

## The New Jerusalem

### The Description of the City: Literal or Symbolic

The New Jerusalem probably isn't a topic of study for most. However, understanding what it actually is can certainly result in a clearer sense of purpose in the context of preparing the way for the Lord's return and establishing a kingdom paradigm. God apparently felt it was important enough to give us a picture of this future city.

#### Revelation 21:10-14 (KJV)

10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Somewhere along the way, growing up in an evangelical church, I had heard about this New Jerusalem descending out of heaven. When I was a new believer, I remember noticing a particularly bright star while looking into the night sky. I thought to myself, "I wonder if that might be the new Jerusalem on its way?" I obviously had not read what the bible says about this city at that point!

Like many, I understood the New Jerusalem to be a literal city built of stones and other building material. In fact, the verses that follow the passage above, describe the material this city is built of which includes many kinds of precious stones and streets of pure gold. Even the dimensions of the city are given; it is a cube, 1500 miles wide and 1500 miles long! That is roughly half the size of the continental United States! Besides that, it is also 1500 miles high, a distance that would reach out of the atmosphere and into space. That is quite a city!

But will the literal city of Jerusalem be built up during the reign of Christ until it is a 1500 mile cube that reaches into space? I don't know, with God all things are possible. However, the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation certainly has a symbolic meaning that speaks of something else. This is not a great mystery for those who have simply read the context of the passage describing this New Jerusalem; it is called the bride, the wife of the lamb:

#### Revelation 21:9 (KJV)

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

## **The Bride/Wife of Christ**

Most students of the Scriptures understand immediately who the Bride of Christ is. In Chapter 5 of the epistle to the Ephesians, we find the classic instructional passage for husbands and wives where Paul says, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (see Eph 5: 22-32). To sum it up, the institution of marriage with the headship of the husband is a model of Christ’s relationship to the Church. Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. The husband is to lay down his life for the wife and present her holy and pure, just like Christ laid his life down for the church and is washing us with His Word that we might be a people prepared for the great wedding at His return. This is why we study and submit ourselves to the Word of God, that we might renew our minds and be conformed, not to this world, but to the image of Christ (see Rom 12:2). Therefore, the New Jerusalem is the bride of the Lamb, and the bride of the Lamb is the church. [1]

## **The House/Church of God**

Paul wrote to Timothy, instructing him how to “...conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God...” (1 Timothy 3:14-15). From this we can see that the church (the bride of Christ), is also called the house of God. [2] Paul spoke to the Corinthians about the construction process of this building we call the church/New Jerusalem.

### **1 Corinthians 3:9-16 (KJV)**

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? [3] [4]

Notice first, from the passage above, that *we* are God’s building/temple (verses 9 and 16). This includes all those who are genuine Christians. This building is built from stones, but not just any stones. Peter referred to us as living stones being built up as a spiritual house Jesus being the Chief Corner Stone (1 Peter 2:5, 7). [5]

Next notice that some of these living stones are not only part of the building structure, they are also considered builders. Paul referred to himself as a fellow worker with God, a wise master builder who has laid the foundation (verse 10). Then he issues a warning to anyone else who might build upon that foundation, that they should be careful how they build lest they lose their reward (verses 13 and 14). [6]

Now let’s look at the different types or qualities of the building material used to build this spiritual house which is the church of the living God. The passage from 1 Corinthians Chapter 3 lists gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw (verse 12). The quality of the material that

each builder has incorporated into the building will be tested by fire. Obviously, gold, silver and precious stones will remain, but the wood, hay and straw will be burned up. This brings us back to the description of New Jerusalem found in Revelation: “The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones...” (see Rev 21:19-21) This description, which names several types of precious stones and describes streets of gold, corresponds with the building material in 1 Corinthians 3:12 (gold, silver, and precious stones), excluding the wood, hay, and straw. Paul was describing to the Corinthians a work in progress, but the New Jerusalem is a description of the finished house. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians also speaks of this work in progress:

**Ephesians 2:19-22 (KJV)**

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;  
21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:  
22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The description of the finished building includes no wood, hay or straw because, at its completion, the church, the house of the living God, the bride of Christ, has gone through the test of fire and “...has made herself ready” (Rev 19:7). All that is impure, all that is counterfeit, every spot and blemish has been removed.

