

## The Bookends of the Bible

## Genesis 1:1-3:24 and Revelation 21:1-22:5

What is the best way to understand the Bible? How can we decide which parts of the Bible are most important? How can we know how the different parts of the Bible fit together? If we understand the answers to these questions, we will understand the Bible better, and we will be more confident about what it tells us about God.

Many methods for interpreting the Bible have been developed by well-intentioned human beings, who were not inspired by God. But it would be better to use a method that comes directly from the Bible. We can study the methods used by the people who wrote down the words of the Bible. These methods become clearer when we see how the writers of New Testament interpreted the Old Testament.

Over the past few weeks, we've been studying how the writers of the New Testament interpreted the Old Testament. Not only were these methods of interpretation used by the writers of the New Testament, but they were used by Jesus Himself (Luke 24:25-27). We've identified a pattern of "Creation, Fall, and New Creation" that is followed in the story Adam, Noah, and Abraham and his descendants in the nation of Israel. We've also traced the use of the phrase "latter days" as it was used in the Old Testament and the New Testament. So, we've been working at developing our understanding of how the writers of the New Testament interpreted the Old Testament. What I am going to suggest for this study is a way to sharpen our focus and pull these different ideas together. In this lesson we will look at the beginning and the ending of the Bible. You might call these two parts of the Bible the "bookends" of God's revelation.

If you think of the entire Bible as one, very long, complex story, you could say the story begins in Genesis 1:1-3:24 and works its way to the climax in Revelation 21:1-22:5. Every detail of every story in the Bible could be understood as an attempt to reach the climax. Most attempts to reach the climax were failures, and the people involved were never able to reach that climax. However, Jesus Christ did succeed where others failed.

Instead of beginning at the start of the story, we will begin at the end of the story. The end will help us to better understand where everything is heading, and how it's all going to turn out.

We are going to put a lot of information together here in this one lesson. My prayer is that this study will help you to see the story of the Bible as a whole, so that you will be better able to understand how the different parts of the Bible fit into the one, complete story.

In this lesson we will study:

1. The Ending of the Story, Revelation 21:1-22:5
2. The Beginning of the Story, Genesis 1:1-3:24
3. Where do each of us fit into this story?

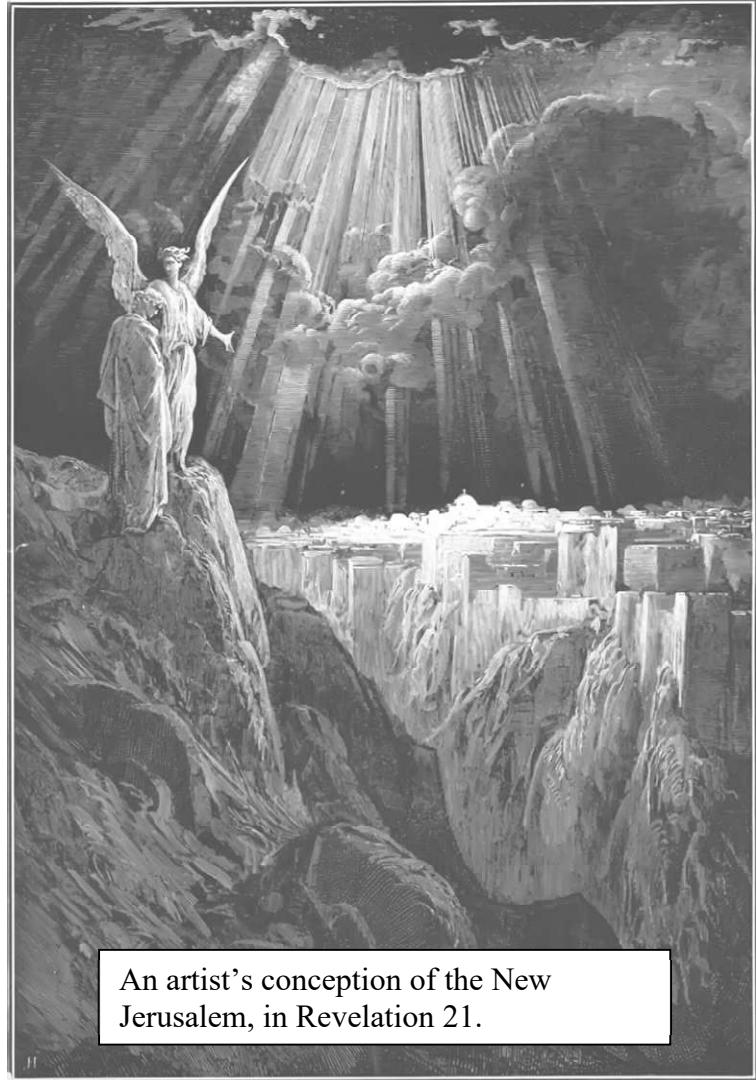
## The Ending of the Story, Revelation 21:1-22:5

I like to grow a garden every year. I plant vegetables and also flowers. When I plant a section of beans, for example, I mark where the bean seeds were planted. I don't mark them as "bean seeds," even though that is exactly what they are when I plant them. I mark them as "beans," because that is what they will produce.

