

To describe something that is beautiful... to paint a word picture that captures the essence of a scene drenched in beauty... is no easy thing.

It stretches our vocabulary.

It requires us to carefully look at that which is beautiful... and to even more carefully endeavor to describe it.

Our passage for today describes a scene of beauty unimaginable.



As Jesus' revelation to John and his church comes to an end... a theme is repeated multiple times in the closing chapters.

19:7 – For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

19:9 – Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!

21:2 – I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

21:9 – Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

22:17 – The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'

The book of Revelation speaks of the bride, the wife of the Lamb as being  
(1) the followers of Jesus who have been reconciled to God... and...  
(2) the Holy City, the new Jerusalem.

I've said this before, but I need to say it again - in this present time, the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, between two who are different, functions as a signpost that points ahead...

...not only to the kind of relationship Jesus will have with his followers upon his return ... when he will forever bind his life to ours in a relationship of faithful commitment, fellowship, and enduring love and care...

...but also his never-to-be broken commitment to the new creation, to the new Jerusalem, where he will live among and with his people, and where his people will live with him and in him.

As we come to the end of this book, it is important that we see the magnificence of the vision shown to John and the great wisdom of God revealed in how the Spirit moved John to write it down.

In Revelation 2-3, Jesus first spoke a message to seven churches in Asia Minor. Then in Revelation 4...John saw...

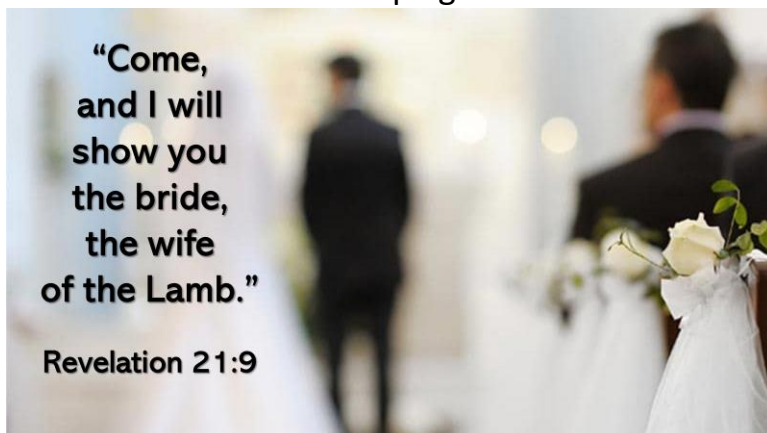


...and heard the voice of Jesus inviting him to...



At once John was in the Spirit and as he looked into heaven, he saw... at the center... a throne upon which the Lord God Almighty sat, and where a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, stood – **Read 4:2-11, 5:6.**

In chapter 21, something similar happens... the angel who had been entrusted with the seventh bowl of plague... came to John and he said...

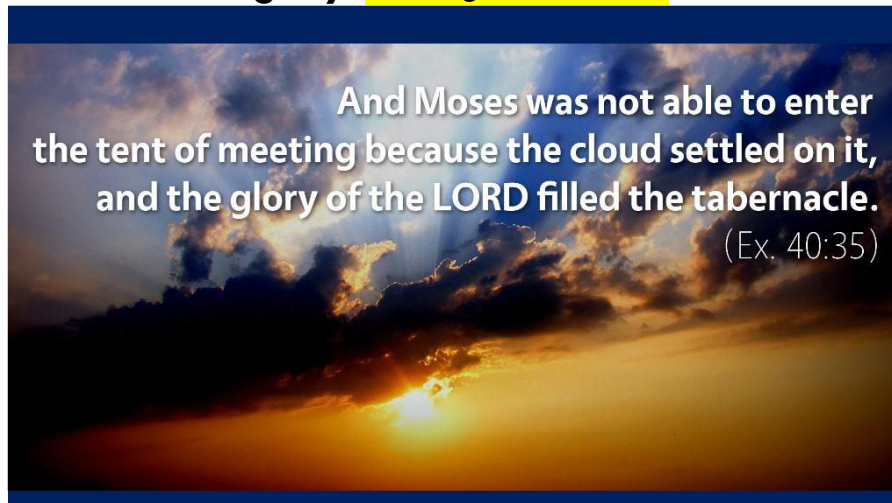


Look now at v.10 - **John was carried away in the Spirit ...** and the angel showed to him, not the throne room, but the new Jerusalem... which according to v.3 is...  
... "God's dwelling place."

