
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Lesson #11 (25 March 2016): Revelation 20-22 Heirs of the Celestial Kingdom: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth”

David A. LeFevre – Adult Education Class – Snohomish Stake

INTRODUCTION: HEIRS OF THE CELESTIAL KINGDOM (20:1 – 22:21)

We have seen many troubling signs of the last days and many threats to the well-being of the saints and the church. She has been forced to flee to the wilderness and her child taken up into heaven for safekeeping. We've seen plagues unleashed on the inhabitants of the earth to offer them every opportunity to be humbled, repentant, and return to God. Most of these efforts failed, and many take the mark of the beast so they might buy, sell, and enjoy the pleasures of the world. This brings final judgments which in the end, result in the downfall of the great evil city that draws all wickedness to her—Babylon, the great prostitute, the woman riding the beast. With judgments, she falls, and her supporters stand back and shake their heads, hoping the same fate will miss them. It does not, and the King of kings returns and sets up his kingdom.

In this lesson, we will see what happens to the devil and the earth as Jesus rules over our planet directly and in-person. The focus on the Millennium is short, and John's vision quickly moves to the end of that period, the great final battle, and the complete defeat of evil. Finally, there is new heaven and a new earth for the faithful, the patient, those who boldly wore the mark of God in the heads and hands. The New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven is the perfect eternal home for the perfect God and his perfect Son and those who have been perfected in their grace.

John ends where he began, testifying of Christ and his divine attributes, then calling for his return and earthly reign to happen—soon!

OUTLINE

There are many ways to outline any book, and Revelation is no exception. Below are the eleven lessons in this series with chapter summaries. For the lesson in these notes, the chapter is broken down into more detailed sections and bolded.

1. The Majesty of Christ (1:1-20)
2. The Messages to the Seven Churches (2:1 – 3:22)
3. God and the Lamb
 - a. The Vision of Heaven (4:1-11)
 - b. The Sealed Book and the Worthy Lamb (5:1-14)
4. The Scroll Begins to Open
 - a. The Six Seals (6:1-17)
 - b. The Seal of the Living God (7:1-17)
5. The Opening of the Seventh Seal
 - a. The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets (8:1-13)
 - b. Two Trumpets and the Great War (9:1-21)
6. John's Mission; Two Prophets
 - a. The Little Scroll (10:1-11)
 - b. The Seventh Trumpet (11:1-19)
7. The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon
 - a. The Church and the Devil (12:1-17)
 - b. The Beasts of Revelation (13:1-18)
8. Judgment and Praise
 - a. The Winepress of the Wrath of God (14:1-20)
 - b. The Seven Angels (15:1-8)
9. Seven Last Plagues and Babylon the Great
 - a. The Seven Bowls (16:1-21)
 - b. Babylon the Great (17:1-18)
10. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
 - a. The Fall of Babylon (18:1-24)
 - b. The King of Kings (19:1-21)
11. **Heirs of the Celestial Glory**
 - a. **The Thousand Years (20:1-15)**
 - i. **The dragon bound (20:1-3)**
 - ii. **Reign 1000 years (20:4-6)**

- iii. Gog and Magog (20:7-10)
- iv. The judgment (20:11-15)
- b. The New Jerusalem (21:1-27)
 - i. New heaven and new earth (21:1-4)
 - ii. Saints inherit all things (21:5-8)
 - iii. The Holy Jerusalem (21:9-27)

- c. Blessed Are They That Do His Commandments (22:1-21)
 - i. Water and tree of life (22:1-5)
 - ii. Worship God (22:6-9)
 - iii. I come quickly (22:10-16)
 - iv. Come, Lord Jesus (22:17-21)

THE THOUSAND YEARS (20:1-15)

All things evil have been put away except one—the dragon, the serpent, the devil, Satan—who started it all. In these verses he meets an angel who will put him where he belongs, at least for the next 1,000 years. At the end of the Millennium, as the earth moves from telestial to terrestrial states, Satan is loosed again for a period of time, to once again deceive the nations and raise a vast army to battle Michael’s host. But they are no match for the power of God and the battle is over in a sudden stroke of fire from heaven. Then comes the resurrections and the judgment of all mankind.

of the abyss. He will use it to lock up the dragon for 1,000 years.

20:1 **a great chain in his hand.** It’s not enough to lock the door; the angel will use a great chain to bind Satan before locking him in the pit. There is irony in that Satan was seen with “a great chain” that he used to cover the earth with darkness (Moses 7:26); now another great chain binds him.

20:2 **he laid hold on the dragon.** The angel uses great power and force (the meaning of *krateō*, translated “laid hold”)¹ to subdue the dragon.

THE DRAGON BOUND (20:1-3)

20:1 KJV	20:1 JST
1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.	1 And I saw an angel come down out of heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

20:2 **the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan.** Four names for Lucifer were first introduced in 12:9; here they are repeated so we can readily identify that it is the same being.

