

Revelation 21-22:5

I. The New Jerusalem, women, and cities

- The audience of Rev lived in seven of the ancient world's great cities, and as we have seen throughout Rev, women often serve as symbols of cities.
- Throughout Rev, the actual city/empire of Rome is depicted as Babylon.
- While Babylon and the New Jerusalem form a structural contrast in the closing chapters of Rev, Jerusalem does not work in quite the same way, since Jerusalem is both a new heaven and new earth, and the bride of the Lamb.
- It is helpful as we near the conclusion of Rev to remember the presence of the holy city earlier in Rev 11 – Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, **2** but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months. **3** And I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth.”
- This city bears similarities to the New Jerusalem, but parallels more directly with the earthly Babylon/Rome. The holy city of earlier chapters in Rev is found wherever the faithful are persecuted and martyred. The New Jerusalem is future oriented, and stands on the other side of the beast's defeat.
- “Part of the strategy of Revelation, in creating a symbolic world for its readers to enter, was to redirect their imaginative response to the world...they needed not only to be shown Roman civilization in a different light from the way its own propaganda portrayed it; they also needed an alternative.” Bauckham
- The New Jerusalem is a future promise with present implications (again, not unlike the mythological cities of Rome depicted in myths like the Aeneid).

II. The home of God is among mortals...

- “See, the home (skene/tabernacle) of God is among mortals. He will dwell (skenosai/verbal form of tabernacle) with them.”
- And the Word became flesh and lived (eskenosen/past tense verbal form of tabernacle) among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14
- The New Jerusalem/New Heavens and Earth is the Holy of Holies!

III. Place, people, and the presence of God: OT Expectation

- Rev describes the New Jerusalem as a place that is paradise, a holy city, and a Temple, where God's presence is experienced immediately without mediation of any kind. (note: Clergy will be irrelevant, thanks be to God!)
- The New Jerusalem fulfills OT expectations of a city where heaven and earth meet, where God rules and reigns, the location where the nations come for enlightenment, and where people live in an ideal community.

- This place was also anticipated to be the location where Paradise would be restored, ex Isaiah 65: The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

IV. The high mountain

- This imagery is not simply generated by OT prophetic promise, it literally stands over the powerful mountains of the ancient Pagan world.
- Ezekiel's vision of a new Temple (40:2): He brought me, in visions of God, to the land of Israel and set me down upon a very high mountain on which was a structure like a city to the south.
- Psalm 40: His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.
- To Pergamum, with the Temple to Zeus on a mountain (2:13): "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is.
- 17:9 in reference to Rome's famous seven hills: "This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated."

V. Paradise Regained

- The water of life: see Isaiah 49 and 55; Ezekiel 47; Zech 14.
- The tree of life: see Genesis 2 and 3; Ezekiel 47
- "It comes from God, who is himself the life of the new creation, but the imagery suggests that as God's gift of mortal life is mediated to us by this creation of which we are part, so eschatological life will be mediated by the new creation." Bauckham
- The building materials: Genesis 2 lists these precious stones in the land of Havilah next to a river; Ezekiel says to the King of Tyre in 28:3 "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering." The stones described in the masoretic text of Ezekiel align exactly with the stones in Rev, which also coincides exactly with the first nine stones on the breastplate of the high priest in Exodus 28:17-20.
- A tradition predating Rev identified the precious stones with which the New Jerusalem would be built: I am about to set your stones in antimony and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. Isa. 54:11

VI. The New Jerusalem as fulfillment of Israel and the Church

- 12 tribes—12 apostles; 12—144; "I will be their God, they will be my people/children"