

## Study 44: Revelation 21:9-16

**9 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."**

- We see another visit from an angel who carried one of the plague-filled bowls. These angels obviously did "double duty." This one in particular carried one of the plagues to earth, but he also brought a revelation or message to John. He offered to take John to see the bride of Christ, the Church.
- The angel told John to "come." That tells me that we have a role to play in anything that God wants to show us. We must **come** to the place where He wants to reveal Himself or His will. That may even be a particular place or geographic location. As I write this study, I am in Asia. That is where God wants me to be right now. For me to learn what God has for me now, I have to be in Asia. I could not remain in Pittsburgh. That is my role in hearing from God: positioning myself where He wants me to be. Where does God want you to be?
- This also tells me that you cannot see the Church with its glory and majesty unless God shows it to you. Are you discouraged about the state of the Church and all its human imperfections? Then allow God to show you His Church from **His** perspective, with all its glory and beauty.
- Many people have been offended by Church leaders and members. I too have been hurt, and I have also hurt others. Yet I am **not** walking away from the Church, nor am I discouraged about her. The Church is the apple of God's eye. The Church is the bride of Christ. I must serve what He loves and be where He is. That is in the Church, in a local church.
- Are you a member of a church? Have you been hurt and withdrawn your gifts and time from God's bride? I urge you to get healing for your wounds and then to get back into the Church, into a local church, where you belong:

**Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25).**

- When Jesus was raised from the dead, He met the women who were coming to the tomb. What did He tell them?

**Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I**

**have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (Matthew 28:7-10)**

- Jesus had all the disciples assembled there in Jerusalem, where He appeared to the women. Yet now He told them to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee, some distance north of Jerusalem. God determines where and how we will encounter Him. It is His grace that He reveals Himself, but He also reveals Himself as part of His Lordship. His revelation is on His terms, not ours.
- Is God telling you to “come” or “go” somewhere? He may want to show you something that He will not show you if you stay where you are. It is not a matter of convenience; it is a matter of obedience. I had a professor say once, “When God wants to say something to you, He often takes you on a trip.” I agree.

**10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.**

- God shows us all things “in the Spirit.” We cannot comprehend the things of God through intellectual means, but only by spiritual means. Revelation began with John “in the Spirit on the day of the Lord.” The book now comes to an end the same way: in the Spirit!
- The Spirit always takes us “up.” John was taken to a mountain great and high. We discussed this truth in previous studies: we are already seated in high places with Christ!

**And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6-7).**

- What great thing did John see? He saw the Holy City coming down from heaven. As we saw last week, the Church originates in heaven. The bride of Christ is born and adorned in heaven. The Church was and is God’s idea and He has clothed her in His righteousness. The Church has no claim to her own merits; she stands on the work of God.
- This city that John saw is referred to as the bride of Christ. Notice how the metaphors are mixed here: first a bride, then a city. Both are accurate descriptions for God’s people. The writer of Hebrews mentioned the concept of a city in reference to Abraham, Sarah and other people of faith.

**By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:8-10).**

**All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them (Hebrews 11:13-16).**

**11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.**

- “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).** The city of God, the Church, has one source of light and that is Jesus! Those who try to walk in their own light have a promise of torment and confusion:

**But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment (Isaiah 50:11)**

- How often I have followed a “good idea” or something that made sense to me only to find that I was walking in my own light and not the light of God. I have set my own torches ablaze and their light was indeed fleeting. I am still learning how to hear from and follow God. Are you?
- The work of God in our lives is priceless, like that of a precious jewel. The price of Jesus’ death is incomprehensible. This jasper jewel mentioned in verse 12, however, is also clear. Transparency is one characteristic of the relationship between God and His people. There are no hidden agendas, nor is there any impurity in the jewel itself to cloud its clarity. I think of what Paul wrote:

**Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God (2 Corinthians 2:17).**

- And God expects a transparent relationship between Him and His people. He wants you and I to be honest with Him, to share our hearts and inner feelings without reservation. Like David wrote:

**I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble.  
When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who know my way. In  
the path where I walk men have hidden a snare for me (Psalm 142:2-3).**

- Are you being honest with God? Remember, being honest with God is not for His sake; it is for yours! Maybe you need to “pour out your complaint” to Him today. When you are honest with God, then that releases Him to be honest with you. Do you need to hear from your Father today? Then maybe He first needs to hear from you.

**12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.**

- The Church has a high wall around it. There is no way to sneak or break into the Church of Jesus. You cannot enter by human effort. Only God can show you the entrance.
- The names of the twelve tribes are written on the gates. That signifies that there is a great salvation history that records God’s faithfulness to His people. Our God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God and it is on the basis that He provides an entrance into His kingdom.

**13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.**

- God is also a God of order. There is nothing random or haphazard in what He does or how He does it. And there is equal access for all people from all compass points into His Holy City, into relationship with Him.

**14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

- Notice that the names of the apostles of the Lamb are part of the foundation, while the twelve tribes are a part of the walls. There is continuity in the Church that began in the Old Testament, runs through the New, and culminates in this last book of Revelation.
- The original twelve apostles who walked with Jesus are generally referred to as apostles of the Lamb. Yet they were not the last apostles, for the word apostle literally means “sent forth one.” Many have been sent forth to plant and oversee churches, and to preach the good news of the gospel.

**Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).**

- Since Paul referred to the people of God as a building and temple, I assume that Revelation is talking about the same thing. While the verses we are studying could refer to heaven, it is my opinion that there is enough evidence to show they were references to the Church.
- I think the early Church was greatly encouraged to be reminded, in the midst of their persecution, that they were already a part of a dwelling in which God lived already. Do you agree or disagree?

**15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.**

**16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.**

- I love the order of God's creation. We know every day what time the sun will rise and set. The seasons begin and end on fixed dates. There is nothing haphazard about God and His creation, including His work in the Church. While I may not be able to see all that God is doing, the angels can see it and measure it and it is a good work, laid out very well.
- God builds well too. This city is a square and is equal in length, height and depth. That speaks of planning and building correctly. We are in good hands when we are in God's care. He does all things well. Are you anxious about something, dear reader? There is no need. God, who orders all things by His power and strength, has everything under control. Let the angels of God show you today just how beautiful His work is in your life. It is even and orderly and God has built and is building you into a wonderful edifice to glorify His name. Let that angel also restore your hope for the Church. Don't put your faith in the leaders of the Church; you will always be disappointed. Put your faith in the Leader of the Church, Jesus Christ. Those who trust in Him will never be disappointed.