We can see that God has called us to be active participants with Him in the building of His New Jerusalem. In doing so, we are preparing the way for Him to inhabit that house, to move in as it were, that we might see the establishment of His literal Kingdom on earth. Therefore, the New Jerusalem is the church, the bride of Christ, which is a spiritual house being built of living stones as a dwelling place for God. [7]

**The Government of God**

In the Bible, the gates or entry points to the city, were usually narrow stone passageways through the thick stone wall that surrounded the city and usually having a heavy door at the outer end of the passage. Along the sides of these passageways there were often indented areas or setbacks to make room for the city officials to set up their tables. Some of these officials were sort of like “customs officials” who checked those who were coming and going and others were tax collectors, etc. For this reason, the gates of a city speak of government and administration. [8] With that in mind, consider again the description of the wall around the New Jerusalem below.

**Revelation 21:12-14 (KJV)**

12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: [9]  
13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.  
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Notice that there are twelve sections of the wall, defined by their respective foundations. Each foundation has the name of one of the twelve apostles. Each section of the wall has a gate

upon which was written the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. This speaks of a governmental function for each tribe of Israel. In *Chapter 2, Politics of the Kingdom*, it was pointed out that the twelve disciples had been given specific government assignments in the government of God that would appear on earth. Look again at Matthew 19:28 with the governmental gates of the New Jerusalem in mind.

**Matthew 19:28 (KJV)**

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [10]

Here we see the obvious parallels. The New Jerusalem is a picture of the church after Christ's return revealing a twelve-part governmental system.[11] Each governmental segment is headed up by one of the twelve apostles, represented by the apostles' names on the twelve foundations, and the names of the tribes on the gates.

If we were discussing the federal government of the United States, we might say something like: "Washington has become corrupt and is in need of reform." Since Washington is the center of government, we simply use the name of the city to refer to the governmental system that operates there. The same is true regarding Jerusalem. Jerusalem is generally recognized as the governmental center of Israel. And like Washington, Jerusalem is in need of reform. Therefore, the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation is a picture of a new reformed government that will be established in Jerusalem after Christ's return.

There are several prophecies that describe this newly remade city. The nations will come to Jerusalem saying:

**Isaiah 2:3 (KJV)**

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. [12]

As a result, peace will cover the earth as also described in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 11:9-10 (KJV)**

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Therefore, the New Jerusalem is a picture of God's governmental network that will rule the world in righteousness.

**Disciples Who Make Disciples**

With this great hope and joy set before us, we discipline ourselves. We have a dominion mandate (great commission) to make disciples of the nations teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. Disciples who observe all that Jesus has commanded are surely gold,

silver and precious stones. Seeking to be like Jesus, we purify ourselves even as He is pure (1 John 3:3). As the Refiner's fire purifies gold and silver, we are being purified. As precious stones are formed from heat and pressure deep within the earth over time, each generation is producing heroes of the faith who have not shrunk back from difficulties. [13]

**1 Peter 1:6-8 (KJV)**

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Not only do we look forward with great joy and anticipation for this time, but we are also called to be actively involved in preparing the way for that day. By being disciples who make disciples, we participate in the construction of this glorious house by building upon the foundation that has been laid. But let each one take heed how he builds on it (1 Cor 3:10).

We also have the opportunity, in civil government and in our churches, to develop our kingdom government skills and prove ourselves faithful on a small scale. This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

**1 Corinthians 6:1-3 (KJV)**

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

For those who have not seen the responsibility we have in preparing the way for His return and the establishment of His kingdom on earth, this chapter represents a very important building block for a new kingdom paradigm.

**Paradigm Builder**

The New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven is a picture of the church as the governmental structure of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

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The Kingdom Paradigm, Common Sense Theology for Politically Minded Christians  
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