

## **The New Jerusalem – A Brochure of Our Eternal Home**

**Sign Title: The New Jerusalem**

**June 6, 2010**

If you are new to Faith, I would like to welcome you. My name is Kurt and I am one of the pastors at Faith E Free. In the summer, most of us take time for a vacation. I am taking mine next week. My family will visit my parents in Philadelphia. When we travel, it seems every highway gas station and rest stop has a rack of these: Brochures. Here are some brochures from our area: Pirates Cove Golf Course, Dickinson County Museum, Dickinson County Recreational Trails and the Daze of Okoboji Guide to Summer Fun. These brochures are designed to get us excited about visiting fun opportunities in our area.



This summer at Faith we are studying heaven. Last week we looked at the new heavens and earth that God will create for us. We learned he will completely transform our current earth and totally renew it. He will purge our universe of all the results and effects of sin so our creation will be vastly improved.

God promises that one of the ways he will ramp up earth to make it even better is he will unite heaven and earth together. Imagine how cool it will be when heaven and earth become one! Last week we learned a lot of exciting details about this new creation. This morning, we are looking at the main attraction in this new creation which is the capital city, the New Jerusalem. This is where we will live. God wants us to get excited about living there. In Revelation 21 and 22 he gives us a travelers brochure to the New Jerusalem so

we can begin to taste its beauty and imagine its amazing attractions. This morning turn to Revelation 21:9-22:5 where we find our travel guide. Before we look at the city, country folk like ourselves need to know why God is so passionate about a city.

### Why a city?

I grew up in New Jersey, a bedroom community to New York City. When I think of a city, I don't have the most positive impressions. I think of traffic, high prices, crime, drugs, gangs, dirt, poverty, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Like many of you, I enjoy fields of corn and soybeans more than the city. Why would God desire the main attraction of his new creation be a city?

Cities don't have to be bad. Cities are also places of where culture thrives, they are places of creativity, entertainment, nightlife, film, sports teams, and great restaurants. Cities can be great places to live, it is just that sin is what ruins the city.

God's dream is for a city with all of the positives of society without the negatives. In the Old Testament, God had a capital city called Jerusalem. It was to be the center of God's rule on earth. It was the place of the temple where priests served and the place of the palace where the king reigned. They did their serving and ruling all under God's authority. They were his representatives on earth. Jerusalem was intended to be a great God honoring city. The earthly Jerusalem reached its high point under David and Solomon but the kings and priests of this Jerusalem betrayed their calling and became self serving rather than God serving. They were beset by sin as it twisted their leadership. As

punishment, God allowed Jerusalem, the city that was the apple of his eye, to be destroyed three times because of the people's sin. There were hopes that Jerusalem would eventually return to become a beacon of God honoring culture but God's people failed again and again returning to sin.

Eventually even the Old Testament prophets stopped talking about the revival of a God honoring city on earth. While they stopped talking about a city like this on earth, they knew God's plans would not be thwarted, they began prophesying about a God honoring city in heaven called the New Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel and Isaiah first prophesied about this New Jerusalem in heaven. We see this same dream alive in the writers of the New Testament.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, Hebrews 12:22 (ESV)

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. Galatians 4:26 (ESV)

When the apostle John is given this vision in Revelation, God says there is indeed a heavenly Jerusalem that is prepared for us and that God will eventually bring it from heaven and place it on the new heavens and earth. So, I hate to tell us country folk that God is a city person but that is what the Bible tells us. The good news is this city is like nothing we have seen before. When we pick up the newspaper in eternity, there will be nothing but good news page after page, no death, no sickness, no crying and pain. We will be reading the newspaper getting pumped up for all the good things and the new things God is up to.

So let's take a look at the travel brochure for this incredible city called the New Jerusalem. We will look at it in three concentric rings, the city, the garden,

the throne. As we look at it, realize we need to use our imaginations. John is describing something beyond description.

## The City

### God loves architecture.

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. Revelation 21:10–11 (ESV)

The summer of my freshman year in high school, I traveled on a missions trip to Europe. While there I saw some great European cathedrals. Even though I was young, I found them amazing. They were huge, they had intricate details carved into the walls and ceilings. I can't even imagine how they built the place without power tools and a front end loader. These old cathedrals had design, symmetry, beautiful stain glass windows, they are amazing and being in one leaves you with a sense of awe.

The reason we love beautiful architecture is because we are created in the image of God. God loves decor, lighting, he loves beauty, symmetry and creativity. God loves creative architecture. This is why we paint the walls in our home, this is why ladies want to wear nice clothes and the color of our car matters so much to us, because we are image bearers of God. God loves beauty and creativity and so do we. This is why we are repulsed by state subsidized housing where everything is a box, the walls are all white and there are only fluorescent light bulbs. We can't stand when beauty is destroyed because we are image bearers of God.

The New Jerusalem is the most stunningly beautiful, defying description city ever. It radiates God's glory like a huge light bulb. God loves beauty and architecture and here are both of them at their finest!

