

## DOES THE SUN AND MOON CEASE TO EXIST AS JOHN INTIMATES IN REVELATION 21:23?

This study was taken from a larger study on the subject of the Cherubim and Seraphim which can be found here.

[http://www.growupinchrist.com/images/docs/CHERUBIM\\_AND\\_SERAPHIM.pdf](http://www.growupinchrist.com/images/docs/CHERUBIM_AND_SERAPHIM.pdf)

This particular section was comparing Solomon's temple where the inner sanctuary, that housed the Ark of the Covenant, was covered in gold and spoke to the glory of the place where God met with His people.

I then compared this to the throne room scene in the heavenly temple that John depicts and then moved into an area of that vision found in Revelation 21:23 that has confused people as to the status of the sun and moon in the age to come.

The following excerpt of the above larger study that addresses this issue of the sun and moon ceasing to exist picks up here.

**Revelation 21:15-23** <sup>15</sup> The one who spoke with me had a *gold measuring rod* to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. <sup>16</sup> The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. <sup>17</sup> And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.* <sup>18</sup> *The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.* <sup>19</sup> *The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone.* The first foundation stone was *jasper*; the second, *sapphire*; the third, *chalcedony*; the fourth, *emerald*; <sup>20</sup> the fifth, *sardonyx*; the sixth, *sardius*; the seventh, *chrysolite*; the eighth, *beryl*; the ninth, *topaz*; the tenth, *chrysoprase*; the eleventh, *jacinth*; the twelfth, *amethyst*. <sup>21</sup> And the *twelve gates were twelve pearls*; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the *street of the city was pure gold*, like transparent glass. <sup>22</sup> I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Now, again, it must be understood that the use of these earthly costly materials are designed to impress upon men the glory that is

seen in the sanctuary of God where the Lord meets with His people.

The city that is mentioned in Revelation 21 is described with walls, foundations and gates that are made with precious materials. Does this mean that there will be a city on the new earth that looks like what is described in Revelation?

Is it beyond the scope of God's ability to construct a sanctuary that is made of any material of His choosing?

Keep in mind that what John is describing is a picture of a sanctuary in a vision setting, which means that he is describing, in symbolic language, a reality that will exist in the future, with the understanding that some of what he is shown is meant to represent the bigger picture of what God's sanctuary actually is.

And it could not be clearer that what John is shown is bigger than any one particular "city", even a city that is described as 1,500 miles cubed. We're told that this "city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it and its lamp is the Lamb."

So, is John saying that the sun and the moon do not exist for the illumination of this city? Not at all. This vision is a picture of a sanctuary, not just a localized city. The word city is meant to explain this sanctuary where God dwells among His people in a Kingdom that expands well beyond the borders of planet earth.

As Beale noted: "God never intended that Israel's little localized temple last forever, since, like the Eden temple, Israel's temple was a small model of something much bigger: God and His universal presence, which could never eternally be contained by any localized earthly structure." (pg. 627)

**Revelation 21:2-3** <sup>2</sup> And *I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,*

In fact, the word city is also used to describe, not just a localized setting where streets and walls and gates are seen, but also flesh and blood saints who dwell in such a place.

**Revelation 21:2** <sup>2</sup> And *I saw the holy city*, new Jerusalem, *coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

A city that is coming down out of heaven made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. In what sense is any city adorned as a bride for her husband?

How about a city that is not really a city composed of brick and mortar, or for that matter gold, silver or costly stones, but a community of people made ready for the bridegroom?

**Matthew 25:1** <sup>NAU</sup> "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

How can a kingdom be compared to virgins who are looking for the bridegroom? Only if that kingdom is identified first and foremost with the people who are being ruled by a King.

And who is this bridegroom in this kingdom?

Well, that is precisely what John is describing in this vision from God where we have this awesome picture of a city that is built with all of these precious jewels in Rev. 21:15-23, which is lit by the Lamb.

But if we go back to the immediate context of this portion of Scripture we are told what this city actually is.

**Revelation 21:9-10** <sup>9</sup> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "*Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.*" <sup>10</sup> *And he* carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and *showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

This is the holy city that John introduced in Rev.21:2 that was "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

People have gone to great lengths to try and give us a picture of a city that is 1,500 miles cubed and then speculate how such a city could be situated on an earth where the top of this city extends well beyond our atmosphere.