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, He had a specific goal in mind. We read about that goal here, at the end of the book of Revelation. Like the label for the "beans" in my garden, I believe we are reading about God's plan for the human race that He had from the time of creation.

There is a lot to see in this description of the end of the present creation and the full-blown reality of the new creation. There is no temple. Why? Because in the new Jerusalem (of the new creation) "its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22). Remember that in the Old Testament God's presence dwelled in the temple. In the new creation God will dwell among His people (Revelation 21:3). God will no longer need a building or tent to house His presence.

God's people will "see His face" (Revelation 22:4). Moses couldn't look at God's face or he would have died (Exodus 33:20). In the new creation God's people will be able to look directly at God. Why? God's people will be without sin, so they will be able to look at God's face and not die. How do we know they will be without sin? First, there will be no more tears, death, or suffering (Revelation 21:4). Because there is no sin in the new creation these things will no longer exist. Second, there will be nothing that is "accursed" (Revelation 22:3). When Adam sinned, all human beings descended from him



An artist's conception of the New Jerusalem, in Revelation 21.

were cursed with sin. In the new creation all of God's people will be without sin. They will no longer be "accursed". As a result, those who believe in Christ will become the bride who is without any stain of sin (Romans 5:19 –"made righteous"; Revelation 19:8 – "it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen bright and pure" – Romans 5:19 and Revelation 19:8 use different words to say the same thing).

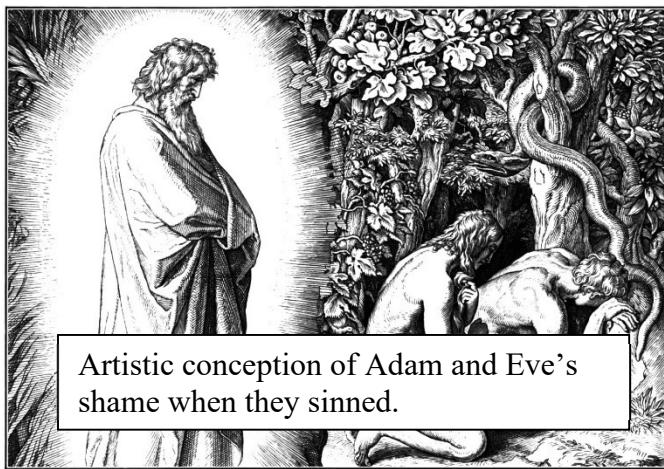
So, what more can we learn about what was God trying to accomplish when He created Adam?

## The Beginning of the Story, Genesis 1:1-3:24

To read all of Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3 would take quite a bit of time. These chapters of Genesis tell the story of how God created Adam and Eve. We read about how Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God.

By reading Revelation chapters 21 and 22 I believe we gain an understanding of what God's plan was for Adam and Eve. God didn't plan on Adam spending eternity in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 1:28&29 we read that Adam was supposed to fill the earth. Fill the earth with what? Fill the earth with people who would be Adam's descendants who would glorify God in all that they did. If Adam and His descendants had obeyed this covenant with

God, then God would have brought His presence to the earth, as described in Revelation 21:1-3. But Adam failed. He disobeyed God. So, God had to find another person, or people, who would do what Adam failed to do. God gave this opportunity to Noah, Abraham, the nation of Israel, King David and his heirs. They all failed. When we can read about what will happen because of the work of Christ on the cross, we better understand what God had intended for the human race, from the very beginning.



Artistic conception of Adam and Eve's shame when they sinned.

spoke about Adam as if Adam was a real person in history (Luke 3:8; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 5:22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; Jude 1:14). For that reason alone we should take the story of Adam very seriously.

God intended to have fellowship with the human beings He created. He intended to be with them, just as He was with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). The sound of God approaching was so familiar to Adam and Eve that they immediately recognized the sound of God coming to visit with them.

