

PREFACE

For just about the entirety of this study, we have begun in the OT, and worked our way toward the NT—ferreting out OT prophecy, then concluding with the NT realization of that prophecy. For this our last session, we are going to reverse that. We will begin in the next to last chapter of the Bible.

Please turn to Revelation 21.

It is easy for all of us to be so impressed, so dazzled by the fantastical prospect of an entire, unimaginably vast city descending from heaven to earth, that we miss the real reason for it. We see it as something set apart, unique—and it is true that nothing like this has ever happened before. But, just as any time we isolate one small passage from the rest of God's word, our perception can become skewed. At the very least we can miss the forest for the trees.

The descent of the New Jerusalem will be truly breathtaking.

Read Revelation 21:10-11.

Here is a picture of an entire, huge city radiating the Shekinah glory of God. John grasps at something earthly and familiar with which to describe the luminescent city: the entire city (because it contains the glory of God) looks like a crystal clear jasper. But jasper stone is also known for its many colors—like a crystalline diamond is also colorful because of its facets. In fact, many commentators believe what is being described here is not our common jasper, but a diamond indeed. Whatever the stone, it represents the majesty and glory of God; John had used it before:

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. (Revelation 4:2-3)

The city has a high wall with twelve gates, each made from a single pearl, and there is an angel guard at each gate. The twelve foundations under the walls are comprised of twelve different precious stones. And note how John describes the city itself, inside the walls.

Read Revelation 21:18, 21.

Some scholars interpret “pure gold, like clear glass” to mean gold that is reflecting back the brilliance of the sun, but note v23:

Read Revelation 21:23.

I rather think that the gold possesses a purity heretofore unknown to earth: not 14k, 18k, not just our 24k—which is supposedly “100%” gold—but a gold so pure one can see through it.

But none of this is for us. None of this has anything to do with us. None of this is for our benefit. As now and always, *all of this is for God.* This is all His standard environment; He has just moved His throne room from heaven to earth.

We make a mistake if we dwell on the building materials, geography, and dimensions of the New Jerusalem. And we make an even greater mistake if we become dogmatic about what the mechanics of all this entails or means. What makes this new earth “new” is not that it now has a bright, shining, fantastical city at its heart, but that *righteousness now dwells there*. As was mentioned last week in class, all this represents a return to the earth and its people as originally created and intended: righteous, pure, sinless. Alan F. Johnson puts it this way:

God originally created the earth and heaven to be man’s permanent home. But sin and death entered the world and transformed the earth into a place of rebellion and alienation; it became enemy-occupied territory. But God has been working in salvation history to effect a total reversal of this evil consequence and to liberate earth and heaven from bondage to sin and corruption. The first heaven and earth refers to the whole order of life in the world—an order tainted by sin, death, suffering, and idolatry. John’s emphasis on heaven and earth is not primarily cosmological but moral and spiritual.

THE ETERNAL TEMPLE

This is not about the setting up of Paradise on earth for our pleasure; that is just a pleasant consequence. No, this is all about God and the Lamb, and their glory. It is all about the worship of holy God in His temple.

Yahweh has always had a temple on earth for His worship. Matthew Henry offers an abbreviated account (which we will expand in a moment), but it nicely sets up the idea.

Matthew Henry: The holy place was at first but a tabernacle, mean and movable, showing itself to be short-lived, and not designed to continue always. Why might not this holy place [i.e., the Jerusalem temple], though built of stones, be decently brought to its end, and give place to its betters...? As it was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple, so it is now that the material temple gives way to the spiritual one [i.e., in believers], and so it will be when, at last, the spiritual temple shall give way to the eternal one.

Please turn to Acts 7.

Stephen is making his defense before the Sanhedrin. Included in his account tracing the history of Israel, he speaks of the tabernacle and subsequent Jerusalem temple.

Read Acts 7:44-45.

Then Stephen recounts how David wanted to build a permanent home for the worship of the Lord.

Read Acts 7:46-50.

Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1-2a, almost verbatim.

Thus says the Lord,
"Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.
Where then is a house you could build for Me?
And where is a place that I may rest?
For My hand made all these things,
Thus all these things came into being," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 66:1-2a)

There is a lot going on here—not least, going all the way back to the dedication of the temple by Solomon in 1 Kings 8, and God saying that He'd rather have reverent, sincere devotion and obedience than a fancy man-made house. But for the purpose of this study I want to bring out the connection between heaven and earth, and their role in this saga of God's relationship with man.

As Johnson pointed out, God created earth as a permanent home for man, but not—as we so easily can think—to separate man from Himself. His purpose from the beginning was that, in various forms and means, He, too, would dwell on earth with man. It is true that it was common for earthly rulers to include in their footstools images of their conquered enemies; thus the throne's footstool was a symbol of the king's dominance over his subjects.

But while the Lord God certainly does enjoy dominion and power over man, He does not consider him a conquered enemy. The throne and its footstool are a unit: where one goes the other goes, and our heavenly King is in perpetual contact with both. He rests His feet on earth—by choice. And—astonishingly—He has chosen earth itself for His final throne and place of rest. His last and greatest "temple" will be located here on earth, but He has *always* had a temple here. So let's briefly trace the history of the Lord's temples on earth—beginning all the way back in the Garden.

