenly realities with the earthly Tabernacle counterpart (and later Temple) and the associated worship protocols.

The establishment of a called out people and nation combined with the desire to use both the people and nation to evangelize the rest of the world and with whom to establish His earthly dwelling reflected a desire on God's part to precede the coming of the promised "Seed" of Genesis 3:15 with a receptive people.⁴ There would have still been the need for the promised "Seed" and "King" to accomplish redemption. There would have still been the need for the promised "King" to rule over a restored and prominent Israel among all other nations. However,

⁴ Post-millennialists, replacement theologians and others carry this particular point too far. They recognize this principle that was true during a certain point of Israel's history and which will be true during Israel's exalted status during the Millennium; however, they extend it to the present age – the Church Age Body of Christ. They do not recognize the interlude, the principle of intercalation during which there has been a pause in God's theocratic-oriented use of Israel and the Jews. They effectively extend principles true for Israel to the present age.

had the Jews and Israel fulfilled their responsibilities toward God and man, it is very likely that there never would have been a Gentile-centric and separate dispensation such as we now know as the Church Age Body of Christ.

APPENDIX B – NATIONS IN ETERNITY?

In the Revelation of John, we observe two distinct categories of nations. **First**, the nations (Gr. *ethne* - ἐθνη) are the pagan, rebellious peoples of the world who trample the Holy City (cf. 11:2; 11:18) and who become intoxicated with the false religion and the economic system promoted by Babylon (18:3, 23). This group of nations will be destroyed by the second coming of Christ (19:15). The same description applies to the kings of these nations.

Included within this category of unbelieving nations of the Tribulation period is the “Gog and Magog” of Ezekiel 38 & 39. In Ezekiel’s prophecy, “Magog” is a land or country of which “Gog” is the prince. (See an earlier study on Ezekiel 38-39 in the Prophecy series for more details on this point). This attempted invasion and annihilation of Israel during the Tribulation period is a part of the wars of that period that are referenced in Revelation 16:14; 17:14; and 19:17-21.

In distinction, the reference to the revolt of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:7-9 is a much larger revolt that occurs at the end of the Millennium when Satan and his demons are released from the Abyss. Evidently, at the beginning of the Millennium, Gentile nations consisting only of believers who have survived the Tribulation period will worship and pay homage to the King Jesus in Jerusalem. Eventually, over time as more people are born and more distance between the horrors of the Tribulation and 2nd Advent occurs, unbelief among men springs forth from their sinful natures. Unbelievers love darkness and move further away from the Light of the World – Jesus Christ, the Messiah, ruling in Jerusalem. Thus, the reference in Revelation 20:8 to Satan’s deceit of the “nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog.” Satan inspires these unbelieving nations to throw off their perceived yoke of bondage in one last fatal attempt. All of this activity precedes the eternal state that is described in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

There is a **second** use of the word “nations.” These nations are the peoples of the earth who are the servants of Christ – the Messiah. They consist of redeemed people who accept His Sovereignty and who have rejected the claims of the beast and the lure of pseudo-security offered by the Beast and the harlot city Babylon (Rev 2:26; 5:9-10; 7:9; 12:5; 15:3; 19:16). Again, all of this activity precedes the eternal state that is described in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

A question arises in regard to the believers of various nations at the end of the Millennium. What happens to these believers and the nations they represent? While it is impossible to reach a dogmatic interpretation of this reference to “nations” in eternity, there are a couple of possibilities at a minimum.

- They represent groups of believers viewed according to their old creation (Millennial Age in particular) nationalities which they could retain in the new creation.
- Entirely new groupings in eternity based upon the eternal rewards dispensed according to faithful service in time (Lu 13:30 cf. Rom 8:16-21; 1 Cor 6:1-3; 2 Tim 2:11-12).

And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.
(Lu 13:30)⁵

⁵ This, too, is a passage that in its context is a reference to the Millennial Kingdom Age. However, as previously noted in an earlier footnote, there are some aspects of the Messianic reign that seem to be true of the eternal state.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom 8:16-21)

Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? 3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? (1 Cor 6:1-3)

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim 2:11-12)

Also, it is instructive to note the comments of the writer to the Hebrews when describing the privileges afforded to believers after Jesus had fulfilled the requirements of the Law. The writer contrasts the unapproachable and unattainable requirements of the Law (i.e. the Old Covenant) given on Mount Sinai (Heb 12:18-21) with the privileges associated with citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem, Mount Zion, where the New Covenant will find its fullest expression (Heb 12:22-24).

But you have come to **Mount Zion** and to the **city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Heb 12:22-24)

In doing so, the writer to the Hebrews notes the inhabitants of the heavenly New Jerusalem. The list mentions “the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven” and “the spirits of righteous men made perfect.” These are evidently references to believers of the present dispensation (i.e. the “Church Age”) as well as believers of prior dispensations.

If these passages have been correctly presented and interpreted, then, when combined, they picture believers of all dispensations in their eternal state ruling and reigning with the Glorified Christ from the New Jerusalem. Evidently, nations will be a part of that eternal order. A possible structure to that eternal order might include the following:

- Israel ruled by the Twelve Apostles (Rev 21:12-14)
- Overcomers (Jew and Gentile) of the Tribulation rule over the nations (Rev 2:26; 12:5)
- Body of Christ (Church Age) rule over angels (1 Cor 6:3)

Accordingly, redeemed Gentile nations of the Millennial era will occupy their own place as will the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed of the Church Age Body of Christ. Thus, there are distinctions in eternity, but there are also similarities. All have access to and all activities center upon the New Jerusalem.