### **God loves meaningful architecture.**

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. Revelation 21:12–14 (ESV)

God didn't design this city randomly, everything about it has meaning, everything about the design preaches something about the designer and his plan. It is the city for the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God, just looking at it tells us that. There is significance to everything in the New Jerusalem because everything there preaches something about God's plans, his goodness and his love for us.

### **God loves grand architecture.**

And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of 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. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. Revelation 21:15–17 (ESV)

The city's exact dimensions are measured by an angel and reported to be 12,000 stadia, the equivalent of 1,400 miles in length, width and height. Even though these proportions may have symbolic importance, this doesn't mean they can't be literal. In fact, v.17 emphasizes the dimensions are given in *man's measurement*. If the city really has these dimensions it would be a metropolis

that would stretch from Canada to Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the California border.

Even more astounding is the city's height, 1,400 miles. Some suggest the city may not be a cube but is a pyramid. Even if that is true, it is quite a large place. Nobody will feel crowded! The

ground level of the city is nearly 2 million square miles. This is 40 times larger than England and 15,000 times larger than London. Remember, that is just ground level. If the city is also a 1,400 mile high cube and if each story is twelve feet high, that means it will have 600,000 levels. Now I realize it is possible these are figurative numbers, not literal dimensions. Either way, the place is huge and has plenty of space for believers of all time.

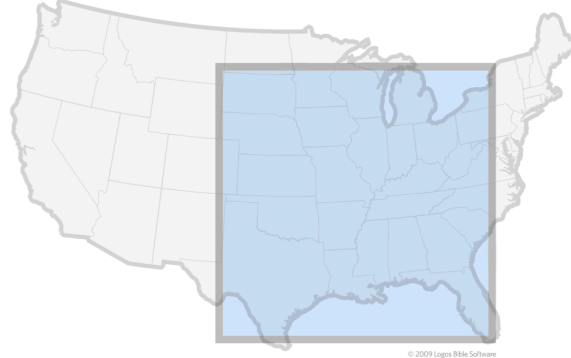
God is into doing big things. He is not going to make us feel cramped for eternity like we are taking an eternal road trip in sub-compact car. Everything about the New Jerusalem displays God's greatness. Realize this is just the capital city, there is the rest of the renewed planet the capital city sits on that displays God's greatness.

### **God loves beautiful architecture.**

The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the

### **The Golden City in Revelation**

The new Jerusalem in Revelation 21:9-27 is a square 12,000 stadia (approximately 1,380 miles) on each side.



street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass... 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. Revelation 21:18–21, 23 (ESV)

While the city is clear as glass, it is still bursting with color. It looks like God went crazy with his jewelry box. Are there any ladies here who like precious stones? That's good, you are very biblical because God likes them too. Any ladies here who are into pearls? You are going to



like heaven because the gates to this city are huge pearls. Guys, I just want to warn you, if the woman in your life starts pushing you to buy her a precious stone after this sermon just realize she is trying to be biblical and prepare for eternity.

What really makes the New Jerusalem incredible is not just picturing it with all these rocks that are clear as glass on the outside of the city but picturing the radiance of God shining through it from the inside. The city is like a super high intensity multicolored disco ball from a roller rink as God's glory shines right through it and shafts of multicolored light purge the new creation of any darkness. It is so intense that there is no need of a sun!

God is lavish, he is extravagant. Everything in this city is first rate, beautiful, glorious, the drywall wasn't made in China, the streets aren't going to crack like concrete, they are pure gold. Everything is first rate beauty.

**The city has no temple.**

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. Revelation 21:22 (ESV)

The temple is where we go to worship God. In heaven, we don't need to go to a temple to worship, we just go to God. Imagine telling your friends, "I am on my way to worship. I am going to go to the throne and cheer in front of Jesus for an hour.

Imagine what it will be like to pray in the new creation. You don't have to get down on your knees, you just go and see Jesus and say, "Hey Jesus, it is Kurt again, can I hang out with you for a bit, I want to talk about some stuff."

I am not making this stuff up. This is literally what it says in the Bible.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)

### **The city is secure.**

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. 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. Revelation 21:24–27 (ESV)

In the ancient world the purpose of the gates were for the cities protection. The gates were shut at night to keep the creeps and thieves from slipping into the city and stealing the law ornaments and taking the rims off cars. The gates of the New Jerusalem are never shut because the city is totally secure. The city is like Juneau, Alaska where during a season of the year, the sun never goes down, except I am sure it will be a lot warmer. Personally, I am hoping we can wear shorts. There is no night there because the light comes from God's glory and that doesn't fade. God just radiates for eternity without losing a watt of brightness. He doesn't burn out after 600 hours like a light bulb. 24 hours a day



we can go swimming, hiking, take a trip, see friends, go out for coffee. My daughter, who keeps on insisting she needs a night light finally won't need one!

In case you didn't realize, there will be more culture to the New Heavens and Earth than just this city. There will be nations that exist. They will bring their glory and honor into the city all the time. It is like China is making stuff and constantly shipping it to us but there is no trade deficit or unemployment. It is like everyone gets free iPhone 4's all to the glory of God. We don't know who will populate these nations, we just know they will be there.

