

Come See the Bride



Revelation 21:9-27

My sister-in-law, Stevie, does wedding videography. We have a family text group, so every once in a while, she'll do a video that she texts to the family group. I always watch these videos because they are so good. Most of the time I have no idea who the bride or groom is; I've never even met these people. The way she does the video, it shows the story of how they came to be, little snippets of how they feel, and reading letters to each other. There are always shots of the bride getting ready in that dressing room looking in the mirror. You can see the anticipation on her face of seeing her future husband. Then there's that moment, song playing in the background, where the groom is standing in the front, the doors open up, and you see the bride walk in. You can see the look on the guy's face. He's just wrecked...tears coming down. I'm watching and even though I don't know who these people are, I'm crying 'this is so beautiful!' Every time, it just does something to me because that's what weddings really do. They pull at our emotions. If you've been a part of a wedding, so know that when everybody stands up there is this energy in the room as the bride walks through those doors to meet her husband. Think about how sad it

would be if a bride, in preparation for her wedding, only thought about the dressing room. Just imagine if a bride spent all of her time thinking about the wedding day as just the dressing room. She spent all of her money and attention on the dressing room. She made it perfect. All of her flowers went in the dressing room, and then spent the entire day in the dressing room, putting on the dress, looking at the mirror, and never left the mirror because the whole thing was about her. She just stayed, looked at the mirror, and thought about how great she looked. She took selfies and posted because the whole day was about her. Imagine how sad that would be. There's a guy waiting behind double doors who never gets to see his bride because she only thought about the dressing room. I want you to imagine if that could possibly be you. In Revelation 21, we're going to see those doors open up in heaven. We're going to see the bride come down, New Jerusalem, as a bride adorned for her husband. We're going to see that beautiful wedding day, and that's us, the Church, coming down to meet our groom, Jesus and to live with Him forever. I just want to ask if there is a chance that you are living more for the dressing room than you are for the wedding day. Are you spending more time look at the mirror, not in preparation to see Jesus, but just for you, just to see how good you look, how much desire you have? You're living this life for right now. This day is only about this day rather than the pull of the New Testament, because the New Testament would say live this day in light of that day. There is a day coming when we will meet our groom, where we will have that great wedding day. What I hope you will see is that you live your life not just for the dressing room. The dressing room is important. It's getting you ready, getting you prepared for what's to come, but the dressing room is not the end. The dressing room is the beginning of the end, and you would live this day, ultimately for that day to come. The good news is we're going to get to see a little glimpse of what that day is going to be like as John catches a glimpse from God in Revelation 21. We're going to read the first section of our verses and then walk through the whole chapter together.

Scripture

"Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal."

The Bride

We see in Revelation that one of the seven angels comes to John and says, come, I want to show you the bride. This angel has already said this to John in Revelation 17. He said come and he took John to a wilderness and showed John, not New Jerusalem, not the bride; he showed John Babylon, which is the great harlot, full of immorality and self-indulgence. In her hands, there are jewels, gold, and pearls, all the trinkets she's holding to try to seduce the world to say come live for yourself, live for me, though Babylon's end ultimately is destruction. Now at the end of Revelation, an angel is coming to John and saying, now come, because I want to show you someone else. I want to show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. I love this. So, the angel takes John to a high mountain. This mountain had to be really high. I love mountains, so I love this. Just thinking about new creation, new earth, think about a mountain John could go to, to see the city we're about to see. It is a great mountain and I cannot wait to hike to the top of that mountain.

Some of you have some good news last week. I talked to Yvette Pyle in the community this week, and she said, "I was so thankful for last week's sermon because as a six year old girl, heaven was one of the stumbling blocks for me coming to know the Lord. I just didn't want to go to heaven. I was a fidgety little girl. I was full of energy, and the thought of sitting in

a pew in church forever terrified me!” like little Huck Finn, she didn’t want that. She wanted adventure, something more than just a church pew. We saw last week that there is not just going to be a church pew forever, not going to have a cloud and a harp; there's going to be a new earth full of adventure and the glory of God. It will be this earth, yet better, recreated, and even more vibrant fall colors. It will be good.

