Fulfilled Prophecies

The Jerusalem Above Was Already Their Mother



By Dan Maines

The Jerusalem Above Was Already Their Mother

Introduction

† One of the clearest demonstrations that the New Jerusalem isn't a future physical city is found in the words of Paul and the writer of Hebrews. Both described the heavenly Jerusalem as a present reality for believers living in the first century.

† Paul declared that the Jerusalem above was already their mother, while Hebrews declared that believers had already come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. Neither writer described a city that would first become available thousands of

years later (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22).
† Revelation 21 describes that same heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. The difference isn't that Paul and Hebrews were describing one city while John was describing another. They were describing the same New Covenant reality from different perspectives (Revelation 21:2-3).
† The question isn't whether the New Jerusalem exists today. Scripture establishes that it does. The question is how its first-century existence relates to the completion of the Old Covenant age in AD 70 (Hebrews 8:13; Revelation 21:1-3).

Galatians 4:26
But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.
† Paul didn't say the Jerusalem above would become their mother someday. He said she was already their mother. His present-tense declaration identified the heavenly Jerusalem as the covenant home of believers in Christ (Philippians 3:20).
† The Jerusalem above represented freedom through the New Covenant, not continued bondage under the Law of Moses. Believers were already children of the promise through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).
† Paul's declaration makes it impossible to argue that the heavenly Jerusalem didn't exist until some future event. Its identity was already established, even while the Old Covenant system was approaching its final removal (Hebrews 8:13).

Galatians 4:24-25
This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.
† Paul explicitly identified the two women as two covenants. Hagar represented the covenant established at Mount Sinai, while Sarah represented the promise fulfilled through Christ (Galatians 4:28, 31).
† The earthly Jerusalem belonged to the covenant of bondage

because its religious system continued under the Law of Moses. The heavenly Jerusalem represented the freedom already available through the New Covenant (Galatians 5:1).
† This comparison wasn't about replacing one geographical city with another geographical city. It concerned the transition between two covenant administrations, one passing away and the other established through Christ (2 Corinthians 3:6-11).
† The earthly Jerusalem still existed when Paul wrote, but it no longer defined the people of God. Their identity came through Christ, not through the physical temple, ancestry, or the Mosaic covenant (Ephesians 2:14-18).

Galatians 4:28-31
And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN. So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.
† Paul identified believers as children of promise before Jerusalem's destruction. Their New Covenant identity wasn't waiting for AD 70 to begin (Romans 8:15-17).
† The command to cast out the slave woman and her son pointed toward the removal of the covenant system that could no longer share the inheritance with the children of promise (Hebrews 8:13).
† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 publicly demonstrated the final removal of the Old Covenant order. The temple, priesthood, and sacrificial system could no longer function as the center of covenant worship (Hebrews 10:9-14).
† The inheritance belonged to those in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. The heavenly Jerusalem was their mother because they belonged to the promise fulfilled in Him (Galatians 3:28-29).

Hebrews 12:22-23
But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
† Hebrews didn't say believers would eventually come to Mount Zion. It declared that they had already come to the heavenly Jerusalem. This was their present covenant standing through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:6, 19).
† Mount Zion wasn't being presented as a future earthly destination. It represented access to the living God through the New Covenant and the heavenly assembly of His people (Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The heavenly Jerusalem was already the city of the living God. Believers weren't waiting for a physical city to descend before they could belong to God's household (Ephesians 2:19-22).
† This passage directly connects the heavenly city with the church of the firstborn. The New Jerusalem is inseparable from the redeemed people who belong to Christ (Revelation 21:9-10).

Hebrews 12:18-21
For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling.
† The writer contrasted Mount Sinai with Mount Zion. Sinai represented the terrifying establishment of the Old Covenant, while Zion represented the access believers possessed through Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16).
† The contrast wasn't between two future physical mountains. It

was between the covenant of bondage and the covenant of freedom already established through Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:7-11).
† Under the Old Covenant, the people couldn't approach God's presence freely. Through Christ, believers received access to the Father by one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18).
† The heavenly Jerusalem was therefore a present spiritual and covenant reality, not a postponed geographical relocation (John 4:21-24).

Hebrews 12:26-28
And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN. This expression, Yet once more, denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;
† The writer explained that the things capable of being shaken were being removed so that the unshakable kingdom would remain. This concerned the passing covenant order and the permanence of Christ's kingdom (Hebrews 8:13).
† Notice that believers were already receiving the kingdom. The New Covenant kingdom wasn't waiting for a future earthly millennium or the destruction of the physical universe (Colossians 1:13).
† The removal of the Old Covenant order reached its historical conclusion with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. The kingdom established through Christ remained because it wasn't dependent upon an earthly temple (Daniel 7:13-14).
† The heavenly Jerusalem belonged to that unshakable kingdom. Its permanence rested upon Christ's completed work, not the survival of the earthly city (Luke 1:32-33).