20:1 **And I saw.** John has used this phrase twenty times so far. With this one and the others in this section (20:11, 12; 21:1, 22), it makes a total of twenty-five times. Each one typically starts a new section of the vision, marking a break in the story of some kind. In this case, our attention turns from the judgment and end of death and hell to end of the dragon himself.

20:2 **bound him a thousand years.** His time being bound matches the length of the of the rule of those with Christ (v. 4). Nephi taught it is “because of the righteousness of [God’s] people” that Satan is bound and “has no power” (1 Nephi 22:26).

20:1 **an angel come down from heaven.** See D&C 88:110 where the seventh angel that sounds his trump declares these events.

20:3 **shut him up.** Compare Isaiah 14:9-17, which portrays the fall of Satan (“Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit”) and how his followers amazed at his powerlessness (“Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?”).

20:1 **having the key of the bottomless pit.** The key was initially given to Satan (9:1) and he used it to cause many problems. Now the key was taken back (or the lock changed!) and an angel of God is placed in charge

20:3 **set a seal upon him.** Or, “sealed it over him” (NIV, NASB, RSV, NJB, CJB). The seal is set on the abyss after the dragon is put in it, harkening back to Daniel 6:17 where the king set his own seal on the lion’s den.

20:3 **he should deceive the nations no more.** Thus locked up and bound, Satan can no more deceive the nations of the world

¹ Draper and Rhodes, 1298.

REIGN 1000 YEARS (20:4-6)

The entire Millennium is covered in three verses. This is clearly just an interlude for John leading to the final scenes,² but also an opportunity to demonstrate that the patience of the Saints is rewarded in the end.

20:4 **judgment was given unto them.** Judgment is given to many people:

- Apostles (Matthew 19:28; 1 Nephi 12:9; D&C 29:12)
- Nephite disciples (1 Nephi 12:10)
- Saints (Daniel 7:22; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3)
- Christ, ultimately (1 Nephi 22:21; D&C 19:3)

20:4 **they lived and reigned with Christ.** This is the ultimate expression of Zion, sought by many throughout the ages. Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16 teaches that God prepared “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” for the faithful who felt they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” while looking for the city that God had prepared, while D&C 45:11-14 says that Enoch’s city was “separated from the earth” and “reserved until a day of righteousness shall come,” a day “sought for by all holy men” but not found because of wickedness.

Those who live with Christ during this time are a combination of resurrected beings who were already faithful (“them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus”) and those left on the earth who “had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark” (therefore meaning they *do* have the mark of the Father).

20:4 **a thousand years.** Though many prophets refer to the period of the earth’s rest, a “golden age” at the end of time, John is the only one that designates it as 1,000 years. Of course, in Biblical symbology, 1,000 often “serves as a nonliteral symbol for a large quantity.”³ In other words, the exact length of the Millennium (a name we get from the Latin term for 1,000 years)⁴ may not be 1,000 years, any more than the length of the earth’s existence will be exactly 6,000 years prior to Christ’s return.

20:5 **This is the first resurrection.** This is the only mention of this doctrine in the entire NT.⁵ Latter-day scripture gives a much greater understanding. The first resurrection started with Christ’s resurrection and

concludes at the end of the Millennium when all the righteous will finally be raised from the dead (see D&C 76:64, where it is called “the resurrection of the just”). The wicked (“the rest of the dead” in this verse) have to wait until after that (see D&C 88:95-102 for a fuller description of the stages of the resurrection).

20:6 KJV	20:6 JST
6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.	6 Blessed and holy are they who have part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

This JST change has no doctrinal impact but it does improve the way the text reads in English, making the verb and pronoun plural to reflect the large numbers will have part in the resurrection.

20:6 **Blessed and holy is that hath part.** The fifth beatitude in the book, extending “blessed” or ‘happy’ to “holy” for those in the first resurrection.

20:6 **the second death hath no power.** The first death is the death of the body, the second the death of the spirit, when man becomes separated from God forever. This second death has no power over those in the first resurrection—they will always enjoy access to God.

20:6 **they shall be priests of God.** Unlike in the OT, where only the Levites administered in the priesthood, in this age all the righteous will have authority to do so. Exodus 19:6 and Isaiah 61:6 both speak of how God’s people will one day all be called “Priests of the Lord.”

GOG AND MAGOG (20:7-10)

20:7 **Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.** While the great angel with the key to the abyss gets Satan chained in the first place, righteous hearts keep him there (1 Nephi 22:26). What causes him to be loosed? D&C 29:22 says it’s when men deny God, and Helaman 6:30-31 teaches that Satan can get hold of their hearts. The

² Draper, 220.

³ Ryken, 865-866.