We don't have to worry about any evil entering the city because at this point everyone who has rejected Christ and his renewing power is thrown into the lake of fire where Jesus punishes them day and night. Imagine what it will be like. A newspaper with nothing but good news to report throughout the city every day of the week. No more cops or Forensic files on TV. No more sleazy magazines and kinky internet popups, no sickness, no poverty, no evil, no death. It is the city that never sleeps but it is the place we want to be.

### **The Garden**

Revelation next takes us from describing the city, to like a tightening ring on the target. We move from the city to looking at the garden in the center of the city. Has everyone planted their garden this year? We have a few tomato plants growing in our neighbors yard. I love gardens and flowers. God knows that in a city, we need a garden to refresh us. That is why they put central park in the center of Manhattan. They were just being biblical.

This garden is like the garden of Eden from Genesis but it is restored and vastly improved.

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 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. Revelation 22:1–3 (ESV)

Center of the garden is the throne of God and the lamb, Jesus Christ. It seems this throne is the highest place in the city because from under the throne an enormous river explodes. Some of you who were hoping for beach front property by the sea won't find it in heaven. While there is no sea, there will be a river. Anybody like the sound of rushing water? Babbling brooks? Of course you do, because you were created in the image of God. God made us to enjoy these kind of things. Just as water releases life now, we can picture the water of life invigorating life then.

Alongside the river that runs right down the middle of the garden in the center of the city are trees. What tree specifically? The Tree of Life. That tree was back in Genesis near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If we had partaken of the Tree of Life after eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we would have been stuck living in sin forever. God graciously kicked us out of the garden to keep us from this tree so we would die. It would be a real bummer to live forever in sin. But now, God has renewed and vastly improved the earth and us so we are free from sin. Eating from the Tree of Life and living forever sounds like a great idea.

Some of you say, “I don’t like fruit.” You will. This will be great fruit. You will eat your fruit and veggies to the glory of God. This is a special tree. It is like a fruit-of-the-month tree. One month apple, next month orange then cherry and banana. We don’t have to get bored with this tree. Can’t you see the Tree of Life wall calendar we will have.

The leaves are for the healing of the nations. What does that mean. I thought sin was obliterated at this point. I don’t have a perfect answer on this one but here is what I think. The word for healing in the Greek is *therapia*. This is where we get our word therapy from. It means health and wellness. I think these leaves don’t free the nations from sin but they help insure relational smoothness. This tree is like putting oil in your engine, the leaves makes the nations run smoothly.

### **The Throne.**

Smack center of everything is the Father and Jesus, the son, the lamb who made this all possible. I told you before that Jesus is the center of everything and here he is in heaven, the very center of the city.

This past week we voted in a primary election. It seems every candidate telling us that they will clean up corruption, push back Washington insiders and make Iowa a great place to live. While we should vote for candidates we believe will bring the most glory to God, there is never a time when politics and society will run smoothly on planet earth until we get to the New Jerusalem when Jesus is in charge of everything.

### **Conclusion**

After looking at the brochure of the New Jerusalem, what do you think? Does it sound like a pretty sweet place to live? It sounds like a great place to spend eternity, especially when you consider that the only other option is that we spend eternity packed up to our neck in roofing tar and burning sulfur in hell. Unfortunately, most of the world will not be in the New Jerusalem. Unfortunately, some people in this room will not be there.

### **How can I go there?**

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. Revelation 21:27 (ESV)

**Nothing False or Detestable** - This is a pure city so any kind of impurity and sin will not be there. The problem is that if we are honest, that is true for all of us. We are unclean, we are false and not always true. We don't belong in the city. We belong in hell with boiling roofing tar for eternity. If that is true for all of us, how does anybody get into the New Jerusalem?

**Lamb's Book of Life** - The good news is that while we deserve hell, God loves us so much that he sent Jesus, his own son, to die for us. When we repent of our sin and ask Jesus' death on the cross to pay for our sin, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. That is what brings us to the New Jerusalem for eternity. But there is still one more qualification beyond having Jesus as your savior.

**Jesus the Center of Everything** - In the city, the Father and the Son are the center of everything. The people that belong in the city are those who desire

for Jesus to be the center of their lives. That is why they just fit into the New Jerusalem, where Jesus is the center of all things.

We are a church that wants everyone to know God loves them, we want everyone to repent of their sin, to trust in Christ for salvation and to place him at the center of everything in their life. We are a church that wants to populate the New Jerusalem. As I close, I am going to prayer and I invite you today to repent of your sin, ask Jesus to be your savior and invite him to be the center of all things in your heart. If you have never done that, I invite you to join me in that prayer in your heart today.

### Prayer

One of the things we will do in heaven is eat and enjoy food to the glory of God. This morning, we are going to practice that. I invite you to stay for our BBQ ribs, chicken and pork lunch.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching.

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