Now, John sees this bride. Imagine that moment that all of us married guys remember well. My wedding was actually in this sanctuary. I stood right here looking at those doors, and I could not wait for them to open. I knew behind those doors was the most beautiful woman in the world, and I couldn’t wait to see her in her wedding dress all fixed up for me! She wanted to come to me, and I was there, not for you guys, but for her. It was our day. Here, John is about to see the doors of heaven open, and he is going to see this beautiful bride. Notice what happens. The angel says, come, I want to show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and then the angel takes him to a high mountain and shows him New Jerusalem, the holy city. It’s kind of strange. He says I want to show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb; now, look and see the city coming down. He's showing him the bride, but he's showing him a city, a city that is the bride. What is this trying to tell us? What does this mean? It means the bride and the city are one and the same. What John is beholding is not just the city and buildings. He's not just beholding a place; he's beholding a people. It’s not just a people; it’s a people and a place. That place is filled with the very presence of God, God’s people in God’s place in God’s presence forevermore. John ultimately sees you, he sees me, because New Jerusalem ultimately is the Church. John says it was radiant, beautiful, and splendid like the rarest of jewels. What is that radiance that John sees? I love Ephesians 5:27 when Jesus says He is going to present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. We are that jewel. We are that splendor. We are that radiance, and it’s not because we are so beautiful; it’s because He has made us beautiful. We, as the city coming down in glory, it’s the glory that Christ has given us. Look at the city; don’t miss it. You're seeing you. You're seeing the Church, the very people of God in the place of God under the presence of God forevermore.

The City

- **Walls | Gates | Foundations**

Let's look at this beautiful city that John sees. In verses 12-14, we're going to see walls, gates, and foundations, "It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." This city coming down had walls, gates, and foundations. Some will say this is all just a metaphor; it's not actually walls and gates. It's just figurative language. Others say these are real walls, gates, and foundations. I want to say that either way you take it, the truth we will see is ultimately the same because John is trying to say this is a secure place that you belong to. It's a place that will never be invaded, a place that will never fall. You will be secure there forevermore. How do we know that? It's because it's got a great high wall. Think about any city. Go back to any movie you've seen about medieval times or any great story that isn't modern. When someone wants to take over the city, they have to penetrate the wall. My kids were watching Willow this morning, and they go to the city and there's a giant wall they have to penetrate to get into the city. All the battles that we've seen on the movies, they have to penetrate the wall, but the wall always cracks, always falls. Here, there is a wall over two hundred feet high that is not going to fall. There are angels at the gates. If you haven't noticed in the Bible, you don't want to mess with an angel. They're pretty bad dudes, right? The idea is nobody is getting into the city. It is completely secure, which is good news for us because we are insecure people. We worry. We fear. We have anxieties about ourselves, our families, and our future, about just everything. We have fear of what tomorrow will bring. We are going to live forever if you are the Church in a place without fear. It's going to be completely secure. It has a high wall and it also has twelve gates and twelve foundations. Think about the gates. If a wall keeps out, what does a gate do? A gate lets in. Here is a place where no evil will go in, but there are gates that you are actually welcomed through. You are welcome to go

in and out of those gates. Why? Because you are the very people of God. Then we see these foundations, twelve foundations. Why are there twelve gates and twelve foundations? John says it represents the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It says their names. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel, those sons of Israel are actually inscribed on the gates, and the twelve apostles are inscribed on the foundations. It's neat how they're named, but their nameless. We don't get the names of Israel or the apostles; it just says they're there. I think it is trying to say John is seeing the people of God, and the people of God encompass both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is Israel, God's covenant people, but it is also the nations. Israel and the nations have become one, and they are called the Church. The old covenant and the new covenant come together, and now, we live under the new covenant as the Church. It's naming Israel, but it's not naming Israel. It's naming the apostles, but it's not naming the apostles. John wants you to see that whether you lived in the Old Testament period or the New Testament period, if you have faith in God, you belong to the new city. It's nameless, but your name is there. That's what John is trying to get us to see.

