

Revelation 21:9–22:6 — The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

Notes on The Revelation with Practical Reflections

H. H. Snell

Chapter 21:9 to 22:6: The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

Chapter 21:9 to 22:6: The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

We now come to the last section of this solemn Book. As in former instances, so now, the seer is led back again, for he is to learn the position and glory of the Church in the millennial age. I here repeat what was mentioned when considering the seventeenth chapter, that it appears as if the same angel that showed to John the mystery of THE GREAT WHORE, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, now, in widest possible contrast, points to THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE. To see the former, he was led into the wilderness; for the latter he had to look up towards heaven. Both needed the power of the Spirit to be discerned. As the harlot was likened to a city, so is the bride. The false thing was symbolised by a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth; the bride of the Lamb is also called that great city. We need not the Holy Ghost to see literal cities: the natural vision is enough for that. The things of God are discerned only by the Spirit of God. The book of Revelation abundantly teaches us this. The heavenly calling and standing of the Church of God is often noticed in the epistles of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Even now we are spoken of as partakers of the heavenly calling {Heb. 3:1},

as quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; in the eternal state, we saw the bride coming down from God out of heaven; and in connection with millennial glory, John saw, that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God {Rev. 21:10}.

If Jerusalem means, as is generally considered, “a dwelling in peace,” we can easily understand why the bride is so called. Securely fixed upon the peacemaking, peace-speaking power of the blood of Jesus, she knows now the full enjoyment of peace with God {Rom. 5:1},

and the peace of God {Phil. 4:7},

under the everlasting shelter of the God of peace {Heb. 13:20, 21}. Holy city {Rev. 21:10, {see New Trans., JND}}

becomes her, because holiness characterizes her, and no false or defiling thing can enter there (Rev. 21:27). She is new Jerusalem {Rev. 3:12; 21:2},

because that city which should have been a dwelling of peace, a glory and praise in the earth, became spiritually Sodom and Egypt; They knew not the Prince of peace; they crucified the Lord of glory; they refused the gospel of peace, the forgiveness of sins; and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Hence that city, Jerusalem, could not be a dwelling of peace. No marvel, then, that we find the counsels of Divine grace teaching us about a new

Jerusalem. It is a great {rather, “holy”} city, because it comprehends all the members of the body of Christ. It comes out of heaven, because the saints, having previously been translated to the Father’s house, are now manifested to the praise of the glory of Divine grace; then the world will know what they are so ignorant of now, that the Father hath loved us even as He loved Jesus. It comes from God {Rev. 21:10},

because Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, and we have been made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, and by His blood. Christ Himself is our righteousness; our life is hid with Christ in God, and He has given us the glory which the Father gave Him; -hence it is now noticed that John saw the bride, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

What wondrous heights of grace! and yet those heights were counselled in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Can we think, beloved, of anything higher or more blessed for any creature than this? It may be asked by some, What proof have you that the bride, the Lamb’s wife, is the Church? I give, in reply, the following reasons: -1. The Church is taught to expect to be manifested to the world, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us-ward through Christ Jesus. 2. The twelve foundations, having in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, seem to identify this city with one of the special characters of the Church, which, we are told in Ephesians, is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, that is, that they were the doctrinal founders of the Church. 3. It is evidently a symbolic and not a literal city, for the seer is not summoned to behold a city, but the bride, the Lamb’s wife. He looks for her. In what imagery she would be presented in the vision he could not say; his soul was prepared by the angel for a vision of the Lamb’s wife. It is clearly, then, a symbolic city. It is not even a city where the bride should dwell. He is called to see the bride, and he beholds her in the symbol of a city. In the contrast of the harlot, as before noticed, he also saw a symbolic city -- a city in which was found the blood of all that were slain on the earth -- a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. How is it possible to apply such language literally? Besides, the dimensions of the golden city are given, and can we imagine a literal city coming down from God out of heaven 12,000 furlongs; or 1500 miles in height? We know, too, how symbolic language abounds in the book of Revelation.