What had they done wrong? Adam was put in the Garden of Eden to "work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Those two words, "work" and "keep" can be translated differently. The first word can also be translated as "serve". In fact, this word "serve" is sometimes used to describe the work of worshipping God in the Temple (2 Samuel 5:18; 2 Kings 10:19, 21, 22, 23; Psalm 97:7; Isaiah 19:21, 23). The other word can be translated as "watch" or "guard". This word is used to describe the work of the priests who guarded the Temple to make sure no one would pollute the holiness of the Temple (Numbers 3:8, 10; 18:7; 1 Samuel 2:9; 2 Kings 12:9; Nehemiah 13:22). The same word can also be translated as "observing" God's Law, which means to obey God's Law (Exodus 12:17, 24; Leviticus 19:37; 26:3; Deuteronomy 5:12; 16:1; Nehemiah 10:29; Psalm 106:3; 119:34; Ezekiel 43:11).

The two words I just mentioned in Genesis 2:15 indicate that Adam was a priest and that the Garden of Eden was a Temple. There are several things that indicate that the Garden of Eden was a Temple. There was a river that

flowed out of the Garden of Eden, that became the source for four rivers (Genesis 2:10&11). In the book of Ezekiel, the Temple of the new creation is described as being the source of a river (Ezekiel 47:1). And, in the book of Revelation, Jerusalem, where God will dwell with His people, is described as the source of a river, whose waters will heal the nations (Revelation 22:1&2). So, a Temple of God is often described as the source of a river in the Bible. This indicates that Eden then, was a Temple where the Adam and Eve were to meet with the presence of God. There are other indications that Eden was a Temple, in another lesson we will look at those reasons in greater detail.

So, all of this indicates that Adam was a priest of the Temple of the Garden of Eden. He was given the assignment to serve God as a priest in this Temple. Part of that job was to guard and protect its holiness.

The serpent, who was Satan, invaded the Temple, which was the Garden of Eden. Since Adam was a priest, assigned to protect the holiness of the Temple, what should he have done when this intruder entered the Temple? He should have driven the serpent out of the Garden or killed it. Priests were assigned to guard the temple and even to kill people who desecrated the Temple (Numbers 3:8, 10; 18:7; 1 Samuel 2:9; 2 Kings 12:9; Nehemiah 13:22). Did Adam do this? No. Adam failed to do the job God had assigned to him.

God's plan to "promote" Adam and extend his domain of responsibility to the whole world (Genesis 1:28&29), was stopped because of sin. Satan entered the Garden of Eden. He tempted Adam and Eve. And, they sinned. Instead of defeating Satan, Adam wallowed Satan to invade the Garden of Eden, Adam was defeated by Satan.

God gave Adam and Eve a promise. He said that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the offspring of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). This is the first prophecy that Christ would later come to save human beings from their sin. Jesus is the offspring, or seed, of Eve. When He died and rose again, He crushed the head of Satan, and defeated Satan once and for all.

## Where do each of us fit into this story?

If God is tugging at your heart to believe, don't turn away from the truth of God's Word. If you sense that God is calling you to believe in Him, you will feel an urgent need to believe the story of the Bible. That doesn't necessarily mean that you won't struggle with any part of the story. But you will find yourself drawn to Christ. You will want to experience His love and forgiveness. You will have an overwhelming desire to be with Him for all eternity.

If you respond to Christ's call, you will be part of this story. You will be among those who will live forever with him. If you have this desire in your heart, then pray and ask Christ to forgive your sins. His death on the cross paid the price of your sin. Confess your sins. Ask Him to forgive you for your sins.

The evidence of your belief in Christ is visible in a changed heart. Do you have love for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you have a desire to draw others to experience the love of Christ for them? Do you find yourself feeling guilty over things that didn't used to bother your conscience? All of these changes are indications that God is changing your heart.

If you are not sure that your heart has been changed by Christ, then now is the time to come to Christ. Confess your sin. Ask Jesus to forgive those sins. Then, watch for the changes He will make in your heart and life.

I have presented a "fast-forward" version of the entire Bible, by using the first and last books, with just a little bit of the information about Jesus in between. I hope you feel drawn to be part of this story, not just now but for all of eternity. God's plan for His people is wonderful. It is a great assurance for those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. My hope and prayer is that you will share that sense of wonder and assurance.