Hebrews 13:14
For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.
† This verse doesn't contradict the earlier declaration that believers had already come to the heavenly Jerusalem. They already possessed access to the heavenly city while awaiting the complete removal of the Old Covenant order (Hebrews 12:22-28).
† The earthly Jerusalem wasn't their permanent covenant home. Its temple and religious institutions were approaching judgment, just as Jesus had announced (Matthew 24:1-2).
† The city they sought was the heavenly Jerusalem already identified as their covenant destination. Its anticipated coming concerned the completed manifestation of the New Covenant order, not the construction of another physical city (Revelation 21:2-3).
† Present participation and anticipated consummation weren't contradictions. Believers already belonged to Christ's kingdom while the former covenant administration was passing away (Hebrews 8:13).

Revelation 21:1-3
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. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 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,
† John saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, but Paul had already identified the Jerusalem above as the mother of believers. These passages describe the same heavenly covenant reality (Galatians 4:26).
† Hebrews had already declared that believers had come to the heavenly Jerusalem. Revelation therefore wasn't introducing an entirely different city that wouldn't exist until thousands of years

later (Hebrews 12:22-23).
† The new heaven and new earth represented the completed New Covenant order replacing the former covenant world. Isaiah had already connected the creation of new heavens and a new earth with Jerusalem's restoration and rejoicing (Isaiah 65:17-19).
† The city descending from heaven represented God's dwelling being established among His redeemed people. The emphasis was covenant fellowship, not a literal city traveling through the atmosphere (2 Corinthians 6:16).
† The fulfillment reached its covenant completion in AD 70 when the Old Covenant system was finally removed. What believers had already entered through Christ stood revealed as the permanent order of God's kingdom (Hebrews 12:26-28).

Revelation 21:9-10
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. 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,
† The angel promised to show John the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and then showed him the holy city. Scripture itself connects the city's identity with Christ's redeemed people (Ephesians 5:25-27).
† The bride wasn't a collection of physical buildings. She represented the people united to Christ through the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 11:2).
† This explains why the Jerusalem above could already be called their mother. The imagery identifies the covenant community and its heavenly identity rather than a physical location (Galatians 4:26).
† The marriage imagery also explains the relationship between what believers already possessed and what Revelation anticipated. The church already belonged to Christ while awaiting the full covenant consummation portrayed in John's

vision (Revelation 19:7-9).

Revelation 21:22-23
I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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.
† The absence of a temple is essential to understanding the New Jerusalem. God's presence is no longer represented by a separate sanctuary because believers have direct access through Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22).
† The sun and moon imagery communicates the sufficiency of God's glory and the Lamb's light. It doesn't require the disappearance of the physical sun or moon (Isaiah 60:19-20).
† The earthly temple's destruction in AD 70 demonstrated that the former sanctuary was no longer necessary. Christ Himself is the fulfillment of what the temple represented (John 2:19-21).
† The heavenly Jerusalem doesn't depend upon earthly geography, a restored temple, or another sacrificial system. God's people are His dwelling place through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Revelation 21:25-27
In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 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.
† The open gates reveal the continuing accessibility of the New Jerusalem. The nations are invited into the blessings of God's kingdom through Christ (Isaiah 60:11).
† The distinction between those inside and outside demonstrates that the vision isn't describing the disappearance of humanity or the destruction of the physical earth (Revelation 22:14-15).
† Entrance into the city belongs to those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Citizenship is determined by

belonging to Christ, not by national ancestry or earthly residence (Philippians 3:20).
† The gates remain open because the completed New Covenant continues to welcome those who come to Christ in faith (Revelation 22:17).

Revelation 22:14-17
Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.
† The final invitation of Revelation confirms that the New Jerusalem is the place of covenant life available through Jesus Christ. The Spirit and the bride continue to invite the thirsty to come (John 7:37-39).
† The tree of life represents the restored access to life that was lost through Adam and fulfilled through Christ (Genesis 3:22-24; 1 Corinthians 15:22).
† The invitation doesn't require believers to wait for another prophetic fulfillment. The New Covenant is established, Christ reigns, and the water of life is freely available (John 4:13-14).
† The Jerusalem above remains the mother of God's people because everyone who belongs to Christ shares in the inheritance of the promise (Galatians 3:29).