Notes on the Revelation

4. When the Lord presents Himself to the assemblies as the bright and Morning Star, we are immediately told that the Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17},

Now I ask, Can such a posture of soul be ascribed to any but the Church of God? To whom else has He been revealed as the bright and Morning Star? and who else has had, or ever will have, such a hope? The Jewish remnant will by-and-by long for Messiah to come, to bring them into their inheritance and kingdom, but they will know Him as the Sun of righteousness, bringing healing to Israel, and trampling their enemies in His fury; they will cry to God to send down vengeance on those around them, as many of the Psalms teach us. But the bride not only deeply longs in ardent affection for the Lord Himself, the bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)

which comes before sunrise, but she throws her arms wide open, in the spirit of the Savior of sinners, and cries to the Christless and godless around her, saying Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Let the reader attentively consider whether with these facts it is possible to think of the bride being any other than the Church of God! 5. The calling and expectation of the Church is that of eternal union with Christ. Christ is said to make in Himself of twain one new man {Eph. 2:15}

-- He the Head and we the members; so that we are even now members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

We are told that Christ . . . loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25, 27-29, 32).

Would not such a Scripture lead us to expect that the Church of God would have a distinct character as the bride, the Lamb's wife? 6. The gold and precious stones that abound in this city are figures used by the Holy Ghost to symbolise true saints on a former occasion. In 1 Cor. 3, when building upon the foundation laid, which is Jesus Christ, is considered, the apostle warns labourers in the gospel against accrediting persons as on that blessed foundation who are merely of the earth earthy, and not partakers of eternal life, not born from above; only wood, hay, and stubble, instead of being heavenly and divine -- gold, silver, and precious stones. Thus we are not surprised to find this holy city, new Jerusalem, of pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones (Rev. 21:18, 19). Are not these reasons sufficient for our concluding that the Church and bride are identical? We know that all the saints who are in the first resurrection will be in the reign with Christ in millennial glory, though that is not contemplated here, because the subject is specially the bride, the Lamb's wife.

It is a city of life and light and glory. As another has said, "The Church, as the candlestick, may be shattered; but as the Lamb's wife she shall live; and this golden city is the Bride of the Lamb, the Church of God now manifested in her perfectness. . . . She is the habitation of the glory of God, the place of the throne, a sanctuary, too, as well as a palace, having a presence within her which makes the

whole scene a temple. Thus is she the suited dwelling-place of kings and priests; and being thus in herself the beautiful one, and bearing with her this honor of the royal priesthood, all that goes forth from her, or enters into her, or dwells there, is according to these things. Light is shed from her, that the nations may walk therein: water from the river of life flows from her, bearing leaves with it, that the nations may be healed thereby; and all that goes in is purity; and all who dwell within are in joy and dignity, having no need of candle, nor even light of the sun, being also in the conscious dignity of their everlasting kingdom; and nothing must touch such a habitation of holiness and gladness and glory, but the very honor of the kings of the earth. They may bring up their glory and honor unto it, but nothing less than that can approach it." The kingdom is here displayed in its holy order and righteous authority. It is the golden city we get, the symbol of righteousness and power united in government -- the Church, with the enthroned Lamb descending out of heaven to take association with the earth, ruling it and yet blessing it, presiding over it in righteousness, and yet dispensing to it the water of life, and the light of the glory, of the very fountains of which she had now become the scene and the dwelling-place." "Fair distant land, could now our eyes But half its charms explore, How would our spirits long to rise, And dwell on earth no more!"

The jasper wall, great and high, tells us not only of glory and beauty in keeping with every other part of the city, but also of security and separation; and if of the earthly city it will be said, Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces {Psa. 122:7},

how much more will this heavenly city be the place of endless peace and unchanging blessing? There is something Divine, something consistent with the glory of God, in the symbol of the jasper wall; for we find, in the vision of the presence of God on the throne in the fourth chapter, that the One who sat upon the throne was like a jasper and a sardine stone. The twelve foundations show its perfect stability: perfect, I say, for it was also twelve times twelve, or a hundred and forty-four cubits high. But it is human, and not Divine, perfection; for it was according to man's measure, that is, the angel's. (Rev. 21:17). We find twelve frequently used as a symbol of perfection in human affairs. We have twelve hours in a day, twelve months in a year, twelve tribes of Israel. This city, too, is remarkably made up of twelves; it has twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve angels. Whichever way it is measured, its length, breadth, and height are each twelve thousand furlongs. The shape of the city, therefore, is a cube. This shows it is perfect, that there is no inequality, nothing wanting. The street (not streets) of the city, emblem of the place of traffic and walk, which on earth is always the place of defilement, is here characterized by perfect purity, transparency, and that which is Divine and righteous. All is light and holiness, and peace.