⁴ Draper and Rhodes, 1301.

⁵ Smalley, 508.

Book of Mormon provides a great parallel⁶ in 4 Nephi 1:15, 23-26, 28-29, where the beast, the false prophet, and the whore come back, and v. 40 where the wicked are more numerous. Whatever the trigger, the language here shows it is not an accident but part of God's plan.⁷ D&C 88:110-111 states that "he shall be loosed for a little season, that he may gather together his armies."

20:8 **go out to deceive the nations.** Released again, the devil will do what he did for thousands of years— attempt to deceive the people all over the earth with his lies and distortions.

20:8 **Gog and Magog.** The words and imagery are from Ezekiel 38:1-3; 39:1-7, where Gog is the leader in the land of Magog. Here, the two are combined, symbolizing all the forces of evil combined.⁸ But Satan's final attempt will fail, says D&C 88:110-115, which describes Michael leading his armies against Satan's armies— again, a repeat of the battle from pre-earth life.

20:8 **the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.** The final great battle will involve huge numbers, so many that they will cover the earth like sand on the beach.

20:9 **compassed the camp of the saints about.** This description makes it sound like the number of God's followers will be relatively small, so much that they can all fit in a "camp" and a single "beloved city."

20:9 **fire came down from God out of heaven.** Satan and his armies make a last futile attempt but are utterly and quickly defeated by God's power.

20:10 **cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.** The devil joins the beast and the false prophet in eternal torment, never to bother the righteous again. Unlike the pit, there is apparently no escape from this lake.

THE JUDGMENT (20:11-15)

Having put away the enemies of God once and for all, judgment can be rendered on all those who are left.

20:11 **a great white throne.** The seat of God, large, pure, and definitive. He is so awe-inspiring that even the earth and the heaven run to hide from him.

⁶ Parry and Parry, 273-274.

⁷ Draper and Rhodes, 1301-1302, 1324.

⁸ Draper and Rhodes, 1324.

20:11 **from whose face the earth and the heaven fled.** This anticipates the new heaven and hew earth of 21:1, giving the reason new ones are required is that the wickedness of the current ones causes them to hide from the face of God when he comes to reside here.

20:12 **I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.** Judgment will take a long time because it will be an individual event for each person, but time will not likely matter at this stage.

20:12 **books were opened.** See 3 Nephi 27:25-26 ("all things are written by the Father") and D&C 128:6-8 (stating that these books "must be the books which contained the record of their works, and refer to the records which are kept on earth" while "the book of life is the record which is kept in heaven"). The books on earth and book of life in heaven are both called on in the judgment. The books on earth could refer to temple work; whatever their nature, they capture people's deeds.

One scholar explained it this way: "It has been suggested that those whose names are missing from the citizen list [the book of life] have access to the 'books of deeds' as a last assessment of their claim to remain...judgment proceeds on the evidence supplied both by the record of deeds and the book of life."⁹

20:12 **according to their works.** See also verse 13 and 22:12; this wording is why Martin Luther rejected Revelation as scripture. "Works" is *egra*, meaning anything done, any action, deed, or accomplishment.

20:13 **the sea gave up the dead** Those lost at sea had an unknown final resting place. John assures us that even they are resurrected.¹⁰

20:13 **death and hell delivered up the dead.** Jacob taught the difference between the two: "death" is the death of the body; "hell" is the death of the spirit or the separation from God (Jacob 9:10-12). Even the most wicked are brought before God for judgment.

20:14 **death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.** Both death and hell are conquered in the Atonement. At the time of the judgment, after all of God's children are resurrected, these two old enemies are rendered

⁹ Mounce, 377.

¹⁰ Parry and Parry, 280.

obsolete and are cast into the fire to be with Satan and his followers.

20:15 **whosoever was not found written in the book of life.** The ultimate record book is the heavenly one—the book of life. There is no appeal or recourse because this record is perfect, managed by the God of the universe. Your name is either in or it isn't.

20:15 **cast into the lake of fire.** Like Satan, the beast, and the false prophet, those who followed them to the bitter end suffer the same fate. "They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born; For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity" (D&C 76:32-33).

THE NEW JERUSALEM (21:1-27)

Judgment is complete and we are given a vision of the final fate of the earth itself as it progresses from its Millennial and terrestrial state to a final celestial one. We also see the glorified followers of Christ who live on it. Portrayed at first as the bride ready for the wedding, the scene shifts to a view of the great city in which God and the saints reside. It is a city of incomprehensible size, beauty, and light, a place of peace and safety like nothing ever known before.

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH (21:1-4)

21:1 **And I saw.** The fourth to last use of this visionary phrase in the book, this one moves us from the scene of judgment to a vision of dramatic change on the earth.