Now let's just take a look at how massive and how beautiful this city is. Let's look at the measurements and the materials. Verse 15 begins, "And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold..." Ezekiel got a measuring rod, it was a reed, to measure the new temple, now, there's a measuring rod of solid gold "...to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal." It's a cube. Its length, width, and height are the same, and that's going to come in later so file that away. "He also measured its wall, 144 cubits (about 200 ft.) by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel." John lists all twelve jewels, and then says, "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." Now, John sees it, it's massive, and now he starts to measure it. It is twelve thousand stadia, which is kind of an odd measurement. That is about fourteen

hundred miles. So John sees a city that is fourteen hundred miles wide, fourteen hundred miles long, and fourteen hundred miles tall. I know those number are a little bit hard to figure out, but that's from New York to Texas! That's how wide it is, that's also how long it is, and that's how tall it is. If you're wondering if there is room for you in the new Kingdom, the answer is yes; there is plenty of room. That's just the city. That's not even the new earth where we're going to go, explore, and adventure. That's just the city that people dwell in. There is plenty of room for you.

I remember flying into New York City for the first time. It is unreal! I had seen pictures of it, so I kind of knew how big it was, but when me and my wife flew into it, I could not get over how big the city was. It looked like it was fake. I mean, these buildings were bigger than my eyes could even imagine. John is looking at a city that goes from New York to Texas, and not just that long, but that wide and that high. Can you imagine? I told you he's on a high mountain, a big high mountain to see the massiveness of this city. Notice the material that is used in the architecture of this city. In the walls, gates, and streets, there are jewels, pearls, and gold, the most valuable things we have on this earth. The wall is covered with jewels; a wall from New York to Texas is covered in jewels, jasper, just gleaming. All the gates are solid pearls. In the New Testament, you've got the pearl of great price. Just a little pearl is ultimate value, and the gates are made out of solid pearls. The streets...what some of you wear around your neck, your ears, and on your fingers because gold is so precious to us, we walk on it. It is the pavement; it is the streets that we stand on. The Baker Commentary said what the priest would stand on in the Holy of Holies was a golden floor. Only they got to stand on the golden floor. In the new heaven and new earth, everybody stands on the golden floor. We walk on golden streets.

In high school, I was a flagger for Murray Paving. My grandparents owned the business and I got to be a flagger. A flagger means you stand on one side of the road construction with a sign that says stop, or slow. You have a walkie-talkie and you let cars go around when the pavers are doing their thing. Trucks would come in with asphalt, put it in the paver, and the paver would pave and the rollers would roll. I would stand there on hot asphalt

because that's what we paved with. I'm just trying to imagine me being a flagger in heaven, standing on a golden road, watching trucks roll in with loads of gold that is poured into a paver that will then get rolled on solid gold. You can imagine the value, beauty, and breathtaking splendor of the city that John sees. It's like nothing he's ever imagined. The best of this world is what they paid for in heaven. One of the most precious things is just strewn out on the walls and on the gates. I think it is giving evidence there is actually better treasure in heaven. The treasure is not the jewels and gold that we love and long for; the treasure in heaven is God. He is the ultimate treasure.

- **The Greater Temple**

John says as he's measuring the city that it's a cube. It's the same length and width as it is height. Why does that matter? In the next line, John also noticed something strange about the city. In verse 22, he says, "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb." John is looking at this city, and you can imagine that for John, who grew up in Judaism, he is looking for one thing in this city. Where is the temple going to be? I mean, if Solomon's temple was great, what is the new Kingdom's temple going to be like. He's looking everywhere for the temple, and it is a shocking moment when John says 'there is no temple.' He's looking everywhere in the city from a high mountain, and there is not temple. Why? Because the temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. Why is this such a big deal? To understand, we have to see a little history about the temple. If you take the whole narrative of Scripture, one the narratives is God getting His presence back with His people. It started in a garden where God made us to be in His presence forever, to enjoy Him forevermore. You could argue that garden was not just a garden; it was a temple garden because the very presence of God was there. Adam and Eve actually acted as priests to guard and keep it holy. They failed. They sinned, and now angels, the same angels that covered the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy of Holies are now guarding the way into the garden. You can't go in there anymore. God's presence is now blocked. Now there are people outside of God's presence. Then we see the story picks up in Exodus where we find that God delivers His people. When He

