The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Teachings by Emanuel Swedenborg

1. The New Heaven and the New Earth, and What Is Meant by "the New Jerusalem"

It says in the Book of Revelation,

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The city had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and on the gates were twelve angels, and names written that are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The city was laid out as a square; its length was as great as its breadth. And [the angel who talked with me] measured the city with a reed: twelve thousand stadia. 1 Its length, breadth, and height were equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, 2 which is the measure of a human being, that is, of an angel. 3 Its wall was made of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 4 The foundations of the wall of the city were made of precious stones of every kind. The twelve gates were twelve pearls. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. The glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb was its light. The nations of those who are saved will walk in its light, and the monarchs of the earth will bring their glory and honor into it. (Revelation 21:1, 2, 12-24)

When people read this, they understand it only in literal terms. 5 They think that the visible heavens are going to be destroyed along with the earth and that new heavens are going to come into being and come down onto the new earth in the form of a holy city, a Jerusalem with the dimensions given in the description.

[2] Angels understand it in a completely different way, though. They understand in a spiritual way the details that we understand in an earthly way, 6 and they understand what those details really mean. This is the inner or spiritual meaning of the Word. 7 In the deeper or spiritual meaning that angels are engaged in, a new heaven and a new earth mean a new church both in heaven and on earth (both will be discussed later [§§2-5]). The holy city coming down from God out of heaven means its heavenly teachings. Its length, breadth, and height, which were equal, mean everything in those teachings that is good and true, all gathered together. Its wall means the truths that protect it. The measure of the wall, being one hundred and forty-four cubits, which is the measure of a human being, that is, of an angel means all those protective truths gathered together, as well as the nature of those truths. The twelve gates, which were pearls, mean introductory truths, as do the twelve angels on the gates. The foundations of the wall, which were made of precious stones of every kind, mean the knowledge on which the teachings are based. The twelve tribes of Israel mean all elements of the church in general and in particular, as do the twelve apostles. The gold like clear glass that the city and streets were made of means good actions done out of love, 8 which cause the teachings and their truths to shine. The nations of those who are saved and the monarchs of the earth who will bring their glory and honor into it mean everyone in the church who is devoted to what is good and true. 9 God and the Lamb mean the Lord's 10 divine nature itself and his divine-human nature. 11

[3] This is what the spiritual meaning of the Word is like; the earthly or literal meaning serves as its foundation. All the same, these two meanings, the spiritual and the earthly, are bound together by their correspondence.

For further reading:

"*Social Justice is the New Jerusalem*" by Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence

https://spiritualquesters.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Social-Justice-is-the-New-Jerusalem.pdf

"*Coming Home to the Holy City*" The final installment of our own series on the Book of Revelation earlier this year:

https://www.churchoftheholycity.org/sermons/coming-home-to-the-holy-city

https://youtu.be/8lW6llg_CZo