**A major storyline of the OT is the lengths to which God went in order to dwell in the midst of his people.**

**The book of Exodus details how God first rescued the family of Abraham from Egypt, where they had been enslaved... and how after doing so, led them to Mt. Sinai.**

**There God gave to his people the Law, and detailed instructions regarding the construction of a tabernacle where he would dwell among them... a tabernacle that when completed... God filled with his glory. NT Wright, Revelation**



In the time of Solomon, the tabernacle was replaced by the temple. When it was finished, the glory of the LORD filled the temple as it had filled the tabernacle – 2 Chronicles 7:1-3



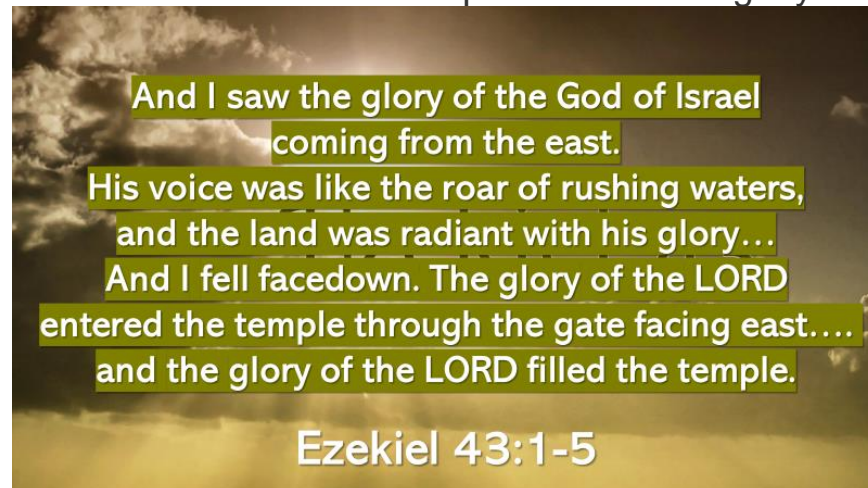


**Hundreds of years later, because of the unfaithfulness of subsequent generations, who turned their back on God and worshiped the idols of the people who had lived in the land before them, there came a point when the glory of the LORD departed from the Holy of Holies, from above the mercy seat – Ezekiel 10.**

**At the hands of the Babylonians, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the nation of Judah was carried off into exile.**

**NT Wright, Revelation**

In those days, speaking in terms they could understand, the Spirit of God inspired the prophet Ezekiel to write in chapters 40-48 about a future temple that would be built when the Lord brought the people back... from exile... to their land... a temple to which the glory of God would return.



There is, however, no historical record of the glory cloud returning to the temple that was rebuilt by the exiles.

So... what was it that God showed to Ezekiel?

The glory of God which Ezekiel saw was the person of Jesus... when he came... into the temple... and cleansed it...

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/lord-returns-his-temple>

**In his teaching Jesus made it known that the glory of God no longer dwelt in a building, but in him.**

**And when Jesus returned to the Father's home?**

**He sent the Holy Spirit to his followers... to live in them... as the Holy Spirit had indwelt him.**

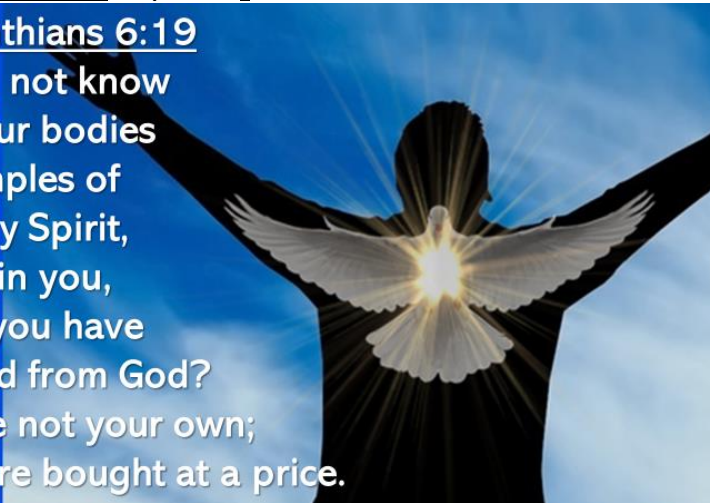
**NT Wright, Revelation**

What did this indwelling mean?