21:1 **new heaven and a new earth.** Everything old is gone; no more persecution, pain, tears, grief, or death. The phrase appears to apply to the earth the atmosphere (one of the levels of heaven), not to the entire 'heavens' (sun, moon, stars, etc.). "New" refers less to the time of the change than the quality of it.¹¹ "And the end shall come, and the heaven and the earth shall be consumed and pass away, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. For all old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof, both men and beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; And not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost, for it is the workmanship of mine hand" (D&C 29:23-25). See also Isaiah 65:17; 66:17, 22; 2 Peter 3:10-13.

21:1 **first heaven and the first earth were passed away.** In Genesis 1:1, God first created the heaven and the earth. The new heaven and earth now enacted have so little resemblance to those former creations that they are *apēlthan*, meaning they have been moved, departed, or come to an end. It is the same heaven and

earth but radically transformed. Why not a new earth but leaven heaven alone? "Heaven and earth belong together in biblical thought, so that the renewal of the cosmos involves both (cf. Gen. 1:6-10; Job 37:14-21; Ps. 102:25-26; Isa. 51:6; Matt. 24:35)."¹²

21:1 **no more sea.** Not literal, but symbolic of no more contention among people, no wars or divisions. The sea was the place of evil creatures, chaos, and events and the thing that kept people apart, and something that God often fought against (Genesis 1:2-3; Job 12:15; 41:1; Psalm 18:16; 74:14; 104:26; Isaiah 19:5; 27:1; 51:9-10; 57:20; Jeremiah 5:22; 50:38; 51:36; Ezekiel 30:12; Nahum 1:4).

21:2 **the holy city, new Jerusalem.** In the Bible, Revelation is the only book to use "new" with "Jerusalem." The first use was in 3:12, in the promise to Philadelphia. Now that promise comes to fulfillment. The New Jerusalem is mentioned many times in latter-day scripture, including 3 Nephi 20:22; 21:23-24, Ether 13:3-5; D&C 42:9, 35, 62, 67; 84:2, 4; 133:56; Moses 7:62-64. Some of these scriptures refer to a New Jerusalem that will be on the earth in the last days, and some to this New Jerusalem that John sees with the celestialization of the earth. See also JST Genesis 14:32-34 (Selections in the back of the Bible) where Melchizedek's people were caught up to Enoch's city, which will come down again as the New Jerusalem.

21:2 **coming down from God out of heaven.** John sees this event from two different vantage points; here from on the earth looking up, and in verse 10 from a high mountain looking down.

21:2 **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.** Returning to the image of the marriage supper in 19:7-8, the city itself takes on the metaphor of a bride coming fully prepared to her wedding ceremony. New

¹¹ Draper and Rhodes, 1353.

¹² Smalley, 524.

Jerusalem and its residents are completely worthy of an eternal covenant relationship with God.

21:3 **the tabernacle of God is with men.** Just as temples carve little pieces of the earth out as holy and sanctified, so the entire earth shall become a temple of God, a place for him to dwell and for his people to pray and receive revelation, knowledge, and glory.

21:3 **God himself shall be with them.** All vestiges of the Fall are now done away—death, hell, sin, pain, and now the loss of the very presence of God is no more. He personally lives with the righteous.

21:4 **God shall wipe away all tears.** From Isaiah 25:8; in 7:17 the same promise was given to those living in the sixth seal (us!). The tears were not shed as a result of remorse for sin but for suffering for the testimony of Christ and other challenges and sadness that is part of life.¹³

21:4 **no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.** All the hard things of life are subsumed in the glorious blessings of being with God directly.

SAINTS INHERIT ALL THINGS (21:5-8)

21:5 **he that sat upon the throne.** Referring to the Father, who makes “all things new.” In this section, he will make seven statements to John.¹⁴

21:5 **Behold, I make all things new.** Creation is reinstated for mankind, this time in its perfect and final state.

21:5 **Write.** This is the final time John receives the commandment to write down what he is seeing. I can imagine John being so caught up in the vision and joy of the triumph that he forgot his assignment to write it all down, so God gently reminded him, ‘John, you’re getting all this, aren’t you?’

21:5 **these words are true and faithful.** In Greek, the word order is ‘faithful and true’ matching Christ’s name in 19:11. God’s words are just like his Son; they are sure and can be counted on fully to be fulfilled.

21:6 **It is done.** ‘It has come to pass’ or ‘it has become.’

21:6 **Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.** The Father and the Son share this characteristic of being there from the beginning and seeing everything through to the end. They are also the beginning of joy, life, peace, happiness, forgiveness, and the end of tears, death, sorrow, crying, and pain.

21:6 **the fountain of the water of life.** This was another promise to those in the sixth seal (us!) in 7:17, now fulfilled in the celestial conversion of the earth. Jesus taught the Samaritan woman, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life” (John 4:14). Nephi helps us interpret this as well, explaining that “the fountain of living waters” is the same as “the tree of life,” both of which represent “the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). God’s love is always available to those in the New Jerusalem.

