

Rev 26-08-02a

Good morning, it is Sunday morning. We're here at Grace & Truth Bible Church on the 2nd of August 2026. We're in Revelation chapter 22.

We'll take a quick review of the end of chapter 21 and move into chapter 22 this morning. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and investigation and we'll begin. Father, we always appreciate the opportunity to refresh ourselves at the oasis of living water that we find in your word, the perspective that it gives us, the objectivity that it restores to us after exposure to this world and the things that are in the world.

We're grateful for the fellowship of believers that share an enthusiasm for the things that relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. We thank you most of all for him, for his work on our behalf, his continuing representation at your right hand as he awaits the command that you will give to return to greet us in the air and to take us to himself. We pray that our study this morning will help prepare us so that we can be like the bride who has made herself ready and share in the opportunities and the potentials that we see described here in the closing chapters of this great book of the revelation.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen. Looking at our passage, let's look at the welcome mat and the threshold of chapter 22 by reviewing the last few verses of chapter 21.

John has just reviewed the foundations and the gates of the new Jerusalem that he has seen descend out of heaven. And in verse 21, he says, the 12 gates are 12 pearls. Each individual gate was of one pearl.

One of the things that characterizes the description of this city is its incredible and extraordinary beauty. It has colorful yet translucent light that emanates from within itself. It doesn't need the illumination of the sun or the moon.

It doesn't say that there is no sun or moon, by the way. It just says that it has no need of the light that comes from those. There is still the marking of time and there is some means by which ongoing progress is noted.

So it doesn't exclude the possibility of some form of celestial sign or movement, but the city doesn't need that sort of exterior illumination as we have seen. I'm fascinated by the choice in verse 21. As I mentioned last time, pearls are not gemstones created in the fires of the formation of the planet.

The molten material that is under the crust and emerges and solidifies and gives us everything from amethyst to jacinth and chrysoprase and these other wonderful gemstones that require unique crystalline formations of molecules under pressure and so on. Pearls are a product of a living organism and that organism is an oyster which, under the law in the Old Testament, was

unclean and forbidden. We know that pearls are formed, this was known in the ancient world.

They began to create seed pearls long ago by introducing a grain of sand or some other irritant into a living oyster. As it deals with that irritation, it coats it with this material and the longer it's in there, the larger the pearl becomes. So why are the gates of the New Jerusalem formed from a single pearl? One guesses that as with pearl necklaces, a hole needs to be introduced into the pearl.

It would be difficult to walk through a solid pearl. It doesn't say that these pearls have been hollowed out. It could be that these are pearls that are of such a nature that one can walk right through them.

We generally think of a sort of rounded gate with a round entrance bored through it, but it doesn't say that. It just says each gate is a single pearl. For it to be a gate, it has to be enormously large.

What this reminds me of and what I would suggest by way of an application is what Paul and Barnabas say in Acts chapter 14, verse 22. After establishing churches in various cities, it says that Paul and Barnabas strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to remain true to the faith, saying, we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. Many difficulties.

There are hardships that we undergo and we endure those in this life. It is the pearl that comes from successfully dealing with something that isn't ideal. We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.

That's how the NIV phrases it. And I believe that that is symbolized with these gates. You literally enter through something that is the product of difficulty to enter the capital city of the kingdom of God.

I believe that's the significance of the pearl composition of each gate. And because there are 12, each is a unique pearl. Many of us face challenges that are unique in our experience, unique in our fellowship.

We may have physical difficulties or relationship difficulties or battles that are waged within our own soul that seem to have no precedent or no similar example in our near periphery. And there can be 12 kinds of difficulty, so to speak. 12 being the number of completion.

It's the perfect number of disciples. It's the number of apostles. It's the perfect number of tribes in Israel.

And these gates and these foundations are a combination of four and three. Four sides, three foundation stones and three gates on each side. Four is the number of completeness on earth.

Three is the number of perfection in heaven. Four times three gives you the 12. So this is the

union of heaven and earth, never more fully represented than this perfect city that comes down from heaven, whose founder and builder is God.

It is the city that Abraham waited for in Hebrews chapter 11. And these numerical associations, the gemstones, the pearls, the gates speak of the perfection of God's plan as he weaves and works all things together for good to those who love him and who recognize the calling according to his purpose. Romans 8, 28 through 30.

That brings us to verse 22. John says, I saw no temple in it for the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are its temple. We are told in a couple of places in the New Testament that we are the temple of God's spirit.

This is the foreshadowing, the anticipation where God dwells with us. Jesus said, the one who has my words and keeps them, he's the one who loves me. I and my father will come to him and make our home with him.

And you end up with a soul that is a habitation for the father, the son, and the spirit. This is preparation. This is anticipation of this city that is itself a temple, that is a holy of holies with a perfect length and breadth and height, like the holy of holies.