1 Corinthians 6:19 explains:

1 Corinthians 6:19

Do you not know  
that your bodies  
are temples of  
the Holy Spirit,  
who is in you,  
whom you have  
received from God?  
You are not your own;  
you were bought at a price.

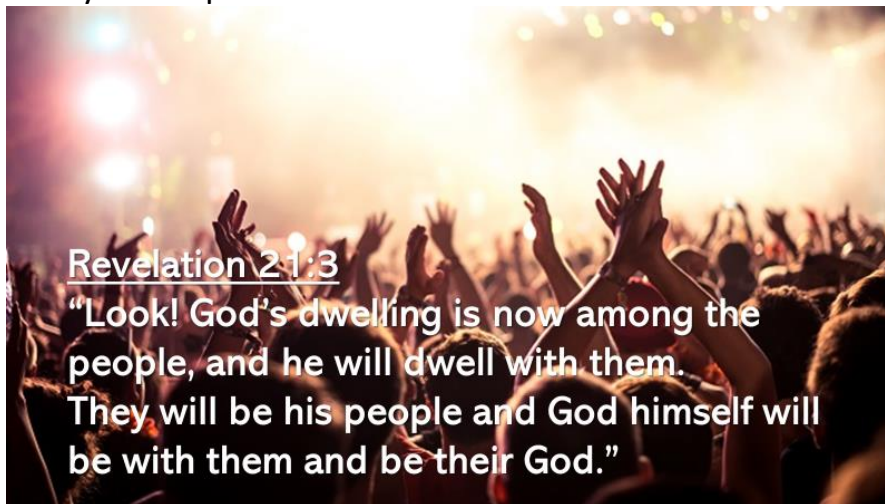


In the last days, the glory of God... now... inhabits the lives of Jesus' followers. What God is accomplishing through the cross and the resurrection... is to restore what he had intended when he first created all that is.

This is what makes the pronouncement from the throne in 21:3 so significant... what God pursued throughout the OT era and throughout the last days... is now finally accomplished...

Revelation 21:3

"Look! God's dwelling is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God."



What the angel showed to John... the new Jerusalem... was a scene of exquisite, breathtaking beauty... the beauty of holiness, purity and goodness.

v.10 - ...the Holy City, Jerusalem, came down out of heaven from God.

**The new city, the place of God's dwelling on earth, is unlike... the tabernacle and the temple.**

In what way?

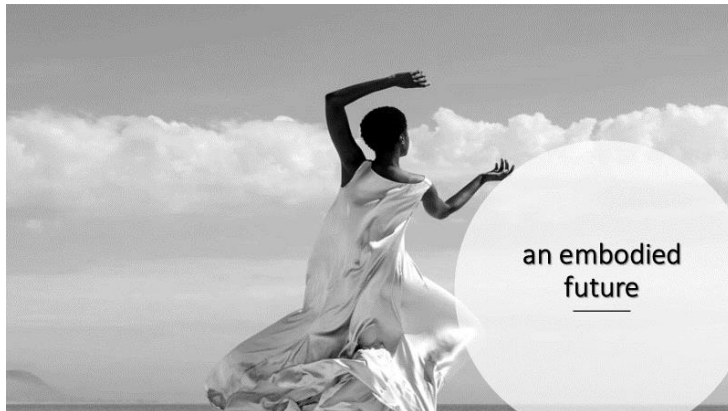
**It is not something which humans make... but is... a gift of God's grace and love to his people. NT Wright, Revelation**

The new Jerusalem comes down... out of heaven... to the earth.

As I said last week, the hope of Jesus' followers is not just to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

We will not exist for eternity as bodiless souls.

Ours is an embodied future.



As I said last week, God made us earthlings and earthlings we will always be. God who created the physical world to be good... at the return of Jesus God will recreate it to be good as it once was in the beginning.