Historical References
† Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-7, recorded the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the devastation that accompanied the collapse of the Jewish nation's religious center in AD 70.
† Josephus described the burning of the temple and the

destruction of Jerusalem's sacred buildings. His account provides historical evidence for the removal of the earthly sanctuary that had defined Old Covenant worship (Matthew 24:1-2).
† Tacitus, Histories 5.10-13, described the Roman campaign against Jerusalem and the conditions surrounding the city's siege. His account independently confirms the historical setting of Jerusalem's destruction.
† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5-7, connected the destruction of Jerusalem with the judgment announced by Jesus and preserved the tradition that Christians departed Jerusalem before its destruction (Luke 21:20-22).
† These historical writers don't establish the theological identity of the New Jerusalem. Scripture establishes that identity. Their accounts confirm the historical destruction of the earthly city and temple during the first century.

How It Applies To Us Today
† We aren't waiting for the heavenly Jerusalem to become our mother. Everyone who belongs to Christ is already a child of the promise and a citizen of the heavenly kingdom (Galatians 3:26-29; Philippians 3:20).
† We don't need a rebuilt temple, another priesthood, or a restored Mosaic covenant. Jesus is our High Priest, and through Him we've received direct access to the Father (Hebrews 4:14-16; Ephesians 2:18).
† We aren't traveling toward a future geographical Jerusalem to find God's presence. We've already come to Mount Zion through Christ, and God dwells among His people through the Spirit (Hebrews 12:22; Ephesians 2:21-22).
† We don't have to wait for another destruction of heaven and earth before experiencing the blessings of the New Covenant. The former covenant order has passed away, and the kingdom of Christ remains (Hebrews 8:13; 12:28).
† Our responsibility isn't to watch for another prophetic Jerusalem. It's to proclaim the completed work of Christ and invite others to receive the water of life freely (Revelation

22:17).
† The heavenly Jerusalem isn't merely our future hope. It's our present covenant home, and its gates remain open to those who come to Christ (Galatians 4:26; Revelation 21:25).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Was the heavenly Jerusalem already in existence when Paul wrote Galatians?
A: Yes. Paul explicitly declared that the Jerusalem above was already their mother. He identified a present covenant relationship, not a city that would first exist thousands of years later (Galatians 4:26).
Q: Did the writer of Hebrews say believers would someday come to Mount Zion?
A: No. He declared that they had already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. Their access to God through Christ was already established (Hebrews 12:22-23).
Q: If believers had already come to the heavenly Jerusalem, why did Revelation describe it coming down from heaven?
A: Revelation portrayed the covenant consummation of what Christ had already established. The city already existed as the heavenly home of God's people, while its descent symbolized the completed establishment of God's dwelling with His redeemed people (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2-3).
Q: Does Revelation 21 describe a literal city descending from the sky?
A: No. The angel identified the city as the bride, the wife of the Lamb. The imagery describes God's redeemed covenant people and His dwelling among them (Revelation 21:9-10; Ephesians 5:25-27).
Q: Why did Hebrews say believers were still seeking the city to come?
A: They already had access to the heavenly Jerusalem, but the Old Covenant order hadn't yet reached its final historical removal. The city to come represented the permanent New Covenant reality whose consummation they anticipated

(Hebrews 12:22-28; 13:14).
Q: Did AD 70 create the New Jerusalem?
A: No. Christ had already established the New Covenant, and believers already belonged to the heavenly Jerusalem. AD 70 marked the final removal of the former covenant system, not the beginning of the heavenly city's existence (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 8:13; 12:22).
Q: Is the New Jerusalem available to believers today?
A: Yes. Through Christ, believers belong to God's household and have access to the Father. The gates remain open, and the invitation to receive the water of life continues (Ephesians 2:18-22; Revelation 21:25; 22:17).
Q: Does this mean the physical earth must eventually be destroyed?
A: No. The New Jerusalem imagery concerns God's covenant dwelling among His people. Scripture also declares that the earth remains, while the prophetic new creation language describes the restoration accomplished through Christ (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Isaiah 65:17-19; Revelation 21:1-3).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
© Fulfilled Prophecies - Dan Maines.

Source Index
† Galatians 4:26; Galatians 4:24-25; Galatians 4:28-31; Hebrews 12:22-23; Hebrews 12:18-21; Hebrews 12:26-28; Hebrews 13:14; Revelation 21:1-3; Revelation 21:9-10; Revelation 21:22-23; Revelation 21:25-27; Revelation 22:14-17
† Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories 5.10-13; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5-7

Share on Facebook

Links

Facebook Link

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/posts/2159357198285743/

Fulfilled Prophecies https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/

Dan Maines

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1349070089314462/user/100001027365819/

You may share this article freely without permission as long as you include credit to Dan Maines and/or a link to the Fulfilled Prophecies Group.