

## *Session 7: A City Coming Down From Heaven*

### *Questions to begin*

- Do you have a favourite jewel? Have you seen the Crown Jewels on display at the Tower of London? What is the attraction of jewels, pearls, gold?
- If you had the power to create the ideal community – the place of your dreams where you would like to live forever – what would it be like? Who would be there? How would it be different from where you live now?
- Why do people sometimes use feminine pronouns when referring to cities and ships?

### **The Reading: Rev 21:1 – 22:5**

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

‘See, the home of God is among mortals.  
 He will dwell with them;  
 they will be his peoples,  
 and God himself will be with them;  
<sup>4</sup> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
 Death will be no more;  
 mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
 for the first things have passed away.’

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ <sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. <sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.’

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ <sup>10</sup> And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and

showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup>It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup>It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; <sup>13</sup>on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. <sup>14</sup>And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup>The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. <sup>16</sup>The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. <sup>17</sup>He also measured its wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. <sup>18</sup>The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup>the fifth onyx, the sixth cornelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup>And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

<sup>22</sup>I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup>And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup>The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. <sup>25</sup>Its gates will never be shut by day — and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup>People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. <sup>27</sup>But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practises abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

<sup>22</sup>Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; <sup>4</sup>they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

*After reading the text, you may wish to consider the following:*

- There are no nights in the city, but there are days and months (21:25; 22:2). What does this inconsistency suggest about the kind of picture John is presenting?
- What similarities are there between the heavenly Jerusalem here and the description of heaven in chs 4 and 5? What might be the significance of these similarities?
- How many references to light and brightness can you find? What total impression of the city do these create? What do you think is the significance of this aspect of the city?
- What do the features of the city suggest about how people who wish to live in the city should conduct their lives in the present world?
- Apart from any particular details, what does John's symbolic vision of a city suggest about eternal life with God?

**After session 7, you may wish to consider the following**

*Questions for Application*

- John's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem symbolises God's desire for you to know him and be with him completely. How much do you desire that? How much do you think about it? What other desires in your life compete with that one?
- What step(s) could you take to respond to God's invitation to love him more deeply?
- How would it change the way you relate to the people in your daily life if you saw them as potential future fellow citizens in the heavenly Jerusalem? What can you do to help other people take the place that God has prepared for them?
- What is the most important message that you will take from your reading of the Book of Revelation? What response will you make to God's Word?

### *Suggestions for Prayer*

Read Revelation 21:22 – 22:5 aloud, pausing between sentences.

Spend a few minutes in silent reflection.

Read Revelation 22:12-21 aloud, pausing between sentences.

Take this opportunity to make known to God whatever prayer comes spontaneously to you.

End with an *Our Father*.