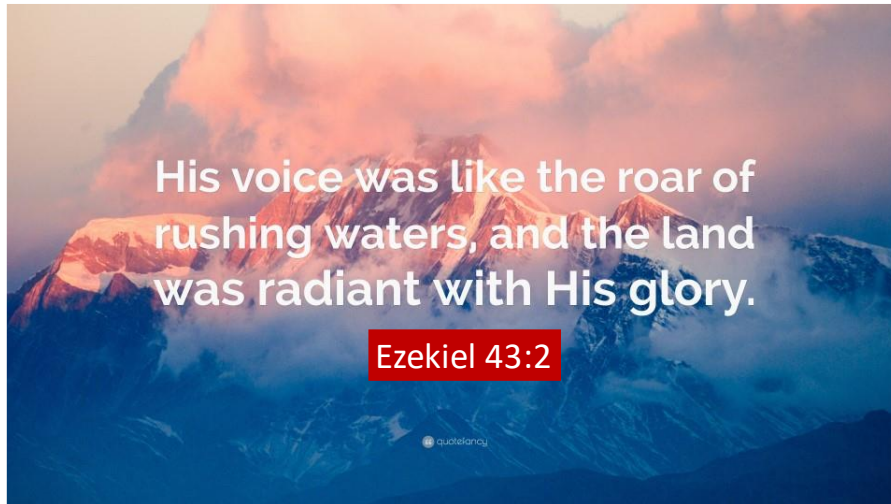
**v.11 – [The city] shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.**

The Greek word for glory, doxa, when used in reference to God means...

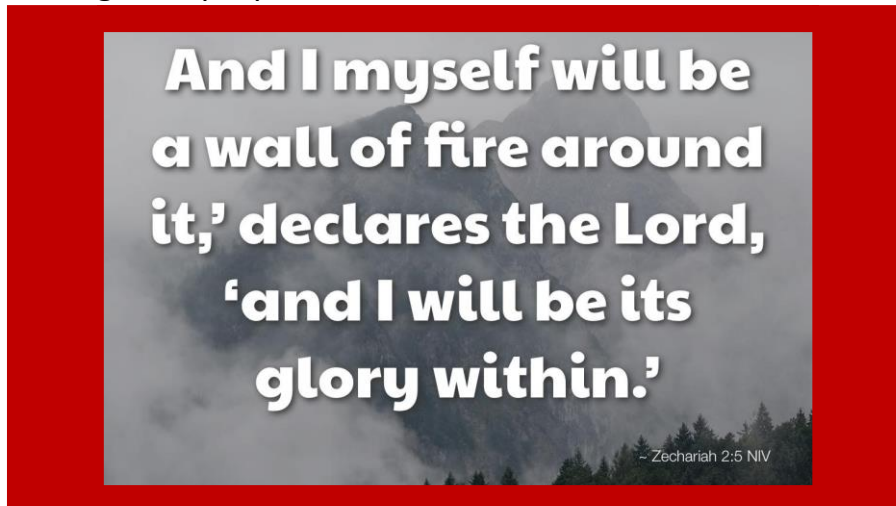


DJ, p.373.

The scriptures speak much of the brilliance of God's holiness.  
Remember what Ezekiel wrote when he saw the return of God's glory?



Through the prophet Zechariah, God said of the new Jerusalem, 2:5...



Unlike the vision seen by Ezekiel, where the glory of God in the person of Jesus... entered... the temple... through a gate... and was distinct... from the temple... the new city, shown to John... is permeated by the glory of God and is inseparable from it. Krodel, p.357.

The brilliance of God's person illuminates... everything and everyone... in the new city. Look at v.23.

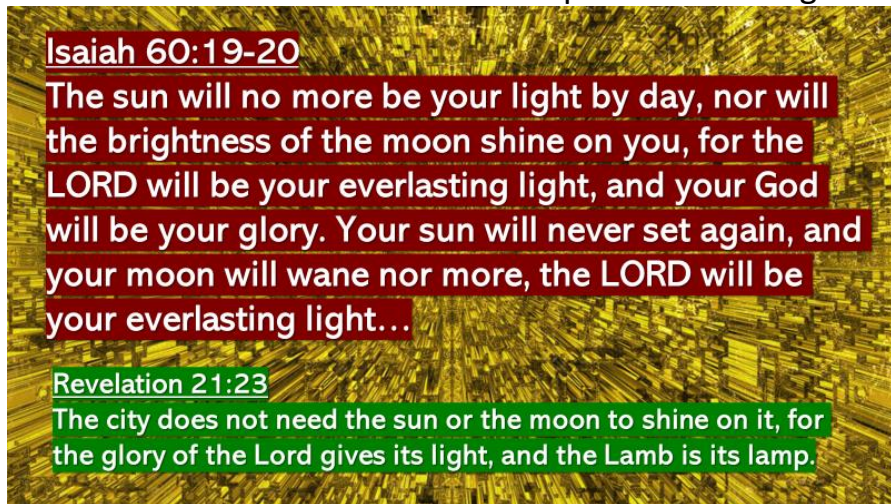




**Revelation 21:23**

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord gives its light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

This statement fulfills what God had promised through the prophet Isaiah.