21:7 **He that overcometh.** Going back to the seven promises in chapters 2-3 to the churches, the final promise to those who overcome is all-encompassing.

21:7 **inherit all things...he shall be my son.** No more slaves, but sons and daughters, receiving the full inheritance. “Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. And they shall overcome all things” (D&C 76:58-60).

21:8 **fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars.** Or, “the cowardly, the unfaithful, the sexual perverts, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idol worshippers and all the liars” (BYU). Interesting what sins are specifically called out in the last spoken phrase from the Father here—those lacking courage or faith, engaged in inappropriate sexual activities, killers, pushers of drugs and magic, those who choose other gods, and the deceitful. Unrepentant people who have not overcome (been victorious over the world) and have committed these sins are those cast into the lake of fire and sulfur.

However, D&C 76:85 leaves it hopeful that their suffering is not eternal like Satan’s but rather just until “Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.” At that

¹³ Mounce, 384.

¹⁴ Draper and Rhodes, 1370.

point, they may be released from their misery and granted a degree of eternal happiness.¹⁵

21:8 **which is the second death.** In contrast to those in the city, who have God with them always and drink from his love daily, those who committed the greatest of sins will be separated from him forever, which is the nature of the second death. See 20:6 above.

THE HOLY JERUSALEM (21:9-27)

Next John saw the earth move from its terrestrial state to its final celestial order; compare Ezekiel 40-48.

21:9 **one of the seven angels.** Probably the same messenger that introduced John to the whore in 17:1 now showed him the virtuous bride, “the Lamb’s wife.”¹⁶ In both cases, John was shown or told about a woman, but in the end saw a city.

21:10 **he carried me away in the spirit.** The fourth and last time John records this experience of being “in the spirit.”

21:10 **a great and high mountain.** Recalls the similar experience of Nephi (1 Nephi 11:1) which led to his seeing a very similar vision. It would have to be a very high mountain to see the whole city (see verse 16). Mountains are the places on earth that are the most physically close to God because of their height in the heavens.

21:10 **that great city, the holy Jerusalem.** Coming from a place beyond earth’s heaven, this represents God’s temple or presence on earth. It is the bridge of the Lamb in the form of a great city, as in 21:2.

21:11 **light was like unto a stone most precious.** Here and in verses 18-21, a number of stones are listed, including jasper, gold, glass (“transparent stone”), sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, amethyst, and pearls. What do all these things have in common? None of them decay; they have no impurities; they don’t rust, decompose, tarnish or change.¹⁷

21:11 **a jasper stone.** Jasper was introduced in 4:3 as an attribute of the Father. Jasper is green and

represents life. Here it shows that the city represents life in the highest sense.

21:12 **had a wall great and high.** Like most ancient cities, this one had a protecting wall around it. In verse 16, we’ll see how huge this wall is, providing massive protection.

21:12 **twelve gates.** Like the tabernacle of Moses’ time, each gate has the name of a tribe of Israel; symbolically, we become part of the covenant people before we can enter the city. It also represents God fully honoring his covenant with the house of Israel. Compare this to D&C 137:1-2, Joseph’s vision of the celestial kingdom, where the gate was “like unto circling flames of fire.”

21:12 **at the gates, twelve angels.** The function of the angels is not given, but presumably they help guard the gates from outside forces. They may fill an administrative role of some kind.¹⁸ Michael Wilcox ties them to the angels Brigham Young mentioned acting as sentinels to God’s kingdom; those who have been to the temple can “give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation.”¹⁹

21:14 **twelve foundations.** The city is founded on the priesthood (Quorum of the Twelve; compare Ephesians 2:20), revelation, and a sure knowledge of Christ’s atonement.

21:15 **a golden reed to measure the city.** John had previously measured the temple (11:1). Now the angel with a rod made of gold will measure the city.

21:16 **the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.** A square represents perfection, exactness, and truth. The Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple was a cube, twenty cubits each way (1 Kings 6:20). Thus the entire city is a Holy of Holies (see verse 22).

21:16 **twelve thousand furlongs.** “Furlongs” should be *stadia*, just over 600 feet by our measure. This makes the city about 1,400 miles in each direction—including vertically.²⁰ The seeming impossibility of it adds to the wonder and testifies that it is God’s doing. But the number 12,000 also has symbolic significance,

¹⁵ Draper and Rhodes, 1382.

¹⁶ Mounce, 388.

¹⁷ Wilcox, 305.

¹⁸ Draper and Rhodes, 1391.

¹⁹ Wilcox, 306.

²⁰ Draper and Rhodes, 1401; Mounce, 392.

representing the great power of the priesthood in this city.

