



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. I've experienced more pain in my lifetime than the people sitting near me.
2. I see the ocean as a dangerous place.
3. I would much rather have something new than an antique.
4. The walls of the New Jerusalem are there to protect us.
5. The New Jerusalem is not a cube, it's shaped like a pyramid.

THE NEW HEAVEN, EARTH, & JERUSALEM

► READ Revelation 21 (NIV)

« What is most intriguing to you regarding John's descriptions of the new heaven, earth, and Jerusalem?

» **Vs. 1, 2: New heaven, earth, Jerusalem** - Newness here carries with it the idea, not of a spiritual existence, but of a new creation of the material world (Gen 1:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10; 4:24).

• **No longer any sea** - The Hebrew tradition regarded the sea as a hostile force that God brought under control in creation (Job 38:8-11; Ps. 89:9; see also Isa. 57:20-21; Amos 9:3). The Egyptians saw the sea as the power which swallowed up the waters of the Nile, and left the fields sterile and barren and unfruitful for want of water" (1960:2.254; see also Plutarch, On Isis and Osiris 32). In scripture, the sea monster Leviathan, conquered by God in the creation of the universe (Job 26:12-13; Ps. 74:13-14; Isa. 51:9), was expected to be similarly annihilated in the New Creation (Isa. 27:1). Additionally, Daniel's four beasts came from the sea (Dan. 7:3), and in Revelation, the sea is the abode of the first beast (13:1; see also 11:7; 12:12), the great harlot (17:1), and the dead (20:13). Indeed, the sea was a common symbol of separation.

« What are the things that separate us from God today?

» **Vs. 3: God's dwelling place** - The word translated home and the verb dwell that follows are both forms of the same Greek word (skēn), which translates the Hebrew "tent" or "tabernacle" (mishkan), where God dwelt in the wilderness. Moreover, its verbal form has the same consonants as the Hebrew shekinah, which commonly symbolizes the presence and glory of God (Exod. 25:8; Lev. 26:11; Ezek. 37:27; Zech. 2:11).

« What does it say about God that His great cheer from the throne is that He will dwell with mankind?

» **Vs. 4: The old order of things has passed away** - This means that the old mode of existence, in which death, mourning, weeping, and pain were an inescapable part of the human situation, will be replaced by a new manner of life that does not include them.

• **No more** - The eternal city is so wonderful that the best way John found to describe it was by contrast—"no more." The believers who first read this inspired book must have rejoiced to know that, in heaven, there would be no more pain, tears, sorrow, or death; for many of their number had been tortured and slain. In every age, the hope of heaven has encouraged God's people in times of suffering.

« What are you most looking forward to having "no more" of in the new earth?

» **Vs. 6: It is done** - The declaration It is done! reminds the reader of the words of God in creation (Gen. 2:1-2) and of Jesus on the cross (John 19:30; see also Rev. 16:7). Actually, the verb is in the third person plural, "They are done!" (gegonan), referring to what has been revealed.

DIG DEEPER



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DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

« What are the things that God has, is, and will be doing to get things “done”?

• **I will give water without cost** - In ancient times, water was scarce and was therefore sold as a commodity; here, it is a free gift (Ps. 63:1; Isa. 43:19–20; 44:3) because the price has been paid by Christ (1 Cor. 6:19–20; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; see also John 4:10–14; 6:35; 7:37–39).

» **Vs. 8: The list** - In the Greek culture, lists like this were formulated to teach ethical behavior (Murphy, 1998:414). Each of the vices in this list relates to endurance in face of persecution (Mark 13:13), representing all those who compromise by giving allegiance to the beast. This list compares the activities of those who drank from the golden goblet of the harlot of Babylon to the activities of those who drank the living water of Christ.

« What does it say about God that his “water” is not only free for us, but that He bought it at a high cost?

» **Vs. 12: Twelve gates** - Numbers 2 describes the configuration of the encampment of the Israelite tribes around the tent of the meeting just as the gates inscribed with their names here surround the New Jerusalem (see also Ezek. 42:16–20; 48:31–35).

» **Vs. 14: Twelve foundations** - These are “foundation stones” (TEV). The picture seems to be that of large stones, each one of which reaches from one gate to the next, twelve in all; or else there is a foundation stone under each of the twelve gateways. In any case, the foundation stones are partly above ground, since the name of the twelve apostles of Christ can be seen written on them. The phrase the twelve apostles of the Lamb presumably refers to the twelve disciples of Jesus, as listed in the Gospels.

» **Vs. 16: The city was laid out as a square** - To the ancient Hebrews, the cube was the architecturally complete shape and therefore appropriate to represent the holiness of the temple. Even more important to interpreting the shape of the city is that it corresponds to the cube-shaped holy of holies in the temple, which was twenty cubits on a side and overlaid with gold.

» **Vs. 16,17: He measured the city** - The numbers 12,000 and 144, in verses 16 and 17, may have symbolic value, since they are both multiples of twelve (x; x), a number in the Bible that indicates completeness. The number is constructed from the numerical designator of the people of God (12 squared, times a very large number (1000), connoting the perfection of God’s faithful saints (Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Pet. 2:5). The dimensions of the city parallel the 12,000 sealed from each tribe who occupy the city (7:4–7). Moreover, a cube of 12,000 stadia on each of its 12 edges totals 144,000 stadia, the number that symbolizes the faithful saints who overcame the great tribulation, still another parallel with chapter 7 (7:4; see also 14:1–7; Farrer, 1964:217). In short, the symbolic meaning of the dimensions of the cube-shaped city is the splendor and perfection of the New Jerusalem (Ezek. 37:26–28).

« What do you think God is trying to communicate with us through this imagery of this city?

» **Vs. 20: The foundations...were decorated** - There is considerable uncertainty over some of the twelve stones named, and modern translations differ. A comparison of ten translations in English (RSV, NRSV, NEB, REB, RNAB, TNT, NJB, NIV, AT, TEV) shows that seven of the translations agree almost unanimously on eight of the twelve stones (NJB is markedly different from the others). RSV and TEV differ on the names of three of the stones. In connection with Old Testament imagery, this verse draws heavily on the description in Exodus of the jewels of the square, golden breastplate of the high priest (Exod. 28:15–21; 39:8–14; see also Isa. 54:11–12; Ezek. 28:12–13; Tob. 13:16; Wis. Sol. 18:24; Jos., War 5.228–37). Furthermore, the list begins in Revelation with the jasper, the stone of Judah, the tribe of Christ the Lamb (see Rev. 5:5–6; 7:5), who is also the chief cornerstone of the city.

« What do you think God is saying through these 12 foundations?

» **Vs. 25: On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there** - The common practice was to shut the temple and city gates at night for protection.

« What is God saying about your experience during your eternal life?

MY PRAYER...

1. What do I need for God to make new in my life?
2. What things on “the list” do I need to ask God for freedom from?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?



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