**Isaiah 60:19-20**

The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more, the LORD will be your everlasting light...

**Revelation 21:23**

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of the Lord gives its light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Gerhard Krodel explains that John was not attempting in what he wrote to convey astronomical information about the new creation.

John was using imagery... to describe the quality of life to be experienced by those who live with and in God.... the people of God will be infused with the light of glory that streams out from the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb. p.364.

**Holiness, purity and goodness will stream out from God and into us.**

Then we shall truly be image bearers of God as we steward the creation on his behalf.

John was also shown another remarkable detail about the new Jerusalem.

Look again at v.12-13.



Who lives in the new Jerusalem?

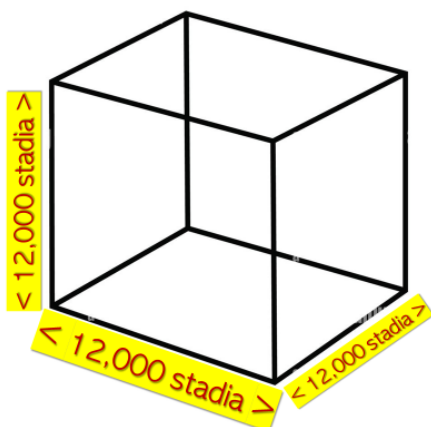
The people of God from both the OT and NT era.

We have seen this before.

In Revelation 4, John saw twenty-four elders – 12 representing the twelve tribes of Israel... and 12 representing the twelve apostles of Jesus.

In Revelation 7, John heard... the number of those who receive the seal of the living God – 144,000 –  $12 \times 12 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$  – a number that represents the complete number of people who belong to God... from all the tribes of Israel, and then John saw... those who are sealed... and he writes that before him was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language.

Look at v.15-17.



The city was  
12,000 stadia\* in length,  
and as wide and high  
as it is long.

**Revelation 21:16**

**\*2,200 kms**

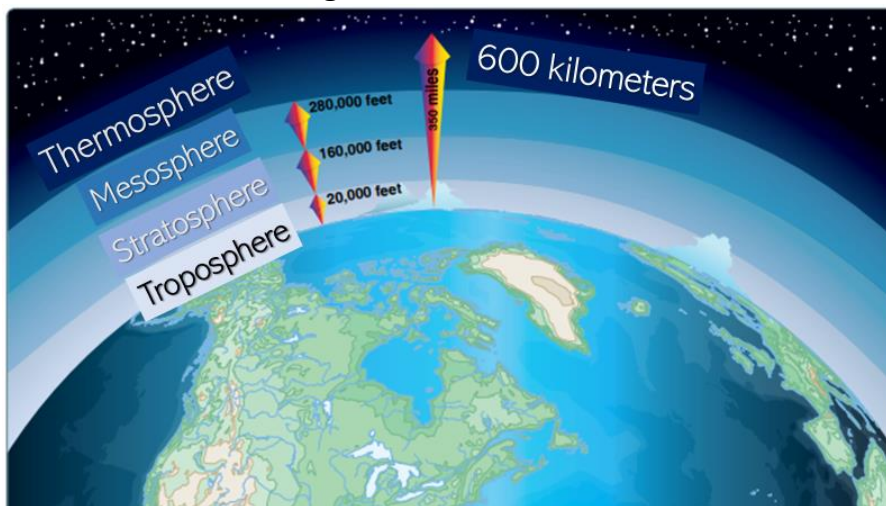
The new Jerusalem is vast in terms of its footprint – 2200 km wide and long... which totals 4.85 million square kilometers.

In comparison Canada totals almost 10 million square kilometers.



The new Jerusalem is a vast city, far, far exceeding the scope of any city which humanity has built.

What was not expected though... is that when the angel measured the city, he also measured its height... which was also 2200 kilometers high.



The thermosphere which is the outer ring of earth's atmosphere is 600 kms above the earth.

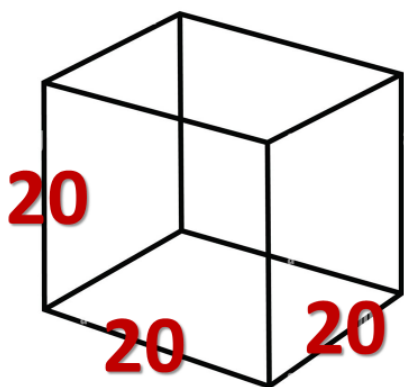
The new Jerusalem in its height stretches four time beyond the thermosphere.