I'm not arguing that there won't be a city or multiple cities on the new earth where people will dwell with their God. My argument is that when we don't see the symbolic language, particularly in this case where John clearly articulates it, then we miss the most important aspects of what God is trying to convey.

In this particular case of Revelation 21, the city is a people in a Kingdom who are illumined by their Savior as they need nothing else in this world to define them, which is why this city, this bride, shines with the glory of her Savior, thus no lamp of this world is needed, nor even the sun or moon's glory to define them.

**Matthew 5:12-16** <sup>12</sup> "Rejoice and be glad, for *your reward in heaven is great*; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. <sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. <sup>14</sup> "*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden*; <sup>15</sup> *nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.* <sup>16</sup> "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

They have no need for any of the glory of such things of this created universe when they have Christ Himself who is the light of the world. The prophet Malachi points this truth out.

**Malachi 1:11** <sup>11</sup> "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts

God is the light among the nations and will continue to be the light on the new earth. But not even a new earth can contain the presence of God, for the entire creation is part of the sanctuary that God has described in His word as being the Kingdom to which His people have an inheritance and who will rule with God for eternity.

**1 Kings 8:27** <sup>27</sup> "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

**SUN AND MOON: TO EXIST OR NOT TO EXIST? ... THAT IS THE QUESTION**

By the way, just as a side note to this notion that the sun and the moon will not exist in the new universe, according to **Revelation 21:23** <sup>23</sup> And the *city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it*, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb," let's take a brief look at a number of verses related to this issue.

When we deal with the immediate context of Rev.21:23 the first thing to notice is the entire chapter is not describing a literal city but a people who are called by God to reflect the glory of their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's look at the broader context of verse 23 as we go back to verse 2 as John is describing the new heavens and new earth.

**Revelation 21:2** <sup>2</sup> And *I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

Notice that the city is identified as new Jerusalem and its beauty is compared to a bride adorned for her husband. And so, the inference is that this particular city has features compared to a bride on her wedding day.

This is a theme we see elsewhere in Revelation.

**Revelation 19:7-9** <sup>7</sup> "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for *the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.*" <sup>8</sup> It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Write, '*Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Is the book of Revelation, which utilizes a great deal of symbolic language, suggesting that the bride at the wedding feast is identified as a great city called the new Jerusalem?

Well, we know that this new Jerusalem is made up of pillars that are prominent in this city and that these pillars are people who are described as overcomers.

**Revelation 3:12** <sup>12</sup> '*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the*

*city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

So, is what John sees in this vision an actual city or a people described as a city?

John will be given the answer only a few verses later in chapter 21.

**Revelation 21:9-10** <sup>9</sup> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, *"Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* <sup>10</sup> And *he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

It is quite apparent that what John is shown, (which is identified as the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, the pillar in the temple of God), is not describing a literal city, but a literal people of God who will dwell with Him forever on the new earth.

This doesn't mean that John was not shown a city in this vision. It simply means that what John was shown and what God intended to show John through this vision, was that the city represents something else, namely Christ's bride.

It is this same city that Jesus describes to His disciples.

**Matthew 5:12-16** <sup>12</sup> "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. <sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. <sup>14</sup> "*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;* <sup>15</sup> *nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.* <sup>16</sup> "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

The light that God's people reflect, as one's who are described as a city on a hill who are in Christ, is the light that originates from Christ.

**John 8:12** <sup>12</sup> Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

**John 12:36** <sup>36</sup> "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

And so, once again, as we come back to the context of Revelation 21, we see that the inference to a city and a temple that shines, is quite clear, as the Creator of that city illumines it with His glory.

Paul would also include the premise that this temple is made up of the people of God.

**2 Corinthians 6:16** <sup>16</sup> Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? *For we are the temple of the living God;* just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

So, when John hears the voice of one of the seven angels in this vision, he hears how great care is made to measure this city, which has already been identified as the bride of Christ.

Again, this doesn't mean that the vision that John sees with his eyes is not a literal city. In the vision he may actually be shown structures that he would identify as pillars and buildings and roads, but the angel has made it clear in chapter 21 that what John sees as a city is actually describing the people of God.

This is why we read of what appears to be actual structures that can be measured.

**Revelation 21:15** <sup>15</sup> The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.

Keep in mind that the angel is not communicating to John that he is measuring a literal city, but the people who make up this city.