Eden

A tabernacle or temple, put simply, is a place where one meets with God. And in their original purity, Adam and Eve enjoyed an intimate communion with their Creator as no one has since on earth. Thus the Garden of Eden was His first temple on earth. (Genesis 3:8)

Ad Hoc Temples

Between Eden and Sinai man worshiped God wherever and whenever he could collect stones to build an altar. God had many open-air temples that were built as needed for worshiping and conversing with the Lord. (Genesis 12:7-8)

The Tabernacle (tent)

The temple of Sinai was more formal, but portable. Here was a tent around which all Israel could worship the Lord, but only once per year only one man—the high priest—could enter the holy of holies to do business with very God. (Exodus 30:10)

The Stone Temple

In the days of Solomon the first stone temple was built in Jerusalem (subsequent ones were built by Zerubbabel and Herod). Here the procedure was the same as with the tabernacle: access to God was severely restricted, and attained only after rigorous and bloody sacrificial atonement. (1 Kings 6:11-14)

Christians

With the coming of the Messiah, after His ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the temple of the Lord once again became portable—yet also permanent. Now every individual believer *himself* became a temple; now every individual believer could meet with, listen to, pray to, commune intimately with an attentive, personal God and Savior. Today there are millions of portable temples walking around all over the world. Believers can—any time, anywhere—meet with their God with the same level of profound intimacy once experienced only by the Jewish high priest once a year. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

New Jerusalem

So in the salvation economy of God the temple has taken many forms over the centuries: a garden, a pile of rocks, a tent, a magnificent stone building, and human flesh. But what will be the form of the temple once the new earth and new Jerusalem are in place? What will be the form of the *eternal* temple? There are several answers to this.

Read Revelation 21:22.

- The first answer is that in the New Jerusalem there will be no need of a temple. When you've got the Lord God Himself dwelling in your midst, why would you need a building in which to worship Him. As to the need for a physical structure, so long as there was sin in the world, a temple was necessary for a place where God's righteousness and truth stood in contrast to everything about it. But in the New Jerusalem this symbol will no longer be necessary.
- However, as the text says, there actually *is* a temple: the eternal temple is now, literally, "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb." We no longer need to conjure the imagery in our mind when we wish to worship and commune with Him: *there He is!*
- In a sense (as Johnson points out), the entire city is the temple, since its dimensions are patterned after the Most Holy Place (v16).

REST

There is one more aspect of the New Jerusalem we perhaps miss. Over the last twenty-six sessions we have traced the presence, the work of Christ from the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the establishment of the the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. We have covered

- His pre-incarnate visitations;
- His lineage and life;
- His roles as prophet, priest and king;
- His life and ministry (work); and
- His role during the end times.

Now, it is true that the Son and the Father are omnipotent, but in some mysterious sense they also “rest” (*shabat* (shaw-bawth’))—which can mean to repose, or just stop working. To put it in crass human terms, from the moment of creation to the yet-future new earth, the Godhead has been hard at it. Now, at the end of all things, with a sinless eternity established, they can take their *shabat*.

Regarding Yahweh, God the Father,

Read Psalm 132:13-14.

Regarding the Christ,

Read Isaiah 11:10.

Again speaking from a human perspective, a well-earned rest indeed.

Acts 7:44-50

44 “Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.
 45 “And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David.
 46 “David found favor in God’s sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.
 47 “But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.
 48 “However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says:
 49 ‘Heaven is My throne,
 And earth is the footstool of my feet;
 What kind of house will you build for me?’ says the Lord
 ‘Or what place is there for My repose?
 50 Was it not My hand which made all these things?’”

Isaiah 66:1-2a

Thus says the Lord,
 “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.
 Where then is a house you could build for Me?
 And where is a place that I may rest?
 For My hand made all these things,
 Thus all these things came into being,” declares the Lord.

A New Earthly Temple (1)

Revelation 21:1-27

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.
 2 **And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.**
 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “**Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,**
 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”
 5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said*, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”
 6 Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.
 7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.
 8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”
 9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”
 10 **And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,**
 11 **having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.**
 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.
 13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.

Prophecy	Christ in the OT	Fulfillment or Reference
<p style="text-align: center;">Psalms 132:13-14</p> <p>13 For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. 14 “This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Isaiah 11:10</p> <p>Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>A New Earthly Temple (2)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Revelation 21:1-27 (continued)</p> <p>14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. 16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. 18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcidony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.</p>
<p><i>A tabernacle or temple, put simply, is a place where one meets with God.</i></p> <p>Eden They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:88)</p> <p>Ad Hoc Temples The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. (Genesis 12:7-8)</p> <p>The Tabernacle (tent) “Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the Lord.” (Exodus 30:10)</p> <p>The Stone Temple Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon saying, “Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. “I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.” So Solomon built the house and finished it. (1 Kings 6:11-14)</p> <p>Christians Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2 Corinthians 6:16)</p>		