This detail impresses upon the reader that there is a deeper and more profound significance to the measurements of this city.

NT Wright explains...

**The new Jerusalem is an enormous cube because that was the shape of the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem.**





1 Kings 6:20  
The inner sanctuary  
[the Holy of Holies]  
was twenty cubits long,  
twenty wide  
and twenty high.

**The measurements of the new Jerusalem communicate that the whole city has become God's Holy of Holies, where he dwells forever among and with and in his people.**

This is why the city, like a very precious jewel, brilliantly shone with the glory of God.

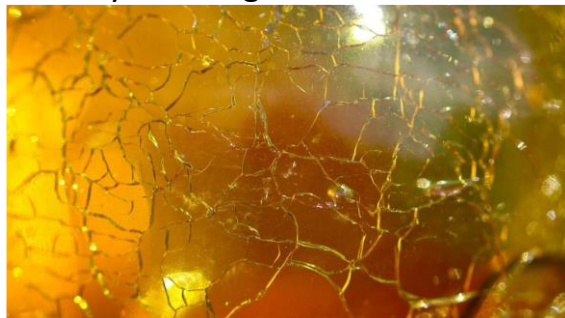
Look at v.18-21.

The Spirit moved John... as much as it was possible using human language to describe in even greater detail the glory of God that shone within the city.

The city wall was made of jasper...



The city and its great street was made of pure gold, as pure as transparent glass...





The foundations of the city's walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone....



... jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, ruby, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, turquoise, jacinth, amethyst.

Each of its twelve gates are made of a single pearl...



Darrell Johnson says of this scene... **the whole of the new creation shimmers.**

**Theologians use a word for this phenomenon... the word 'effusion.'**

**It means unrestrained expression – free flow.**

**All that makes God be God freely flows in every part of the new Jerusalem.** p.373.

This is as far as we will go today.

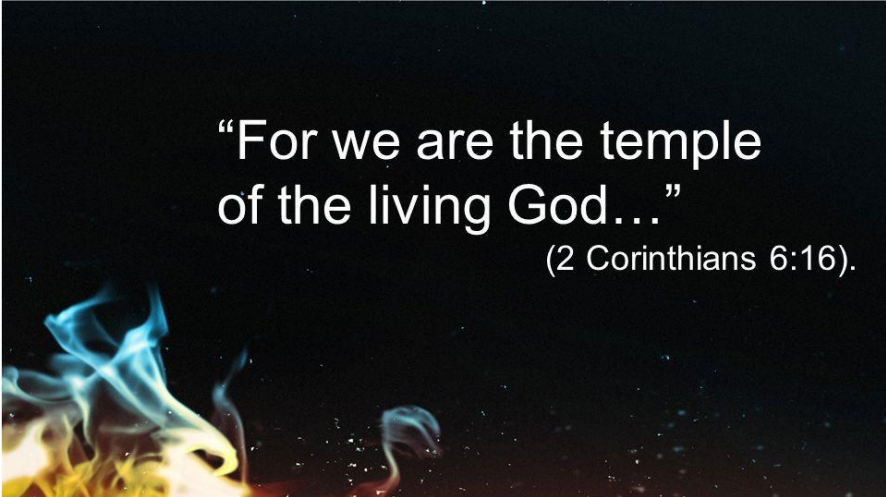
But I do need to now ask...what is the point of connection of this passage to our lives in the here and now?

What we have seen reveals our future.

We fix our eyes on Jesus and the hope that is coming.

But does this future impact our present?

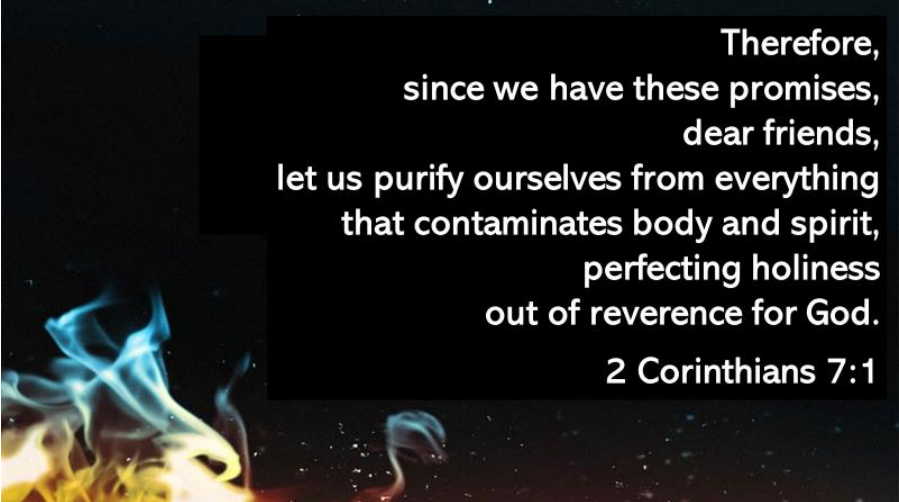
Yes, for even now God desires that our lives shimmer with his glory... and so make know his presence and goodness.