**Revelation 21:16** <sup>16</sup> The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

So, the city, the bride of the Lamb, is laid out as a square where all measurements in all directions are equal.

Where have we seen this before?

We have seen this in the house of the Lord that Solomon constructed to house the Ark of the Covenant, that Most Holy of holies where God met with His people.

**1 Kings 6:19-22** <sup>19</sup> Then he prepared an inner sanctuary within the house in order to place there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. <sup>20</sup> *The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar.* <sup>21</sup> *So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold.*

And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary, and he overlaid it with gold. <sup>22</sup> He overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar which was by the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

When the light of the lamps that were contained inside of this inner sanctuary shone on it, it would have gleamed as it manifested its glory to those high priests who witnessed it, which represented the glory of the Lord.

Again, this is all symbolic language to describe where God dwells with His people. It is not describing, either in 1Kings or Revelation 21, a literal square city that extends 1,500 miles into the earth's atmosphere and beyond.

So, as we come back to the text in question, regarding the city not needing the light of the sun or moon, it must be placed within the context of the city being the bride of the Lamb not needing any illumination other than that of the Lamb.

**Revelation 21:23** <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp *is* the Lamb.

When we understand that the city is the body of Christ then it becomes clear that those who belong to the Lord gain their glory from the King of kings and Lord of lords who is risen in glory from the dead.

**Matthew 13:43** <sup>43</sup> "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

But what about those passages that clearly tell us that the sun and moon are destroyed at some future time?

## SUN AND MOON DESTROYED?

**Psalm 72:5-7** <sup>5</sup> Let them fear You while the sun *endures*, And as long as the moon, throughout all generations. <sup>6</sup> May he come down like rain upon the mown grass, Like showers that water the earth. <sup>7</sup> In his days may the righteous flourish, ***And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.***

**Isaiah 13:9-11** <sup>9</sup> Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. <sup>10</sup> ***For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.*** <sup>11</sup> Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

**Isaiah 24:21-23** <sup>21</sup> So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth. <sup>22</sup> They will be gathered together *Like* prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they *will be* punished. <sup>23</sup> ***Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,*** For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And *His* glory will be before His elders.

**Isaiah 60:19-20** <sup>19</sup> ***No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;*** But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. <sup>20</sup> ***Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane;*** For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over.

**Joel 2:10-11** <sup>10</sup> Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, ***The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.*** <sup>11</sup> The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

Since this study is not about the sun and the moon I need to move a little more quickly, but it's important, in light of cherubim and seraphim being a part of God's creation, to note that the sun and moon are also part of this creation as God has designed them to declare His glory.

With this in mind let's address these passages in the order I gave above.

Psalm 72 is a psalm of Solomon that essentially acknowledges the righteous and holy judgments of God, even toward His own people, along with the hope that He will not ultimately abandon His people.

And so, Solomon utilizes the sun and moon in a way that shows how God stands eternally above all of His creation, and though creation in its present cursed state will come to an end, God's peace will endure to the end.

Of course, though the present creation comes to an end, it is not annihilated since the Scriptures are clear that there will be new heavens and a new earth. But if one wants to suggest that Solomon is indicating that the moon and the sun will in fact cease to exist, those who make this claim should read down to the end of his psalm.

**Psalm 72:17** <sup>17</sup> *May his name endure forever; May his name increase as long as the sun shines*; And let *men* bless themselves by him; Let all nations call him blessed.

God's name will not cease to increase if the sun ceases to shine because like His name enduring forever, so will the sun.

**Isaiah 13:10** <sup>10</sup> For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

Here again, context is very important for explaining how the stars of heaven and the sun and moon cease to shed their light.

But, like Rev.21:23, where we're told that the sun and moon are not needed to shine their light on the city, (which is the bride of the Lamb, not a literal city), so too, Isaiah makes no mention of the sun and moon, and of course this must include all the stars of heaven, as ceasing to exist.

Rather, he simply points out that all of creation outside of the earth will cease to shine. But remember, the context is describing the great day of God's wrath.

**Isaiah 13:9** <sup>9</sup> Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

This is the final judgment that Isaiah addresses which is the same scene that Jesus describes when He comes to gather the nations for judgment.

