

Growth Group *Leader's* Guide

For the week of December 10th, 2017

Fall Growth Group Information:

- **Today begins the final week (Week 15) of our Fall Semester of Growth Groups.** Each semester lasts for 15 weeks. Sunday's mark the beginning of each new week.
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Where to begin...

- **1. Pray, 2. Read Revelation 21:1-8 and 3. Know the context:**

By the time we arrive at our text, we're past the 7-year Tribulation (ch.16), past the Second Coming of Jesus (19), past even the 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom, past the final judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne, where Jesus, finally brings His New Heavens and His New Earth and where He establishes His Eternal Order (21-22).

My Story:

1. When you think of heaven, describe what you think it will be like.

Our descriptions about heaven are telling; they reveal whether or not we grasp, in any detail, the goodness of God that is ours because of salvation. The future home of all believers is going to be more incredible than anything we could ever imagine. It's not going to be boring, mundane, but rather it's going to be incredible.

Digging Deeper:

1. Our text describes the future, holy city, in incredible detail; which part about this city stands out to you and impresses you the most?

This is an open-ended question and though some of the descriptions are not common to us, they are nevertheless incredible. The commentary below may help from John MacArthur:

21:11 – jasper – a transliteration, not a translation, of the Greek word. Rather than the modern opaque jasper, the term actually refers to a completely clear diamond. A perfect gem with the brilliant light of God's glory shining out of it and streaming over the new heaven and the new earth (cf. 4:3).

21:12-14 – wall – See verse 16 for the dimensions of the city and, thus, the length of the wall.

21:15 – gold reed – The reed was about ten feet long, which was a standard for measure. Measure the city – This action indicates that the capital of heaven belongs to God and He is measuring what is His (cf. 11:1; Ezek. 40:3).

21:16 – twelve thousand stadia – this would be nearly 1,400 miles cubed or about two million square miles, offering plenty of room for all the glorified saints to live. Length, breadth, and height – the city has the symmetrical dimensions of a perfect cube, which parallels its closest earthly counterpart, the inner sanctuary in the tabernacle and the temple (cf. 1 Kin. 6:20).

21:17 – one hundred and forty-four cubits – this is 72 yards or 216 feet. This is likely the width of the wall.

21:18 – jasper – This is the material of the thick wall – diamonds! Pure gold, like clear glass – unlike earth's gold, this gold is so pure it is transparent, so the overpowering radiance of God's glory can refract and glisten through the entire city at any time. The city will literally shine the glory of God at all times.

21:19,20 – Because some of the names of the gems have changed through the centuries, it is difficult to identify each one with certainty. Eight of the twelve stones are found in the breastplate of the high priest (cf. Ex. 28, 39), and the other four may also be related to the breastplate. The gems picture a brilliant, indescribable panoply of beautiful colors that send forth the light of God's glory. The following are possible identifications for these gems – chalcidony – this name comes from Chalcedon, an ancient name for a city in modern Turkey. The gem is a sky-blue agate stone with translucent, colored stripes – Sardonyx – a variety of chalcidony with parallel layers of red and white – Sardius – a common stone from the quartz family, which ranged in color from orange-red to brownish-red to blood-red (4:3) – Chrysolite – a gem with a transparent gold or yellowish tone – Beryl -a mineral with several varieties of gems, ranging from the green emerald to the golden yellow beryl to the light blue aquamarine – Topaz – ancient topaz was a softer stone with a yellow or yellow-green color – Chrysoprase – the modern form of this jewel is an apple-green variety of quartz. The Greek name suggests a gold-tinted, green gemstone – Jacinth – Today, this stone is a transparent zircon, usually red or reddish-brown. The one John saw was the blue or shining violet in color – Amethyst – a clear quartz crystal that ranges in color from a faint purple tint to an intense purple.

21:21 – one pearl – Each of the gates of the city is a single, almost, 1,400 mile-high pearl. Even as earthly pearls are formed in response to the wounding of oyster flesh, so these gigantic, supernatural pearls will remind saints throughout eternity of the magnitude of Christ's suffering and its eternal benefit.

2. Compare John's vision of this holy city with the related visions in Ezekiel 40-48 and Isaiah 60-66; what details are added to the picture from Revelation 21?

A comparison reading and study will discover several parallels and details that aren't mentioned in John's vision. The point is that God, even right now, already has His eternal home for all who trust Him. It will one day be a reality to our eyes, but just because we don't see it yet, doesn't mean it's not real.

This world isn't our home – our home is coming... therefore, we should look forward to that home with great joy!

Taking it Home:

Our text ends with this statement that "*nothing impure will ever enter*" this holy city. God desires that His people would love Him and trust Him, and live a life that honors God. How does this future reality challenge you to live differently today?