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Revelation 21 The New Heaven And The New Earth



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Revelation 21 reveals the final vision of covenant fulfillment. After the judgment of Babylon and the passing of the old covenant order, John is shown the completed reality of God's new creation.

† The language of new heaven and new earth is prophetic covenant language used throughout the Old Testament to

describe the establishment of a new covenant order. The focus is not the destruction of the physical universe but the passing of the old covenant system centered in Jerusalem and the temple.

† When Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in AD 70, the old covenant world came to its end. What John sees here is the fully revealed new covenant kingdom where God permanently dwells with His people.

Revelation 21:1

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.

† The passing of the first heaven and earth refers to the end of the old covenant order that revolved around the temple, sacrifices, and priesthood.

† The prophets used heaven and earth language to describe covenant systems. The old covenant world centered in Jerusalem has now passed away and the new covenant world has fully arrived.

† The statement there is no longer any sea represents the removal of separation and chaos. The sea often symbolized the nations and disorder, but in the new covenant the barrier between peoples has been removed through Christ.

† Hebrews 12:26-28 explains that God would once more shake heaven and earth so that what can be shaken would be removed and what cannot be shaken would remain. That shaking refers to the removal of the old covenant system and the establishment of the unshakable kingdom.

Revelation 21:2

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her

husband.

† The New Jerusalem is clearly identified as the bride of Christ, showing that this city represents the people of God rather than a literal city.

† The church is described as the bride throughout Scripture, meaning the covenant community redeemed by Christ.

† The city coming down from heaven shows that the church originates from God. The kingdom is established by divine authority and not by earthly power.

† Galatians 4:26 identifies the Jerusalem above as our mother, showing that the heavenly Jerusalem represents the covenant people of God rather than a literal future city.

Revelation 21:3-4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

† This fulfills the covenant promise that God would dwell among His people and walk among them as their God.

† The removal of death reflects the end of covenant separation from God. Through Christ eternal life is secured for His people.

† The first things passing away refers to the old covenant world of temple sacrifices and priesthood that ended when Jerusalem fell.

Revelation 21:5-6

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." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give water to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life, without cost."

† God declares that the covenant transformation is complete and the new covenant world is fully established.

† The words it is done reflect the completion of God's redemptive plan through Christ.

† The water of life represents the free gift of eternal life offered to all who come to Christ.

Revelation 21:7-8

The one who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually 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.

† The inheritance of the kingdom belongs to those who remain faithful to Christ.

† The lake of fire represents the final covenant judgment against God's enemies.

† The contrast shows that the blessings of the new covenant belong only to those who overcome through faith.

Revelation 21:9-11

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, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very valuable stone, like a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

† The angel directly identifies the city as the bride of the Lamb, proving that the city represents the redeemed people of God.

† The brilliance of the city symbolizes the glory and righteousness given to the church through Christ.

† The imagery reflects the beauty and purity of the covenant community.

Revelation 21:12-14

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on the gates, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

† The tribes of Israel and the apostles together represent the unity of God's people from both covenants.

† The imagery shows that the promises given to Israel are fulfilled in the church.

† The gates facing every direction symbolize that people from every nation now have access to the covenant kingdom.

Revelation 21:15-17

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 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, twelve thousand stadia; its

length, width, and height are equal. And he measured its wall, 144 cubits, by human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.

† The cube shape reflects the design of the Most Holy Place in the temple.

† This imagery shows that God's entire people now function as the holy dwelling place of God.

† The measurements symbolize completeness and perfection in the covenant community.

Revelation 21:18-21

The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were decorated with every kind of precious stone. 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.

† The precious stones symbolize beauty, purity, and permanence.

† The imagery shows the glory of God's redeemed people.

† Unlike the earthly Jerusalem that rejected Christ, the New Jerusalem is incorruptible.

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 illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

† The absence of a temple shows that the old covenant temple system has ended permanently.

† God's presence now dwells directly among His people.

† Christ Himself is the light of the covenant city.

† Jesus declared that true worship would no longer be tied to a physical location but would be in spirit and truth, showing that God's presence would dwell directly with His people.

Revelation 21:24-26

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

† The open gates symbolize the universal invitation of the gospel.

† The nations walking by its light show that the covenant kingdom includes people from every nation.

† The glory of the nations entering the city reflects the worldwide reach of Christ's kingdom.

† This fulfills the promise that the nations would come to the light of God's kingdom and share in the blessings of the covenant.

Revelation 21:27

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.

† The covenant city is holy and undefiled because it represents God's redeemed people.

† Only those belonging to Christ are part of this covenant community.

† The book of life represents the secure identity of those redeemed by the Lamb.

Historical References

† Eusebius wrote that the fall of Jerusalem fulfilled Christ's prophecies and marked the end of the temple-centered covenant order.

† Irenaeus described the church as the dwelling place of God among men.

† Justin Martyr taught that believers in Christ are the true heirs of God's promises.

† Tertullian wrote that the church is the true temple of God, showing that God's dwelling is among His people rather than in a physical building.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Believers already belong to the New Jerusalem through Christ.

† God's presence now dwells with His people rather than in a physical temple.

† The kingdom of God continues to grow as the gospel spreads among the nations.

† Our identity is rooted in the eternal covenant community established by Christ.

Q & A Appendix

Q If the new heaven and new earth are covenantal, why is the language so cosmic?

A Prophetic writings regularly used cosmic imagery to describe covenant changes and the rise or fall of covenant orders.

Q How do we know the New Jerusalem represents the church?

A Scripture consistently identifies God's redeemed people as the bride of Christ, and the city is directly called the bride of the Lamb.

Q Why is there no temple in the New Jerusalem?

A Because God's presence now dwells directly with His people through Christ.

Q If Revelation 21 is fulfilled, why does the world still have suffering and death?

A Revelation 21 describes the end of covenant death and separation from God. Through Christ the power of death has been defeated and believers now share in eternal life.

Q Futurists say Revelation 21 must be future because it describes a new heaven and earth. How do we know it refers to covenant change instead of the physical universe?

A The Bible repeatedly uses heaven and earth language for covenant systems. When God established Israel, He spoke of planting the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth. The New Testament explains that the old covenant heaven and earth would be shaken and removed so that the unshakable kingdom would remain.

Q If the New Jerusalem is the church, why is it described as a city with walls, gates, and measurements?

A Revelation is written in symbolic prophetic imagery. The walls, gates, and measurements represent the structure, protection, and completeness of God's covenant people. The twelve tribes and twelve apostles show the unity of God's people from both covenants forming one city.

Q Why does Revelation say the nations walk in the light of the city if it is the church?

A The church carries the light of Christ into the world. As the gospel spreads, the nations walk in that light and enter the covenant community through faith in Christ. The imagery shows the worldwide expansion of God's kingdom.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Revelation 21; Isaiah 54:11-12; Isaiah 60:11; Isaiah 65:17; Leviticus 26:11-12; 1 Kings 6:20; John 8:12; John 4:21-24; Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:26-28; Hebrews 12:22; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Philippians 4:3

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History; Irenaeus, Against Heresies; Justin Martyr, Dialogue With Trypho; Tertullian, Against Marcion

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