Chapter 21:9 to 22:6: The Bride, the Lamb's Wife "O happy city of our God! O sweet and pleasant soil! In thee no sorrow can be found, No grief, no care, no toil."

The twelve gates always open, seen in each direction, north, south, east, and west, tell us, too, of administrative government. The gate of a city, in Scripture language, is the place of rule, power, and judgment. Hence we get the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written thereon. We must remember here, that though the scene is simply one of the bride, the Lamb's wife, yet the period is the kingdom of

our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Others will be associated in the reign with the bride, though not distinctively of her; for we have been previously taught, that all who are in the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

live and reign with Christ. In that day, too, heaven will be truly God's throne, and the earth His footstool, yet the place of His feet shall be glorious. It will be glory above and glory below, each distinct, and yet one whole kingdom-scene of power and glory; for the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. When the heavens are thus opened, angels of God will be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man. All His various relationships shall then be sustained in infinite beauty, order, perfection, and truth. As the last Adam, Head of the body, Bridegroom of the Church, King of Israel, Governor among the nations, King over all the earth, He shall wear His many crowns and dispense His manifold blessings; and as He, the Upholder of all things, now sustains the mighty planets in their various revolutions, so then, when all things are gathered together in one, both things on earth and things in heaven, even in Him, there shall still be diversity, even as in creation's fair history it is recorded that every fruit tree yielded fruit after his kind. The kings of the earth bring their glory to or unto this city. Those dwelling there eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7). The leaves of the tree minister healing to the nations, which is enlightened by the glory of the city. It will be a chain of golden links of rich and varied blessings, each part of the different kingdom spheres dependent one on another, and all dependent on the Lord. It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel (Hos.2:21, 22),

the seed of God. The living water, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, pure and clear, flows copiously like a river, deepening and widening in its progress, through this city of heavenly blessing. All drink plentiful draughts of its endless, exhaustless depths of grace. Each sees the face of Jesus, and bears His name in the forehead; and then will be realized more fully what we know in some little measure now, that the joy of the Lord is our strength {see Neh. 8:10};

for service will still flow from a joyful heart in ministry to the need of the nations. And out of this city shall flow judgment, and, doubtless, blessing too, to the favoured tribes of Israel's land: for our Lord's promise to the apostle was, that in the regeneration, which is the time we are considering, Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

It seems, from the prophet Ezekiel, that the millennial city of restored Israel will be almost a counterpart of the heavenly city: and among other similitudes, water will so flow out from under the threshold of the house of the Lord, as to become so deep and wide as to form a river to swim in, and which will give life to every thing whithersoever the river shall come. Nor is this the only idea of life and blessing in connection with the times of restitution, the period of Israel's glory; for we are told, that by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine (Ezek. 47:12).

Then Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Out of the earthly city shall flow earthly glory, government, and blessing. The inhabitants of Zion shall be joyful in their King, while they and the saved nations walk in the light of the golden city. Then the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3). All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee (Psa. 22:27).

Creation, too, will rejoice in her liberty from the groaning and bondage of corruption, at the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22). The Lord then, sitting upon the throne of His father David, shall judge the people in righteousness, and the poor with judgment. (See Psa. 72.) The pearly gates and variety of precious stones and gold that mark the structure of this symbolic city show us how costly are its materials; and when we think that it is the bride, the Lamb's wife, her priceless value in God's sight, the cost, the unutterable cost of that city is forced upon our minds. When none else could redeem, we know that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a price! What costly stones are sinners saved by the blood of the Lamb! How precious they must be to the heart of the Lord Jesus! "Oh yes, Christ loves the Church, 'Tis her He lives to bless; He cannot love her more, Nor will He love her less; Bone of His bone, cleansed by His word, A bride adorned meet for her Lord."

It is interesting to observe the Scripture notices of "gold" and "precious stones," so largely characteristic of this heavenly city. When this fair creation came fresh from the Maker's hands, we are told that Eden not only had a river flowing through it to water the garden, but that it had gold and bdellium and the onyx stone; or as the inspired prophet by the river of Chebar more fully expresses it,

Notes on the Revelation Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold (Ezek. 28:13).