21:17 ***an hundred and forty and four cubits***. The width of the wall was 144 cubits or about 220 feet. Of course, 144 is 12 times 12, so exponential priesthood power.

21:18 ***the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass***. Gold never rusts or tarnishes like other metals and represents wealth and prosperity. This gold is worked such that it reflects like a polished piece of glass—a mirror, we would say.

21:19 ***all manner of precious stones***. Twelve stones are mentioned in verses 19 and 20 (going back to verse 14 that counted twelve foundations). The stones are similar to the stones in the high priest's ephod (Exodus 28:17-21), linking the foundation back to Israel and priesthood.

21:21 ***the twelve gates were twelve pearls***. Continuing the absurd sizes to make a point, each gate was made of a single, massive pearl, showing the great value of the gate that let the righteous into the city. All the gates were the same, so no matter which one you entered, you had the same experience.

21:21 ***street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass***. This is the main street going through the center of the city. What an amazing contrast this would be to any city in any part of the world in John's day or ours. See D&C 130:6-9; 137:4.

21:22 ***I saw no temple therein***. There was no need for a building called a temple, since God lives in the city already and the entire city is, in fact, his temple. They themselves "are the temple of it." Temples are no longer needed to represent Christ's atoning sacrifice through animal offerings, nor to perform work for the dead, since all have been redeemed that will at this point.²¹

21:23 ***no need of the sun...the glory of God did lighten it***. As the sun's brightness hides the stars in the daytime, so the glory of God and Christ overshadows even the sun in the New Jerusalem, making it redundant and unnecessary. See Isaiah 60:19-20.

21:24 ***them which are saved shall walk in the light***. The phrase "them which are saved" is not in the oldest Greek manuscripts, being a later addition. So this just refers to the nations walking in the light of the city.²²

21:25 ***gates of it shall not be shut***. Anciently, cities shut their gates at night for protection; in this city there is no night and no threat, so there's no reason to ever shut the gates. Compare Isaiah 60:11.

21:26 ***they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations***. "They" refers back to v. 24, the kings of the earth, who bring or give glory and honor to God and Christ and their great city they live in.

21:27 ***there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth***. No wickedness in any form will be allowed into the city.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS (22:1-21)

Revelation ends much as it began—revealing the majesty of Christ and his triumph over death, sin, hell, and all enemies, and his infinite care for each of us. The authenticity of the vision is confirmed by a divine witness, followed by blessings and penalties for the righteous and disobedient, respectively. But first, we finish the tour of the city by looking at the water flowing through it and the tree of life.

WATER AND TREE OF LIFE (22:1-5)

These verses should be compared to Ezekiel 47:1-12, which portrays a river and trees by the temple.

22:1 ***pure river of water of life***. The water represents the healing power and knowledge of the Spirit, the water of eternal life that flows out from the throne of God into the city (see Ezekiel 36:25-26).

22:1 ***proceeding out of the throne of God***. Like in the garden of Eden where a river went out from the center and split into four to water the garden and the earth in four directions, so here the river of life comes from the throne of God himself. In Ezekiel's vision, the water comes out from under the temple, also referring to the presence of God (Ezekiel 47:1-2).

22:2 ***on either side of the river***. A tree cannot be on two sides of a river. Indeed, the sense of the Greek is

²¹ Draper and Rhodes, 1406.

²² Draper and Rhodes, 1408.

that the tree is so large it hangs over both sides of the river.²³

21:2 **the tree of life.** This is the love of God (John 3:14; 1 Nephi 11:25). Both images—water of life and tree of life—come together in the temple, reminders of a home we once knew, and a destiny we shall one day enjoy.

22:2 **twelve manner of fruits.** Twelve different kinds of perfect fruit, one for each month of the year, representing the power the priesthood and the Atonement to sustain life all the time, in all places, even in eternity.²⁴

22:2 **yielded her fruit every month.** Eternal life served up 24 x 7 x 365.

22:2 **the leaves of the tree were for the healing.** Even the leaves have an important healing function, blessing the nations of the earth (see Ezekiel 47:12).

22:3 **there shall be no more curse.** The Greek phrase denotes any ‘accursed thing.’²⁵ Nothing is cursed by God, the sin of man, or anything else that would impede the joy of celestial life.

22:3 **the throne of the God and of the Lamb.** Jesus did the exact will of the Father, so he shares the same throne.

22:4 **they shall see his face.** In the Bible, only a few saw the face of God (e.g., Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:1; Numbers 14:14; Deuteronomy 5:4). Now everyone in the city has that privilege.

22:4 **his name shall be in their foreheads.** They are the willing servants (slaves) of God. They received his seal in their foreheads long before this time (7:3; 14:1) but now we see the seal is actually God’s name. “His name stands for his character. The faces of those who have experienced the beatific vision will reflect the unmistakable likeness of their heavenly Father.”²⁶

22:5 **no night there.** See 21:23.

