

NEWJERUSALEM

By

Curtis Dickinson

Jerusalem achieved its prominence when David captured it and made it his capital (2 Samuel 5:6-7). Under the reign of Solomon the city attained world renown, and from that day on Jews sang its praises and saw it as the focal point of God's concern for the world, even though Micah predicted that since they built it up with iniquity it would be plowed as a field (Micah 3:10, 12).

Jesus often avoided Jerusalem. He grieved over it (Luke 13:34-35) and predicted its destruction (Luke 19:41-44). Its corruption was so bad that the Apostle John said that spiritually it is called Sodom and Egypt (Rev. 11:8). Early in his ministry Jesus said that the time would come when Jerusalem would no longer be the center of worship (John 4:21)

Under the old law the tabernacle was the meeting place of God and His people. (Ex.2e:43) When the temple was built in Jerusalem, it replaced the tabernacle and Jerusalem became the center of religious worship and activity for all of Israel. However, at the crucifixion of Jesus the temple veil was rent from top to bottom, signifying the end of the Old Covenant, its sacrifices and laws, and a major change in God's dealing with man. Jesus has become a "high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (Heb.8:1-2). The temple, its priests and sacrifices, were only types of the true spiritual things of the New Covenant established by Jesus. They are called "copies" and "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb.9:24; 10:1). Ancient Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. as God's judgment on Israel.

Although Jerusalem still occupies a prominent place in world affairs, it is no longer the Holy City of God and the Christians' real Jerusalem. Paul wrote that the Jerusalem of his day was in bondage with her children, but the "Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother" Gal. 4:25-26).

Modern Zionists, who reject Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, use Biblical references to Jerusalem as a means of gaining support for political objectives, and millions of Christians are misled to support them. Many believe that the "New Jerusalem" of Revelation 21:2 refers to a future earthly city. Many others take it to be a description of heaven. A careful study of the text and other scriptures will show that it is neither.

Note the text: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband"

(Rev. 21:1-2). John, in recording this scene, is told, "Write; for these words are faithful and true...they are come to pass" (v.5, 6). This is not something in the far-off future, but something already in existence in John's day.

The "new heavens and new earth" describe a major change that took place in the abrogation of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the new. The Hebrew writer stated, "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity also a change of the law" (Heb. 7:12). He writes more of this change in Heb. 8:8-13, to show that the Old Covenant law was no more. Concerning Christ's death, he wrote, "For this cause he is the mediator of a new testament...He takes away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb.9:15; 10:9). This was such a phenomenal change in the way God relates to man that in prophetic language it is said to be a new heaven and a new earth. Similar language is found in many places in Old Testament prophets where they speak of significant changes or extraordinary events.

John "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." This language does not describe a literal city. Rather is meant to give a symbolic picture of the bride of Christ. An angel said to John, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb." Then, what did he show him? "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:9-10).

The city John describes is the bride of Christ, and the bride of Christ is the church. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up to death for her, in order to make her holy, cleansing her with the baptismal water by the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle of any other defect - holy and unblemished" (Eph. 5:25-27. Weymouth translation).

In the book of Hebrews we are told that we have not come to a "mount that might be touched" with its fearful appearance and awesome sounds when the law was given through Moses. Instead, "You are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn," (1Heb. 12:22-23).

The New Jerusalem, then, is the bride of Christ, and the bride of Christ is the church. The description of the holy city in Revelation 21 and 22 is a symbolical description of the church, and fits the description of the church in other passages-of Scripture.

It is pictured as "having the glory of God...and the lamp thereof is the Lamb," (v.11, 23). Jesus said that he had given his glory to the church (John 17:22), and Paul called the church "glorious" (Eph 5:27). The Lamb is Christ, "the light of the world" (John. 8:12).

The "holy city Jerusalem" of Revelation is built upon "twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles," (21:4). The church is said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

The “precious stones” (vs. 19) of the city are the Christians. “You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Other symbols used by John to describe the city also describe the church of our Lord. There are some portions of these two chapters (Rev. 21 & 22) which may refer to the final and perfect state of the church, but many verses show that this “holy city” is a present reality on earth. Two verses mention that John saw the city “coming down out of heaven from God” (vs. 2, 10). This gives the heavenly divine origin of the church. It comes from heaven, in contrast to the beast, which comes up out of the earth (Rev. 13:11).

The city is immense. “He measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs (1500 miles).” The length, breadth and height are equal. Some have tried to explain a city 1500 miles in height. But these dimensions have a symbolical meaning with reference to the perfection and greatness of Christ’s church.

Christ gave John a vision of a gloriously pure and beautiful bride, and that bride is the church of which we become a part when we are obedient to the gospel. This grand vision was not given for us to use as a tool to support various prophetic theories. In the past 50 years hundreds of prophetic interpretations have been given us regarding the present day city of Jerusalem, which is mislabeled “The Holy City.” There is nothing holy about that war-torn city full of people who intentionally and purposefully reject Christ, and by doing so reject the One who sent him. No one has a divine claim to that country, as the promise made to Abraham about the land was fulfilled over 3,000 years ago.

It is the New Jerusalem that is important to all the saints. John wrote that it needs no sun nor moon to shine upon it: “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb” (21:23). Christians are not in need of the world’s wisdom and we should not be trying to fashion the church according to human standards in order to make it “relevant” to our corrupt generation”

“There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean or he that makes an abomination and a lie...” (vs. 27). (So much for the acceptance of the abomination of homosexuality.) The bride of Christ is to “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (John 2:15). If the church is to be holy and without blemish, as Paul and John described it, this means that each individual member must walk in the light of Christ: “To the end that we should walk worthily of God, who called you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12).

As its citizens, we are to show the beauty and glory of the New Jerusalem. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature,” (2 Cor.5:17)

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