We saw this last time in both the tabernacle and the temple. They were a perfect cube. And that is what the city resembles here.

And therefore there is no need for a temple because we are dwelling in the holy of holies with the presence of God and the lamb. And they have no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it for the glory of God illuminates it. The lamb is its light.

The nations shall walk in its light. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honor. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day.

There shall be no night there. They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it, but there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or one who causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the lamb's book of life. There are those who have been resurrected in a permanent and eternal way who are not qualified to enter the city.

Those who are allowed to enter are written in the lamb's book of life. There seems to be the book of life. And then there is a subset, there is a selected, probably minority of those who are in the book of life and therefore raised, not judged at the great white throne and sent to the lake of fire who move forward into the kingdom of the father.

But notice there are nations, there are entire nations existing outside the city. And the kings of the earth, these are authorities who rule over them. This is the new earth.

And yet the masses of people largely exist outside the new Jerusalem. We want our names, not

just written in the book of life, but in the lamb's book of life. There is no reason why this cannot be true of us.

We know exactly what the qualifications are. And we're going to see that this morning, interestingly, from the apostle Paul, a reminder of what our task is, what our purpose is. It is so easy to be defined by our job or our relationship or our circumstance, our challenge, our success.

People are often almost pigeonholed. You express a preference for a thing. That's the kind of gift you get for the rest of your life.

You accomplish a thing. There are people who want to be Texans and you never see them without their boots and their hat and their pickup and used to be a gun rack in the back window. Too much crime for that now.

But there are others who want to be urban successes and they dress expensively and they drive nice cars and they live in mini mansions in the nice part of town. And that's their identity. There are others who wear their hardships on their sleeve.

And that is what people think of when they think of them and what they will advertise and what they will bring up in anything longer than three to five minute conversation. And we want to stop and think, what is my identity? What defines me? What makes me me? If I get hit by the proverbial heavily laden vehicle and they're having a memorial service, what are people going to say about me? What was the impression I left? What was the witness I expressed? I would pray to God in heaven that at the point that I get remembered after my departure from this life, that first and foremost would be love for the Lord and for the things of the Lord, his word, his promises, his hope that he gives us the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf and all of the potentials and all of the blessings and the opportunities that he has granted in this life to be of service and to prepare for the endless eternal ages that are to come. If that doesn't come to someone's mind within the first two minutes of thinking of me, I'm not doing it right.

We should be known and remembered as believers who love the Lord Jesus, who have come to the Father through him and cherish and are defined by that relationship, filled with the Spirit, anxious to produce the fruit of the Spirit, humble enough to acknowledge our shortcomings, to confess them, to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, to be measured by our love, one another love, neighbor love, those who are outside love, and even enemy love. Our light should so shine before men that they see how we act, how we live, and what we do, and glorify our Father. They don't glorify us, they glorify our Father.

How can they know that we live the way we live and do what we do because of the Father? It has to be evident. We have to make people aware at some point that we live our lives to please our Heavenly Father in the light of the example of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the only reason to be alive.

So, as a part of that, a part of our witness and a part of our example is how do we deal with hardship, personal suffering? Paul and Barnabas knew what that was like. You think about the Philippian jailer in Acts chapter 16. They had been beaten criminally, wrongly, unjustly accused and punished, and they were singing hymns in the prison.

And they knew to remain when the earthquake happened and their chains were loosed. They were aware. And through that, the Philippian jailer and his entire household came to Christ to think in the moment, not a knee-jerk response, God must be delivering me, let's run out of here before the soldiers arrive.

Constantly looking for the will of the Father. There's a purpose for us to be here. And by staying, which is counterintuitive, God is going to use us for salvation.

We pray, we have to be in tune with our Father so that He can guide us with His eye. There is a time to stay and there is a time to leave. Peter, when his prison bars were opened and the angel kicked him awake, said, get up and get out.

He wasn't to remain there and be a witness. And you remember the whole story of Rhoda. I was thinking about this because of the use of the word angel.

And this is something we're going to look at this morning. When is it a heavenly being? When is it an earthly messenger? There's a challenge sometimes in figuring that out. So Acts 14.22, Paul and Barnabas used this word not to discourage or to dishearten believers.

They strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to remain true to the faith saying, we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom. These are the gates of pearl. People always talk about the pearly gates.

By the way, we don't see Peter standing at any one of these 12 gates. I don't think he could run around and cover them all. So the whole thing of St. Peter at the pearly gates is a, of course, fiction, but the gates are made of pearl for a reason.

And it is a reminder that hardship is a part of this life and how we deal with it is a part of our service. So the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it for the glory of God illuminates it. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter three.

