
JERUSALEM ABOVE – THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

By Kenneth N Higgs

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22)

"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:2)

When we read the Word of God, we need to recognise the HISTORICAL CONTEXT and PRIMARY AUDIENCE to whom the particular passage is addressed. In the case of the Book of Revelation, the CONTEXT is the last days of the ancient Jewish kingdom, just prior to the Neronic Persecution of AD 64 to 68. The AUDIENCE is the Christian believers in seven real, historical churches in Asia Minor (now modern Turkey).

The book is a prophetic message delivered by an angel sent by Jesus to the apostle John c. AD 62. The message warns Christians of the terrible persecution approaching and exhorts them to persevere to the end, which was imminent ... in their lifetime.

"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the TIME IS NEAR" [Gk: ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς : for the time is near] (Rev 1:3).

The angel sent by Jesus said that the events would occur SOON:

"things that must SOON take place" [Gk: ἐν τάχει : quickly] (Rev 1:1)

"what must SOON take place" [Gk: ἐν τάχει : quickly] (Rev 22:6)

"I am coming SOON" [Gk: ταχύ : quickly] (Rev 22:7,12,20)

Given that specific TIMING, we must also conclude that the NEW JERUSALEM was established during the lifetime of the early Christians, ie: at the parousia of Christ in the 1st century AD.

Clearly, there is NO SCRIPTURAL BASIS for futurist claims that the events of Revelation are yet to be fulfilled, some 2,000 years later. The Word of God informed 1st century Christians that the time was NEAR, and that the events would SOON take place. Will you believe the Word or will you vainly cling to traditions of men?

OLD AND NEW JERUSALEM CONTRASTED

Apostle Paul taught the early church about NEW JERUSALEM in his letter to the Galatians, and contrasted the earthly Jerusalem with the more glorious JERUSALEM ABOVE:

"Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the JERUSALEM ABOVE [Gk: ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ : Jerusalem above] is free, and she is our mother" (Gal 4: 25-26).

In another article (The Holy City - New Jerusalem), we review James Stuart Russell's commentary ⁱ on these concepts. Here are some insights from that article:

OLD JERUSALEM

Old Jerusalem is the historical capital city of Judea which Paul said was *"in slavery with her children"* (Gal 4:25).

Old Jerusalem is denounced in the Book of Revelation:

- *"the great prostitute who is seated on many waters"* (Rev 17:1);
- *the "woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names"* (Rev 17:3);
- *"Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations"* (Rev 17:5);
- *"the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus"* (Rev 17:6);
- *"in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth"* (Rev 18:24);

Michael Alan Nicholls ⁱⁱ notes that "OLD JERUSALEM was the city in which Christ was crucified in 30ad (sic). It had become a wicked city and was nicknamed 'BABYLON' by the apostles and disciples." ...

"Jesus was angry with the unbelieving Jews and the city of OLD JERUSALEM. Christ condemned OLD JERUSALEM and the scribes and Pharisees who were wicked inwardly, while trying to pretend to be righteous outwardly." (p93. *Caps in original*)

Jesus warned them that God was about to judge them and punish them severely:

"so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation" (Matt 23:35,36).

NEW JERUSALEM

In contrast to the old earthly city, NEW JERUSALEM is honoured in Revelation and other passages:

- *"the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"* (Rev 21:2)
- *"the dwelling place (or tabernacle) of God is with man."* (Rev 21:3)
- *"the Jerusalem above"* (Gal 4:26)
- *"the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"* (Heb 12:22)

NEW JERUSALEM is always represented in Scripture as situated in heaven, not on earth (Gal 4:26 & Heb 12:22,23).

The Holy City is the abode of the glorified; the inheritance of the saints in light; the mansions of the Father's house, prepared for the home of the blessed.

Nicholls notes that "NEW JERUSALEM is the heavenly home for all of God's people for eternity. It is where God Himself is headquartered. It is where every believer has personal access to Christ in His presence. It is a better heavenly country for all born-again, elect, saints, who are all holy and righteous in Christ." ...

"All born-again believers going forward in human history continually enter spiritually through the open gates of the NEW JERUSALEM city. This is positionally or relationally now in Christ while they are alive on this earth, but it is not fully realized for each believer until their death, when they put-on their new immortal bodies and live with Christ forever." (p.92. *Caps in original*)

Nicholls notes that "Christ returned at His second coming Parousia and consummated the SALVATION of all of His elect (past and future) (Heb 9:28). He fully established His New Covenant spiritual gospel kingdom that is within His born-again, elect believers." (p158. *Caps in original*)

GOD'S SPIRIT IN-DWELLS BELIEVERS

Jeremiah the prophet foretold that God would establish a new covenant, wherein he would put his laws in the hearts and minds of the faithful: which is an indication of the in-dwelling of the Spirit of God in his people. This prophecy was about to be fulfilled in *"in these last days"* (Heb 1:2) at the parousia return of Christ:

"I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (from Heb 8:10 NKJV. cf: Heb 10:16; Jer 31:33).

Thus *"the dwelling place of God is with man"* (Rev 21:3).

Furthermore, Jesus never promised us an earthly paradise or utopia. In fact, he declared that *"my kingdom is not of/from this world"* (John 18:36). What he promised his disciples is that they would soon be dwelling with God:

"In my Father's house are many rooms... and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:2,3)

King David was looking forward to that same eternal hope and he rejoiced in song:

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6)

CONCLUSION

The Seventh Vision of the Book of Revelation foretells the establishment of *"the New Jerusalem"*, *"the holy city"*. It is NOT a physical, earthly city. It is *"the Jerusalem above"*, *"the dwelling place of God"*.

When the vision refers to the city *"coming down out of heaven from God"* (Rev 21:2), it is NOT saying that a physical city will drop from the skies onto the earth below. It is NOT saying that the holy city would physically sit on planet Earth. The passage is simply declaring the heavenly nature and origin of the city: *"the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God"* (Heb 11:10).

Christ our Saviour returned in his parousia, taking his disciples home to dwell *"in my Father's house"...* *"Jerusalem above"...* *"the dwelling place of God"*. All saved, elect believers are now adopted into the household of God, where we dwell as citizens of the New Jerusalem.

As Nicholls explains: "At His Parousia, Christ brought the heavenly New Jerusalem city back with Him. It is the home of the Bride of Christ (the first century church). It is also the home of all believers (past and future). Christ brought the TABERNACLE to dwell with His people in the New Jerusalem. It is Christ Himself. All born-again believers are His people. God shall always be with them forever." (pp.158,159. Caps in original)

The angel sent by Jesus promised that these things must SOON take place, ie: during the lifetime of that 1st century generation. To dispute that clear time statement is to vainly oppose God's Word!

"But as it is they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God' " (Rev 21:3)

You can read more on this topic in our articles: 'The Holy City - New Jerusalem';
and "Soon" Means "Soon" on the Biblical website: ParousiaFulfilled.com

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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

ⁱ ***"The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Christ's Second Coming"*** by Russell, James Stuart. International Preterist Association, Bradford, PA 2003. (Originally published as *"The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming"* by T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1887).

ⁱⁱ ***"Preterism HANDBOOK: Commentary on 140 Bible Terms & Concepts"*** by Nicholls, Michael Alan. International Preterist Association, Bradford, PA 2013.

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