

**A VISION FOR THE JOURNEY // REVELATION 21**

This passage points us to two, intertwined things: what God has prepared for us and the fact that we are what God has been preparing.

Revelation is often considered a book about the end. But it is also a vision for the journey and gives us hope and strength for where we are now.

We have not spent a single moment free of sin and sorrow. We cannot even understand the life that is waiting for us—a life with no tension, no awkwardness, no sin. When verse 1 tells us that “the sea was no more” this is indicating that sin is gone. In the Bible, the sea often symbolizes darkness, chaos, fear and sin; it is the place of dragons and death (Rev. 13:1). In verse 2, we see the first indication that we are what is being prepared—the focus is on the bride, prepared for her husband.

In verses 3-4, we hear a proclamation: a voice from the throne. This is the third time in Revelation this voice is heard. The first was a proclamation of judgement (Rev. 16:17); the second was a call to worship (Rev. 19:5). This final proclamation of the voice from the throne is this: “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.” God had sought his people to dwell with them in previous times. In the wilderness, he instructed them in the construction of the tabernacle, a temporary mobile tent. Then the temple was built. And destroyed. God’s people strayed, and he removed his presence from them at various times for their disobedience. The tabernacle and the temple were not the final ways that God would dwell with his people. They needed a permanent remedy for their waywardness, and that happened at the incarnation, when “the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:14). We still see through a glass darkly, but there is coming a time when this dwelling together will reach its final stage when Jesus returns.

In verses 9-27, we see a description of this future dwelling place—the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, contrasted with the city of man, Babylon in chapter 18. This holy city is described as a perfect cube—the same shape as the Holy of Holies in the temple. Now, everyone will dwell permanently in the most holy place. But, again, the attention is not merely on a place, but on a people. The walls are described as 144 cubits—a perfect number, twelve times twelve, that might point to the Twelve Tribes, the Twelve Apostles. It’s not about buildings, but people, God’s people that he has chosen for his own possession. The description of the rich materials, jewels and gold and pearl, reflect how dearly God values his people, this chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation (1 Peter 2:9), a people purchased by the blood of his own Son. The vision is not a city made of gold, but of a people transformed, made new by the work of Christ (1 John 3:2).

How can we know that this is true and can be our own vision? First, God’s word— “these words are trustworthy and true” (v. 5). Secondly, his character: “It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega” (v. 6a)—our position is based on who he is, the beginning and the end. And finally, our identity. We are “the thirsty” who will be made sons (v. 6b-7). We can have confidence in this vision for our journey and for our future and for what God is doing in our story right now.

**D I S C U S S I O N Q U E S T I O N S**

1. Why is it important to understand this passage as not just about a place, but about a people?
2. We see various pictures of God dwelling with his people throughout the Bible. How do the tabernacle, the temple, and even the Garden of Eden help us to understand the reality that will be God’s final dwelling place with his people?
3. Revelation is about more than just the end. How can Revelation provide encouragement for your current journey?