These concepts, interestingly enough, occur in 2 Corinthians chapter three and chapter four. Chapter four is where we're headed, but Paul begins what we call chapter four with a four, with a therefore, what is the therefore? Therefore we have to start in chapter three. Verse three, you are an epistle of Christ ministered by us written, not with ink, but by the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of flesh.

That is of the heart. We are a message as we reflect the glory of Jesus Christ. It is a

communication often silent.

Often we don't know that someone is picking up that signal is receiving that word from God by simply being faithful to our calling. You are an epistle of Christ. Verse four, we have such trust through Christ toward God.

Perfect example. Isn't this a consistent truth? We see over and over again. Our faith is in God.

Our relationship is with God, the father through Christ. He is the way we come to the father through him. John 14, six, we're not sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves.

Our sufficiency is from God who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. He talks about the ministry of death, written engraved on stones, stones, the message of the old Testament graven on stones. Peter talks about the fact that we are living stones and Christ is the cornerstone and we are built together into a temple to house and to reflect the glory of God stones.

Speak of this life, speak of this earth. We want to become beautiful stones. We want to be gemstones, not dull chunks of granite, but that was glorious so much so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance.

And that glory was fading. It existed. It was real and it was present, but it did not endure.

It was temporary. The old covenant was temporary represented by the fading glory in the face of Moses. But if that was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry of the spirit going to be? Paul says, verse 9, for if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

What are we looking at in Revelation 21 and 22? The material manifestation of the glory of God. The glory of God is the light of the new Jerusalem. The more we understand about the glory of God, the more we are ready to take up residence and to dwell in the new Jerusalem.

Isn't it amazing? We are still alive. There is time remaining to us. We can make ourselves ready.

We can ensure that our names are in the Lamb's book. There is not a reason in the world why every single one of us cannot be in that book and dwell in this city for all eternity, in the presence of God, next to the river of life, walking the streets of gold, enjoying the glow of God's glory emanating from every surface, being a part of that emanation of God's glory, because it is something we developed here and learned how to manifest and express. This is where history is heading.

It's not a fantasy. It's not a fairy tale. This is as real as the fall elections or the requirements of your job in the coming week.

It's just as real. It's on the calendar. It is coming.

It will be real. It will replace this entire world, this entire sky and universe. We're going to be here somewhere right now.

You and I are determining, are we going to be inside or outside? Are we going to be with those who are outside that have had to roast marshmallows over their inheritance because their portion went into the lake of fire and was swept away for all eternity? Are we going to be living in one of the nations and sending that diminished glory toward the eternal capital city of God, where those who woke up and smelled the coffee in this life dwell and participate in all of God's future plans? We're going to see it before this is finished. It isn't a bas-relief. It's not a freeze.

It's not a little diorama where everything is frozen. There is activity. There is progress.

There are future worlds, future projects that God is going to undertake, and we have the opportunity to be a part of it. Who wouldn't want that? You have to really not understand the potential to not manifestly and devoutly desire to be a part of it. So, verse 11, 2 Corinthians 3, If what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

Paul is talking about the glory of God and how we can learn about it, get used to it, incorporate it into our lives, reflect it so that our light shines before others, so that they will see us and see the fruit of our lives and glorify our Father in Heaven, appreciate His glory, come to want it in their own lives. Moses had to put a veil over his face in verse 13 so the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded, for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.

The Old Testament glory fades, and you can't see but a glimpse of the glory, and that glimpse fades. The fullness of God's glory is in Christ. This is why the Lamb is the light of the New Jerusalem.

The Lamb is Christ, and the veil that prevents us from seeing the full-orbed glory of God is lifted in Christ. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. In Christ we can see clearly.

Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Their minds were blinded, and even to this day, when Moses has read verse 15, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Turn ye at my reproof, why will you die, O house of Israel? Turn. Make a change. If we're not there yet, make a change.

Turn. Take advantage of the opportunity, because in Christ the veil is lifted. In Christ we can see the glory.

This is our motivation. This will get the boilers lit. This will get the engines going.

This will provide the horsepower from God to do what we don't think we can do, to make the hard decisions, to endure the difficult circumstances, to push through challenges and difficulties, opposition, setbacks, the press of Satan and Satan's world, the pull of our fallen nature, and the influences in the world, the aggregate of sinful natures that surrounds us in the millions of unbelievers that run things, the world of flesh and the devil, the glory of God, when we see it, energizes us. You think solar power is great? God's power, when we absorb it, energizes us with supernatural power, supernatural clarity. We can see clearly in this light.

Isn't that what the New Jerusalem is all about, the glory of God as light? You can see clearly. You see through walls. The city is translucent.

The gold that is one of the densest, most opaque materials, it reflects light. In the New Jerusalem, it is translucent. It is transparent.