delivers them in the wilderness, He tells them to build Him a tent. It's going to be a tabernacle, a place where He will dwell among them. He gives them instructions to build a perfect cube inside of the tent. It will be the same length, the same width, and the same height. Inside that cube, there will be gold, and special stitching, special instruments, the Ark of the Covenant, angels, and God's presence will be there. If you were the high priest, you got to go in there and meet with God. When Moses goes in there, sort of face to face with God, he notices it looks a lot like Eden. The colors, the trees, and all of this are trying to show what the garden was like in a very minicosm. They would move this tent and take it with them. God's presence would go by fire and it would come in a cloud. God's presence was portable, moving with them. One day, that tabernacle becomes a temple because God's presence finds its place. That place is a city, the city of David, Jerusalem. Solomon builds a permanent structure, like none seen, with gold, jewels, and extravagance. They build the Holy of Holies, that cube place so that in that place, on golden floors, a high priest could come in once a year and go into the very presence of God. It was a temple city, a city that would have the very presence of God, but only in a little twenty by twenty by twenty place. Then, that temple gets destroyed. Then, it gets rebuilt in Ezra and Nehemiah's day, but it wasn't rebuilt for its glory because the old men just weep. They're like this is not Solomon's; this is not how it should be. Then Herod, through his project, tries to freshen it up, tries to rebuild it to remain in its glory, and Jesus shows up, and basically says it's condemned. It is wasted. It's come to its end. Destroy it and I'll raise it up in three days. He talks bad about the temple where God's very presence dwells. Why is that? It's because the temple is obsolete because Jesus, the new tabernacle, had come.

See, Jesus came to tabernacle among us, John 1:14 says. His body would behold the very presence of God. Where Jesus is, you see God. He is that movable presence of God, that new tabernacle. When people see Jesus, they see God, God's presence back on the earth with His people in limited capacities in a movable way. When Jesus died on the cross, what happened to the veil in the temple? That veil that said you cannot come past, you must hide or you must die; those are the two options because your sin is too great. When Jesus died, the veil was ripped from top to

bottom to say the presence of God is now open to all those who come and follow Jesus. Do you know what the Bible actually says about us? When you go to 2 Corinthians 6:16, it says we are God's temple. Jesus brings the tabernacle when He dies and rises again; He turns the Church into God's temple. Here's the place of God where God's presence will dwell. It's us, you and me! Everywhere we go, the presence of God goes with us. The temple is the presence of God. The temple is where God is. Once we dwelled in it fully, but now, we have to either hide or die because of our sins. But Jesus did away with our sin. He made us righteous so that we can now live in the presence of God.

So, John is looking for a temple but he realizes there is no temple. It's the same width as it is long as it is high. Where is the only other measurement like that in the Bible? It's the Holy of Holies in the temple. What is the point? Why is there no temple in this new place? It's because the entire place is the temple of God. The whole place is filled with the glory and presence of God, and as His people, we get to live in His city. We don't have to hide and we don't have to die. We can just bask ourselves in the presence of God. His presence, the thing that we were made for and meant for, the only thing that will satisfy the longings of our heart, we get to live in it in the full splendor of the glory of God forevermore because there is no temple. One of the main themes of Scripture is God getting His presence back with His people. It happened through little pieces all along the way.

- **Greater Light**

One day, a coming day when the doors fly open and the wedding happens, we will live fully in God's presence forevermore. Which means, there will be better light in this new city. Verse 23 says, "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb." This new city doesn't even need the sun. The sun that gives us light has no need anymore because the glory of God lights up the whole place. You'll never have to flip on a lamp in heaven because the lamp is the Lamb. You will never have a moment where you're in darkness. Have you ever walked through a forest in the middle of the night? It's a little spooky because somehow darkness reminds us of evil. There will be no memory of

evil. There will be no more nights because the glory of God will be our light. On a cold day, have you ever found just found that spot where the sun shines bright? You can just get in the moment where you feel the warmth of the sun. It feels so good. Can you imagine the warmth of God's glory? You're going to live not needing the sun or the moon because you have the very light of God.