“For we are the temple  
of the living God...”

(2 Corinthians 6:16).

I appreciate that Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not leave it vague regarding the implications of this truth statement.  
What does God expect of his people as he indwells them?  
Look at what he moved Paul to write in 7:1...



Therefore,  
since we have these promises,  
dear friends,  
let us purify ourselves from everything  
that contaminates body and spirit,  
perfecting holiness  
out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

The Spirit of God motivates the people of God to pursue after and to grow in holiness...

... not that we might earn favor with God, for we have been given that in Jesus...

... but as the means by which we reflect the beauty of his holiness into the circles of our influence... our homes, neighborhoods, schools, workplace, church.

This is why, whenever the Spirit would convict us of something... it is expected by our God that we would quickly agree with him... and purify ourselves by turning from whatever it is that he has said will contaminate our body and/or soul... and appropriate the grace of forgiveness and cleansing.

GK Beale writes...

**To the degree that we do this, God's glorious presence will shine increasingly through us.** p.481

We have been given the righteousness of Jesus by grace through faith.  
We have been given the word of God to renew our minds and feed our souls.

We have been given the table as the reminder of the Lord's death and sacrifice, that as we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

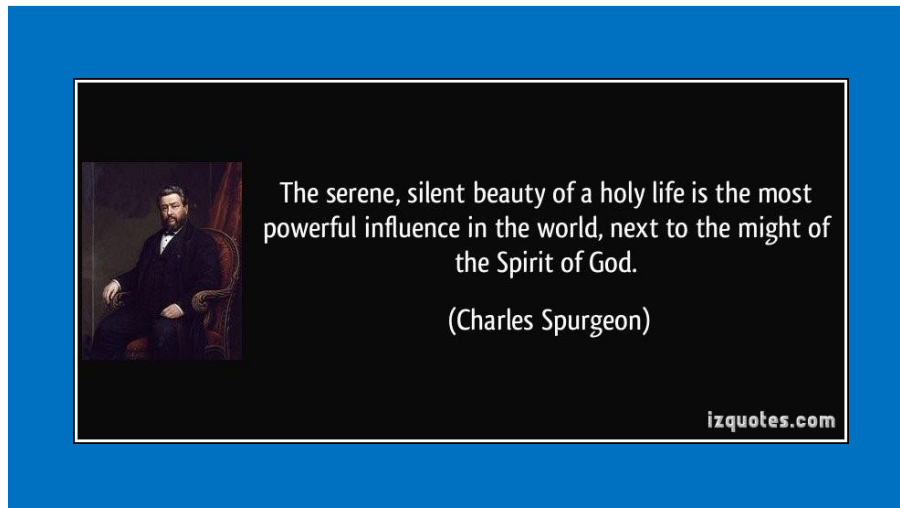
We have been given the Spirit who would with our cooperation transform us into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.

The beauty of holiness that will saturate our lives in the future, is even now being worked out in us... day by day by day by day....

This is why, together, we pursue after the beauty of holiness ... its why we spur one another on in the faith... we do so out of love for our God... and... because of a passion that through our lives his name and fame known would be made known.

## The Blessing

Jesus said that the beauty of holiness cannot be hidden but shines out from his people like a city on a hill.



To live holy lives... what we will ultimately be we are now becoming.



Prayers of the People:

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25

Prayers of the People:

O Jesus, open my eyes to see You alive and powerfully present. Infuse all I say and do with the hope of resurrection life.