**Matthew 24:27-30** <sup>27</sup> "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, *so will the coming of the Son of Man be.* <sup>28</sup> "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. <sup>29</sup> "But immediately after the tribulation of those days ***THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*** <sup>30</sup> "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and *they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.*

Jesus is not using this language to suggest that the sun and the moon and the stars will literally fall from the sky or cease to exist, but rather is utilizing the kind of language that paints a very dark picture of that Day of Judgment.

This is the same scene that Isaiah uses later with the same result where judgment is equated with darkness.

**Isaiah 24:21-23** <sup>21</sup> So it will happen in that day, That *the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth.* <sup>22</sup> They will be gathered together *Like* prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And *after many days they will be punished.* <sup>23</sup> *Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,*

As Isaiah moves toward the end of his writings he approaches the culmination of what God's judgment actually accomplishes as He finally eliminates all wickedness, but brings in the everlasting city.

**Isaiah 60:18-19** <sup>18</sup> "Violence will not be heard again in your land, Nor devastation or destruction within your borders; But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise. <sup>19</sup> "*No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory.*

This is the identical picture we have in Rev. 21:23. And where Isaiah is speaking prophetically to Israel and their place of habitation including a city with walls and gates, where they no longer need the sun or moon to provide light for them, John makes it clear what this city is (the bride of the Lamb), and what light that city will be lit with, (the Lamb).

In fact, Isaiah continues by describing how the sun and moon, (which moments ago was apparently not needed), is reintroduced back into the picture.

**Isaiah 60:20-21** <sup>20</sup> *"Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane;* For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over. <sup>21</sup> *"Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified.*

Here Isaiah is saying that, like the everlasting light of the Lord, the sun will shine perpetually and the moon will never wane, which is to say that both sun and moon will continue to shine in the context of possessing the land forever in righteousness, which Isaiah will define with the introduction of the new heavens and new earth in chapter 66.

**Isaiah 66:22-23** <sup>22</sup> "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure. <sup>23</sup> *"And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD.*

Notice that in the new heavens and new earth which God makes to endure we continue to experience new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath as God's people bow down before Him on the new earth. From one new moon to the next, the moon gets brighter not darker.

And of course, we know that the entire creation, which would include the sun, the moon, the stars, planet earth and every other created thing, continues to fall under the curse, but also continues to yearn for that final day when Christ returns to judge the world and subsequently to set up His kingdom forever when all men are raised, and He establishes the new heavens and new earth, which will include a new sun and a new moon, as all are recreated by God from the old.

**Romans 8:20-22** <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that *the whole creation groans* and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

The last verse I addressed earlier that some use to confirm that the sun and moon will one day cease to exist is found in Joel.

**Joel 2:10-11** <sup>10</sup> Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, *The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.* <sup>11</sup> The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. *The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?*

Again, the prophet is not suggesting that that the sun and moon will cease to exist only that their brightness will turn to darkness. And as was pointed out earlier, this is in the context of the great and terrible day of the Lord in His final judgment, of which Joel tells us in verse 11.

## JUDGMENT

Will this mean that the sun and the moon will still exist after God's great judgment on the last day?

Of course, why wouldn't it?, unless you take Rev.21:23 out of its context and decide that verse, in the context of the entire chapter, has anything to do with a physical city without the sun and moon.

David had an understanding of God's decree to create a universe that would accommodate His people forever in a Kingdom that magnified the name of the Lord.

**Psalms 89:36-37** <sup>36</sup> "His descendants *shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me.* <sup>37</sup> "*It shall be established forever like the moon,* And the witness in the sky is faithful." Selah.

Forever, is how long the sun and moon shall last to declare the glory of God, because the sun and moon were created to determine times and seasons that will last forever on the new earth.

**Psalm 104:19-24** <sup>19</sup> *He made the moon for the seasons; The sun knows the place of its setting.* <sup>20</sup> You appoint darkness and it becomes night, In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about. <sup>21</sup> The young lions roar after their prey And seek their food from God. <sup>22</sup> *When* the sun rises they withdraw And lie down in their dens. <sup>23</sup> Man goes forth to his work And to his labor until evening. <sup>24</sup> O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions.

**Psalm 148:2-6** <sup>2</sup> Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! <sup>3</sup> *Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light!* <sup>4</sup> Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! <sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. <sup>6</sup> *He has also established them forever and ever;* He has made a decree which will not pass away.