- **The Nation's Glory**

In this light, the nations are going to walk. Verses 24-26 say, "By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations." There is this picture of kings and nations coming into the city through the gates bringing their honor and their glory. It's hard to imagine exactly what this could mean, but it seems to imply that those from the nations who bear the image of God, those who have followed after the Lord from all corners of the earth are now bringing their culture, their art, their genius, the stuff they've created, into the city to show that they are the people of God. They who are in the image of God, for the glory of God, have made stuff with the hands God has given them, and now, they're bringing it all into the city to enrich the city all for God's glory. It's not going to be boring. Heaven is going to be a place like you've never seen before, the very best of this world transformed into greater glory in the Kingdom to come. All of it will be done for the glory of God. I love this nations talk because the whole Bible is about the nations. God's heart is for the nations. He was never just for one people; He was always for all people. In heaven, we are going to keep our distinctions that make us uniquely different. We're not all going to become one bland people; our differences are going to remain. Our ethnicities will remain. There's going to be languages and accents because that's God's design and God's beauty. We will celebrate it all to His glory. We will see His good plan and how good it was, how it got distorted with sin, but how it got redeemed by the gospel and how grand it is on that day. We will be one people looking uniquely different for the glory of God.

- **The Only Way In**

In this city, there's only one way in. Verse 27 says, "But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." This is good news and bad news. The good news is there is no more sin, which means there are no more sinners in the place of God. Nothing of sin will get in. It's only righteousness forevermore. That's the good news. That's also the bad news, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all have done what is false. The reality is none of us deserves to be in that city. None of us! It's not that those who have done more good than bad will get in. There isn't some scale weighing where pretty good people get in and pretty bad people stay out. No one is righteous, no not one. No one can go in because everyone has done what is false, but John sees a book. There's a book called the Lamb's book of life. Everybody whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life has free access and belongs, and they become that city. It's not how good you do or how hard you try; it's who you banked your life on. Did you bank your life on you, or, did you completely turn from you and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? Did you repent of your sins and believe in the gospel that He lived and died for you, and by confessing His name, by trusting in Him, He would raise you from the dead to new life? Have you been made new by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? It's only by faith that we get our names in the Lamb's book of life and we can freely enjoy and walk into the city. But not only walk into it, we are it. We are the very place that God dwells.

The truth we see in Revelation is that there are two different cities. There is Babylon, which has trinkets and it is all about self and indulgence. It's all about you. It's your life lived to your fullest apart from the glory of God. Babylon's end is destruction. But there is a new city where those trinkets we so love will be turned to pavement because those things were not the real treasures. The real treasure was always God. That new city, as the bride of Christ, we will live with Him forevermore. Which city are you? Do you reside in Babylon? If so, repent and believe in the gospel because Babylon perishes. New Jerusalem lasts forever. What if you are New Jerusalem? My encouragement to you is to live, but not just for this day;

instead, live for that day, the day we just read about. It's the day when those doors will fly open and you will be presented to your husband forevermore. I can't imagine if Katie, fifteen years ago, would have stayed in the dressing room and never walked through those doors because she forgot the wedding day is not just about the dressing room. It's not just about looking your prettiest for him. The mirror is not for him; the mirror is ultimately for Him. He's not there for him; He's there for me. The dressing room is about a wedding and a life. If you are New Jerusalem, please remember this life is a dressing room. It is preparing you. It matters how we live in this dressing room, but it is a waiting room. It is getting you ready for what's to come. The mirror is not to look at yourself and only notice you and make your life better for you; the mirror is to make you prepared and ready for King Jesus. Everything you do in the dressing room will be with an eye to those double doors where you can't wait when they fly open and you, from this day, go to that day, the day you were made for. You were not made for a dressing room; you were made for a wedding and for a life with God in a city that is more glorious than you could imagine where there is no temple and the light is the very presence of God. That's what you were made for. So what do we do? We live this day focused on that day. We live in this dressing room because it matters. Right now matters. This life matters. Things we do right here matter. They matter because there's a couple of doors they're about to open. When those doors open, that day is what matters most. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, "Therefore, do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all, so we fix our eyes, not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Church, look at the mirror, but don't make the mirror about you. Look to the mirror to prepare yourself for that day that's coming. The dressing room is about the wedding. Let's make this day ultimately about that day.