It is clear like glass. In the ancient world, the Romans knew how to make glass, but it was imperfect, and you would literally see through it darkly. Good transparent glass was so hard to make and expensive that it only was found in the realms of royalty, of the wealthiest and the most prosperous.

That's where you could find clear glass. Here, the gold, I think of this, it's hard to imagine because gold looks like gold, so is this sort of an amber transparency where it's gold, but it's clear. I think that this is so difficult to describe, but I like to think of it as the most beautiful stained glass windows that you've ever seen.

Many times, and some of us have made leaded glass or have made stained glass windows using a kit. You remember that between the pieces of beautiful glass, some of them are textured, some of them have variations in color, some of them have little bubbles and a wavy surface, but how do you hold them together? Generally, it is a lead-like substance that ties them together. Suppose that your stained glass window was not held together with lead, but with gold.

The streets of gold would be edged with gold. The curbs are gold. The driveways are gold, and the streets themselves are transparent.

This is highly metaphorical, but what does it mean? We can see clearly. Johnny, somebody sang that song decades ago. I can see clearly now.

The rain is gone. I can see all obstacles in my way. Gone are the dark clouds that had me down.

It's going to be a bright, bright, sunshiny day. There are no obstacles to limit our view, to prevent us from being prepared, from being ready. The transparency of the new Jerusalem can be experienced now.

We can see clearly in the light of God's word. His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and we can see clearly. And as we learn to operate in the light of God's glory, we prepare ourselves for the city that is illuminated by God's glory.

And that's what Paul is talking about here. Look at it. Verse 17, the Lord is spirit.

Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, just as by the spirit of the Lord. We are being transformed.

Notice it is a present tense. We are being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Remember that? Romans 12, 1 and 2. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.

This is your reasonable service. We're going to be seeing the concept of service this morning. This is your service.

What are you supposed to do? Serve the Lord. How? Present yourself a living sacrifice. Not my will, but thine be done.

What would you have me do? Is it difficult? Is it hard? By your grace and in your strength, I'll get it done. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed. How are we transformed? He is talking about it here.

We, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of God, are being transformed. Concentrating on the glory of God. Anticipating the glory of God.

Looking for, incorporating and reflecting the glory of God, like a light in the midst of a perverse generation, among whom we are to shine. We are being transformed. Concentrate on the glory of God.

Where is the glory of God in this difficulty? Here's somebody in a bad way. I want to pray for them. I can pray, O Lord, please fix their circumstance.

I can pray, O Lord, please manifest your glory. May others see this situation and the believers that are involved and come away praising you and interested in you and wanting to learn more about you through the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, as Moses prayed on the mountain, as Elijah prayed, show me your glory.

Show me your glory. We, unveiled face, not limited. It's not a fading glory.

It's not something graven in stone. This is the translucence that is an anticipation of the new Jerusalem. Now we're at chapter four.

Therefore, see why the therefore is there? This is the reason. Since we have this ministry, we have this ministry. Concentrate on the glory of God.

Being a part of it. Reflecting it. Understanding it.

Being transformed by it. Defining our lives and our goals and our priorities and our objectives where is the glory of God, what path, what conversation, what thoughts, what actions most reflect the glory of God and not my will and my plan. We have this ministry.

As we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. We do not lose heart. This word lose heart is really interesting.

We're going to talk about it after the break, but it's so easy to be bogged down by opposition, by hardship, by friction, by difficulty, by the darkness that is in the world, Satan's world, by the darkness that is a part of our own fallen nature. It is so easy to be discouraged. It is so easy to lose heart.

But what does Paul say? Because of what we just saw in chapter three, as we have received mercy, God has given us the grace to overcome this lack of glory situation. We do not lose heart, but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifesting the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled of those who are perishing, whose minds the God of this age has blinded.

There is a veil that obscures, that creates darkness instead of light. The God of this world blinds the minds of those who are faithless. Otherwise, the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, the glory of Christ, the image of God, this is the glory of the new Jerusalem, toward which we are heading.

If we have any ambitions at all, if we have a lick of sense, that is where we want to be. And we will leave no stone unturned and avail ourselves of every bit of God's mercy to get there. Otherwise, the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, would shine to them.

We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves, your bondservants, for Jesus' sake." This is going to come up again in our chapter 22. It is the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Let there be light, Genesis 1. The author of the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, in Genesis 1. So, that God who commanded light to shine out of the darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Bombshell. He is preparing us to understand Revelation 21 and 22. Verse 7, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the excellence of the power is of God and not of us.

This is the challenge, to remember where the power is. Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, and his heart departs from the Lord. You're going to be the shrub.

You're not going to see good when it comes. Verse 8, we are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. Always caring about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that's this life, so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our body.

We who live are delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. Anticipation of things to come. We'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see how well this dovetails with John's vision in chapter 22. Let's pause here and take our break.