WORSHIP GOD (22:6-9)

Returning to his own time and place, John’s angel/narrator began to teach him some things, but

²³ Draper and Rhodes, 1430.

²⁴ Draper and Rhodes, 1431.

²⁵ Draper and Rhodes, 1432.

John felt the need to fall down and worship him. The messenger corrected him (again) and counseled him to only worship God.

22:6 **These sayings are faithful and true.** Or, ‘These words are faithful and true’ again echoing back to Christ in 21:5 and 19:11.

22:6 **the Lord God of the holy prophets.** Or, “The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets” (NIV). Better manuscripts made the phrase easier to understand than the awkward phrase of the KJV. God inspires prophets with his spirit to deliver the messages of “things which much shortly be done.”

22:7 **I come quickly.** Three times in this chapter (verses 7, 12, and 20) the Lord makes this declaration, and three times John records the response, “Come” (verses 17 and 20). “Quickly” means suddenly or unexpectedly but not soon.

22:7 **blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.** This is the sixth beatitude in Revelation. We must always be prepared by obeying what is taught in the Revelation because we don’t know when he will come. See Luke 12:37 then JST Luke 12:41-44, 47 (appendix)—he comes in each watch of the night, meaning we all have a ‘personal second coming’ when we die, even if we are not on the earth for the Big Event.

Why the Lord would not make the specific time of his coming know is illustrated by the “Parable of the Three Papers.” A teacher says the grade of a class is based on three papers but no specific due date is given, just one day during the semester when he will call for them. How many would start on them immediately? If the dates were given, how many would wait until the last minute? So it is with the Lord—he is merciful in not telling us when he’s coming so we’ll not procrastinate our repentance.²⁷

22:8 **I John saw these things, and heard them.** John’s witness is a personal testimony—he saw and heard the whole vision for himself, not in a dream but in a physical experience of which he can witness.

²⁶ Mounce, 400.

²⁷ Wilcox, 318-319.

22:9 KJV	22:9 JST
9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.	9 Then saith he unto me, See not that for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

See 19:10 for notes on the same change.

22:9 **thy fellowservant**. As in 19:10, John fell to worship the messenger, perhaps thinking it was Christ, but more like in tremendous gratitude for what he had learned from this man, but was told not to do so.

22:9 **of thy brethren the prophets**.

22:9 **worship God**. The model for all good teachers, parents, family members, and friends, who may receive praise or recognition for service in the kingdom: 'I'm not what's important here—worship God.'

I COME QUICKLY (22:10-16)

22:10 **Seal not the sayings**. The opposite of what Nephi was told after his vision (1 Nephi 14:18-28). John was to write and share them.

22:10 **for the time is at hand**. Not the "time" as in the specific moment (*chronos*), but the period of when this will all begin (*kairos*).

22:11 **he that is righteous, let him be righteous still**. The wicked will continue to do wicked things; the righteous need to continue to do righteous things, because the judgment is coming.

22:12 **my reward is with me**. The angel/prophet is still speaking but even more directly with investiture from God, speaking Christ's own words in the first person. When Jesus comes, he will reward those who are watching and waiting (see Matthew 16:27 and Romans 2:3-6).

22:13 **I am Alpha and Omega**. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet serve to illustrate that Jesus is the beginning and the end, the first and the last (see 1:8, 11, 17; 2:8; 21:6).

²⁸ Draper and Rhodes, 1472.

22:14 **Blessed are they that do his commandments**. We gain access to the tree of life by doing the will of God. This is the final of the seven beatitudes scattered throughout the book and promises access to the great city John just finished seeing in chapter 21 and the beginning of this chapter.

22:15 **For without are dogs**. Outside of the city of the presence of God wickedness still exists. "Dogs" can also mean heathens, unbelievers; they are not allowed in the city. The rest of the list is similar to the one in 21:8, 27.

22:16 **I Jesus have sent mine angel**. The angel/prophet is still speaking but delivering the words of Christ.

22:16 **the root and the offspring of David**. Both the terms "root" and "offspring" denote a descendent, emphasizing Jesus' right to the throne of Israel as the direct line from David.²⁸

22:16 **the bright and morning star**. See 2:28, this refers to Venus which is the brightest 'star' in the sky and thus an apt symbol for Christ and his light.

COME, LORD JESUS (22:17-21)

"The verses which follow in this paragraph (16-20) present a picture of order and beauty within the holy city; and this contrasts markedly with the chaos and ugliness of life under the dragon and his beast-like lieutenants."²⁹

22:17 **the Spirit and the bride say, Come**. The Holy Spirit who testifies of all things prays for Jesus to come, as does the bride/church who suffer in the unfair world of men and long for the equality and justice of Jesus' coming.