Creation then was something on which God's eye and heart could rest, and pronounce very good. But sin came in and marred this beautiful, spotless universe. It was soon overrun with the foul spirit of the prince of darkness, and we see not the precious stones and gold brought into prominence until there was something introduced in which God could again delight. The tabernacle and priesthood, in connection with an elect people, bring precious stones again before us in settings of gold. The breastplate and shoulder-pieces of the high priest were resplendent with the dazzling glory of the costly stones in their gold inclosures. They were a shadow of good things to come. They pictured glory as resulting from Divine grace through the redemption work of Jesus. But soon again these shadowy jewels passed away. A dark history set in, and the holy Son of God, the tried stone and the precious stone, was found here in veiled glory, a stranger and despised One in this world that He had fashioned. He wore no jewels, for He Himself was the precious corner stone. His glory was in humiliation and

rejection as the righteous and holy One. His beauty and glory were hid from the carnal eye; but once and again heaven opened to declare, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17; 17:5}.

The glory of His humiliation and death will shine eternally in untarnished lustre. His sufferings and sacrifice were the golden chains of Divine love to unite us to God for ever. "That visage marred, those sorrows deep, The vinegar and gall; These were the golden chains of love, His captives to enthrall."

But His sufferings are over. He has accomplished eternal redemption. He is now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor. We get no more mention of "gold" and "precious stones" till we read of true saints, those who are not "wood, hay, and stubble," merely of earth's growth, but those who are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. It is interesting, however, to observe, that the devil, who mimics God whenever he can, so as most effectually to deceive, uses gold and precious stones. He misplaces the type, to blind souls to the antitype. The gospel declares that Christ is a precious stone, and that believers in Him are precious stones also. But Satan says, No. He adorns Babylon with all manner of precious stones, and furnishes her with a golden cup by which to intoxicate and deceive. The true believer knows nothing "precious," apart from Christ. He Himself is "precious," His blood is precious, faith is precious, because it links us on to Him, and the trial of faith is precious, because it will be found to His praise and honor at His appearing. Again, however, there will be that on which the eye and heart of God can rest. Israel, His earthly people, shall yet be numbered up as His jewels, and introduced into terrestrial glory; and the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be in heavenly glory, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It is permanent, lasting blessing. The new creation shall have eternal lustre, all flowing from the wondrous sufferings and death of the Lamb of God. Fair and comely in His sight, she shall be manifested as established in everlasting blessing and security before God. We can understand then, I think, why "gold" and "precious stones" are here again used, -- to show the priceless

value, stability, and glory of those who are so loved by God, and brought into such unchanging nearness to Him through the blood of the Lamb. No temple is seen here, because all are at home with God and the Lamb. A temple always gives the idea of the worshiper being at a distance from God; He is as it were enshrined, because of His holiness. Even now a temple is out of place for those who are made nigh by the blood of Christ, and therefore have right and title, through the rent veil, to approach God Himself, because of that one Sacrifice which was once offered, and the ever living High Priest. The seer therefore tells us, when contemplating the glorious vision of this holy city, I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (Rev. 21:22).

Nor was there any need of created light; whether of sun or moon, nor of artificial light -- no need of the candle; for there shall be no night there; and also because the Lord God giveth them light (Rev. 22:5)

-the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:23).

There is a remarkable similarity between the scene of the first man in blessing in Eden and the holy Jerusalem. We are told that in creation's primal glory there was a river and gold and precious stones, a

happy created universe, a tree of life, the man and his wife. A progeny also is contemplated -Be fruitful, and multiply {Gen. 1:28}.

The Lord God is mentioned too, in connection with all, and finding rest in all. There was also the tree of knowledge, as a test of man's faithfulness. In the closing scene of the Apocalypse we have a river of life, gold and precious stones, circles of glory and blessing extending over the kingdom, the tree of life (much of which description is doubtless symbolical language) and the Lord God, the throne of God and the Lamb, the Bride the Lamb's wife in connection with it all. But here there is no tree of knowledge; for man had been tried in various ways, and always found to be incapable of standing, except as upheld by God. So now; being made to stand upon the everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, his perfect security rests on the ground of redemption. There shall therefore be no more curse. How precious the blood of Christ is, and should be, to us! "O precious blood! O glorious death! By which the sinner lives; When stung with sin this blood we view. And all our joy revives. "The blood that makes His glorious Church From every blemish free; And oh, the riches of His love, He poured it out for me! "The Father's everlasting love, And Jesu's precious blood, Shall be our endless themes of praise In yonder blest abode"