## Genesis 1:1–3:24

In the beginning, God created the **heavens** and the **earth**. The **earth** was without **form** and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let **there** be light,” and **there** was **light**. And God saw that the **light** was good. And God separated the **light** from the darkness. God called the **light** Day, and the darkness he called Night. And **there** was evening and **there** was morning, the first day. And God said, “Let **there** be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse **Heaven**. And **there** was evening and **there** was morning, the second day. And God said, “Let the waters under the **heavens** be gathered together into one **place**, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land **Earth**, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, “Let the **earth** sprout vegetation, **plants** yielding seed, and **fruit trees** bearing **fruit** in which is their seed, each according to its **kind**, on the **earth**.” And it was so. The **earth** brought forth vegetation, **plants** yielding seed according to their own **kinds**, and **trees** bearing **fruit** in which is their seed, each according to its **kind**. And God saw that it was good. And **there** was evening and **there** was morning, the third day. And God said, “Let **there** be **lights** in the expanse of the **heavens** to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be **lights** in the expanse of the **heavens** to give **light** upon the **earth**.” And it was so. And God made the two great **lights**—the greater **light** to rule the day and the lesser **light** to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the **heavens** to give **light** on the **earth**, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the **light** from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And **there** was evening and **there** was morning, the fourth day. And God said, “Let the waters **swarm** with **swarms of living creatures**, and let **birds** fly above the **earth** across the expanse of the **heavens**.” So God created the great sea **creatures** and every **living creature** that moves, with which the waters **swarm**, according to their **kinds**, and every winged **bird** according to its **kind**. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, “Be **fruitful** and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let **birds** multiply on the **earth**.” And **there** was evening and **there** was morning, the fifth day. And God said, “Let the **earth** bring forth **living creatures** according to their **kinds**—livestock and **creeping things** and **beasts** of the **earth** according to their **kinds**.” And it was so. And God made the **beasts** of the **earth** according to their **kinds** and the livestock according to their **kinds**, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its **kind**. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our **likeness**. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the **birds** of the **heavens** and over the livestock and over all the **earth** and over every **creeping thing** that creeps on the **earth**.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be **fruitful** and multiply and fill the **earth** and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the **birds** of the **heavens** and over every **living thing** that moves on the **earth**.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every **plant** yielding seed that is on the face of all the **earth**, and every **tree** with seed in its **fruit**. You shall have them for food. And to every **beast** of the **earth** and to every **bird** of the **heavens** and to everything that creeps on the **earth**, everything that has the **breath** of life, I have given every green **plant** for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And **there** was evening and **there** was morning, the sixth day. Thus the **heavens** and the **earth** were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the **heavens** and the **earth** when they were created, in the day that the **LORD** God made the **earth** and the **heavens**. When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small **plant** of the field had yet sprung up—for the **LORD** God had not caused it to rain on the land, and **there** was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then the **LORD** God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the **breath** of life, and the man became a **living creature**. And the **LORD** God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and **there** he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the **LORD** God made to spring up every **tree** that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The **tree** of life was in the midst of the garden, and the **tree** of the knowledge of good and evil. A **river** flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and **there** it divided and became four **rivers**. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where **there** is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are **there**. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The **LORD** God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the **LORD** God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every **tree** of the garden, but of the **tree** of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Then the **LORD** God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the **LORD** God had formed every **beast** of the field and every **bird** of the **heavens** and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every **living creature**, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the **birds** of the **heavens** and to every **beast** of the field. But for Adam **there** was not found a helper fit for him. So the **LORD** God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its **place** with flesh. And the rib that the **LORD** God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is **bone** of my **bones** and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other **beast** of the field that the **LORD** God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any **tree** in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the **fruit** of the **trees** in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the **fruit** of the **tree** that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the **tree** was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the **tree** was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its **fruit** and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig **leaves** together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the **LORD** God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the **LORD** God among the **trees** of the garden. But the **LORD** God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you

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were naked? Have you eaten of the **tree** of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man **said**, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me **fruit** of the **tree**, and I ate." Then the **LORD** God **said** to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman **said**, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The **LORD** God **said** to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all **beasts** of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." To the woman he **said**, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your **desire** shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." And to Adam he **said**, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the **tree** of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the **plants** of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The man **called** his wife's **name** Eve, because she was the mother of all **living**. And the **LORD** God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the **LORD** God **said**, "Behold, the man has become **like** one of us in **knowing** good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the **tree** of life and eat, and **live** forever—" therefore the **LORD** God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he **placed** the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the **tree** of life. ([ESV](#))  
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## Revelation 21:1–22:5

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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**. And I saw the holy **city**, new Jerusalem, **coming** down out of **heaven** from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the **throne** saying, "Behold, the **dwelling** place of God is with man. He will **dwell** with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe **away** every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no **more**, neither shall **there** be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed **away**." And he who was seated on the

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**throne** **said**, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he **said**, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And 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** from the spring of the water of **life** without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Then came one of the **seven angels** who had the **seven bowls** full of the **seven** last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will **show** you the Bride, the wife of the **Lamb**." 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. 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**. 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**. The wall was built of **jasper**, while the **city** was pure **gold**, like clear 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 street of the **city** was pure **gold**, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in the **city**, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the **Lamb**. 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**. 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**. 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. They will see his face, and his **name** will be on their foreheads. And night will be no **more**. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their **light**, and they will reign forever and ever. ([ESV](#)) Exorted from [Logos Bible Software](#)