22:17 **let him that heareth say, Come**. John's plea is that everyone that hears this book read will likewise invite Jesus to return and take his place as King of Kings.

22:17 **let him that is athirst come**. This refers to the living water which all are invited to drink (see Isaiah 55:1; John 4:13-14). The invitation plays on the Spirit's and church's invitation to Jesus to "come"; Jesus turns around and invites those needing a drink from the love of God come to him.

²⁹ Smalley, 551.

22:18 **add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues** See Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32. This was probably not the last book John wrote. At the very least, at this time, the New Testament was not yet compiled, so applying this command to the not-yet-existent New Testament doesn't make sense. John was clearly speaking of the scroll of Revelation only, which serious scholars of all faiths recognize.³⁰

22:19 **if any man shall take away from the words of the book.** What did John really mean? Perhaps because it is easy to add to or take away from symbols, giving them our own meanings, it's critical to stay with teachings of the prophets, other scriptures, and the Spirit to make a proper interpretation.

22:20 **He which testifieth these things.** From the beginning, this was "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"

(1:1); his voice has been persistent through the visions in declaring what will shortly come.

22:20 **Even so, come, Lord Jesus.** Knowing the difference between the world we live in and the one Christ will bring, this is the only logical prayer we could offer. The prepared bride longs for the wedding; everyone else waiting adds their own "Amen."

22:21 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.** Though the word "grace" may have been a typical letter ending in Greek culture, when tied to Jesus, it becomes a powerful blessing left by an apostolic voice on those who would read his vision and letter. That blessing extends down to our present day and to the faithful of all ages.

CONCLUSION

The dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the whore, and the merchant city may look like they're winning the battle today, as they did in John's day. But John's message of hope comforted the churches in his day, and it should do the same in ours.

The prominent signs of the last days—earthquakes, war, and all the rest—have been on the earth since the beginning. So an increase in earthquakes or other natural disasters in the short-term is difficult to interpret with confidence and being any specific part of

the last days. The most powerful sign is the restoration itself, the manifestation of the love of God—the water and tree of life—given to this last dispensation that we might be prepared and say each day: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"The book of Revelation is thus a manual of preparation that will steady us in the days ahead."³¹ John's—and the Lord's—ultimate message in Revelation is: 'Don't worry and have hope—God rules and God wins.'

³⁰ Mounce, 409, says it is a warning "against willful distortion of the message. It is not unlike Paul's stern words in Gal 1:6, 7 to those who would pervert the gospel."

³¹ Wilcox, 318.

SOURCES CONSULTED

- Beale, G. K., and Carson, D. A., eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).
- Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).
- Danker, Frederick William, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- Draper, Richard D. *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991).
- Draper, Richard D. and Rhodes, Michael D. *The Revelation of John the Apostle* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2013); electronic version from Deseret Bookshelf, so page numbers may differ depending on the device used.
- Faulconer, James E., *The New Testament Made Harder: Scripture Study Questions* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2015).
- Faulring, Scott H., Jackson, Kent P., and Matthews, Robert J., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 2004).
- Holzappel, Richard Neitzel and Wayment, Thomas A., eds., *The Life and Teachings of the New Testament Apostles* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 2010).
- Holzappel, Richard Neitzel and Wayment, Thomas A., eds., *Making Sense of the New Testament* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 2010).
- MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation*, 2 vols. (Chicago, Moody Press, 1999).
- McConkie, Bruce R. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary (DNTC)*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977).
- Millet, Robert L., ed. *Studies in Scripture: Vol. 6, Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1987).
- Mounce, Robert H. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977).
- Osborne, Grant R., *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002).
- Parry, Jay A., and Parry, Donald W. *Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998).
- Ryken, Leland, Wilhoit, James C., Longman, Tremper, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998).
- Smalley, Stephen S., *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005).
- Smith, Joseph Fielding, ed., *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977); cited as TPJS.
- Wall, Rob, *Lectio: Guided Bible Reading—Revelation*, <http://blog.spu.edu/lectio/readings/revelation/>.
- Wayment, Thomas A., *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 2005).
- Welch, John & Hall, John. *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002).
- Wilcox, S. Michael. *Who Shall Be Able to Stand? Finding Personal Meaning in the Book of Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).
- Wilson, Mark, "Revelation," in Arnold, Clinton E., ed. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).
- Bible versions cited (if no version is cited, it is the KJV; any translation or paraphrase in single quotes is the author's):
 KJV – King James Version (Authorized Version)
 JST – Joseph Smith Translation
 BYU – BYU New Testament Rendition (from Draper and Rhodes)
 CJB – Complete Jewish Bible
 LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
 NAB – The New American Bible
 NASB – New American Standard Bible
 NIV – New International Version
 NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
 NLT – New Living Translation