Lectio 365

Prayers of the People:

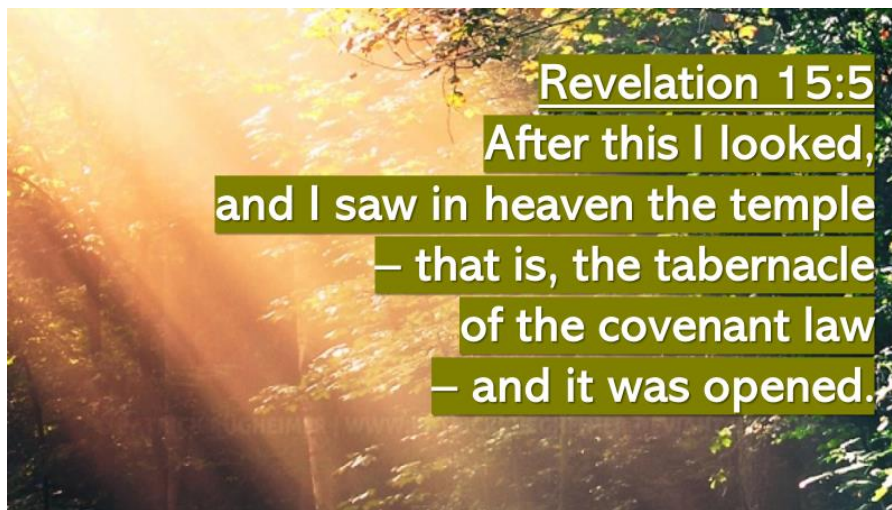
O God, shift my perspective from debate to desire, from loss to longing, from anger to anticipation of your presence.

I ask that the the position of my heart would be primarily that of one who longs for You and for Your love to be known in my life.

Lectio 365

We pursue after becoming blameless and pure, even though we live in a warped and crooked generation.

Living holy lives is not an impossible task, because the Spirit of God lives within us and his power enables us to live like Jesus, and so shine like the stars in the sky.



Out of this tabernacle came the seven angels with the seven plagues.

But as John was carried in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shown the new Jerusalem, we must not miss what he wrote...



Paul preached in the city of Athens, Acts 17:28, "in God we live and move and have our being."

Humanity is not always cognizant of this truth in this present time.

All of us live in God's world.

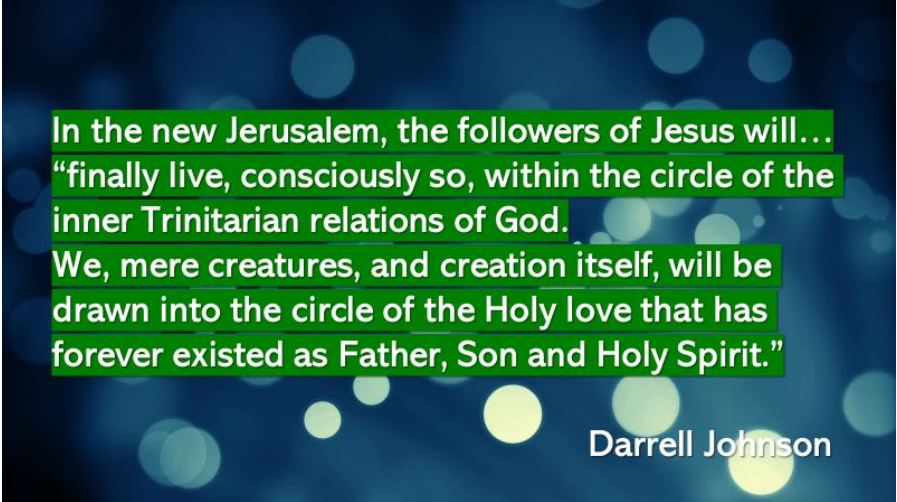
All of us are sustained by God's word.

Every moment of every day every person, regardless of whether they love God or not, experiences the grace of God that blesses all life upon the earth simply because God is good and he chooses to do so.

In the time of the new heaven and the new earth and the new city, the people of God will know and experience God in a way that far exceeds what we can only imagine in the here and now.

But in this lifetime we have had but a taste, a down payment, a first-fruit... of what it means to live and to move and to have our being in God.

In the new Jerusalem, the followers of Jesus will, in the words of Darrell Johnson,



In the new Jerusalem, the followers of Jesus will...  
“finally live, consciously so, within the circle of the  
inner Trinitarian relations of God.  
We, mere creatures, and creation itself, will be  
drawn into the circle of the Holy love that has  
forever existed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Darrell Johnson

p.372.

This is what the Scriptures have pointed us to.

2 Peter 1:4

...He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature...