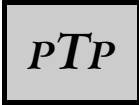


The New Jerusalem



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The New Jerusalem:

A Review of a Paper So Entitled in the July and August Numbers {1873} of the “Golden Lamp”¹

By J. A. T.

{Things in braces { } have been added by the editor.}

The system of the writer has at least the merit of being clearly presented to us.

Nothing can be more flagrantly inconsistent than to assert that all the prophecies concerning Israel in the Old Testament are to be understood literally, and at the same time to teach that this chapter must be explained away and spiritualized (p. 190).

We are to understand the contents of Rev. 21, 22, literally. To interpret them as spiritual things communicated to us in figure is to explain away.

Is this, then, the principle on which the Book of the Revelation is to be understood? or is it possible to deny that the general scope of it is symbolic? When, then, are we to begin to take it literally? If it be supposed that what is addressed to or spoken of the church must be literal, the writer himself maintains the contrary. For, in speaking of Rev. 2, 3, he says,

Every figure in these epistles to the seven churches is of a Jewish and Old Testament cast and character (p. 216).

There are, then, figures in the book; and when the churches to whom as a whole it is addressed are specifically the matter in hand, every figure is of Jewish and Old Testament cast and character. There is nothing inconsistent, then, as to the form in which the truth is communicated, if the church be still the subject matter in chapters 21 and 22, although it be cast in Jewish figures. On the contrary, I think it will be found that nothing could be “more beautifully in harmony with what scripture would lead us to expect.” Nor need the most earnest advocate of the literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy for the Jews fear that this will be touched, save to confirm it by the use of the realities of their coming earthly glory, as figures of a heavenly glory beyond and above theirs.

1. {The Golden Lamp was an Open Brethren periodical.}

I will now ask any simple Christian to read again the description of the glorious city in Rev. 21 and 22, and tell me if it conveys to his mind the idea of what is material; and, if he is still in doubt, to turn to page 219 of this paper, and see what materialism involves the writer in.

As to its shape and form, we cannot pretend to any degree of certainty, but, from the description, it would seem to be material, to be in the form of a lofty pyramid, of which the height to the top-stone, &c. The top-stone, the chief cornerstone, will crown the pyramidal city, and forming thus the center in which all its lines shall meet, will, with exquisite suitability, form the material representation and glorious monument of the exalted living stone.

A material inhabited city in the shape of a pyramid! And this is Rev. 21 “in its natural sense!” But v. 16 will settle this point for a mind subject to scripture.

The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal:

the city is presented as a cube. What could be more evidently symbol, whatever the thing symbolized? For this we must take the scripture before us, and see if it will not be its own interpreter.

But, first, the structure of this part of the prophecy calls for attention, as evidently forming an important feature in the interpretation of it. What is the reason of the break at the end of Rev. 21:8? If there be none, and the course of the prophecy be simply continuous, why is it said at this point,

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues?

Has not such introduction of angel messengers been previously marked in the book, and generally connected with some change or first beginning made in the communication of it? (See Rev. 5:2; 7:12; 8:23; 10:1; 14, 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; 21:1.) Is there nothing to arrest the careful reader *here*? -- no break or change indicated? Why, too, one of these *particular angels*, and the similarity of the circumstances under which John was shown the mystery of the woman and the beast that carried her, in Rev. 17? Are not these things significant at least, and likely to bear on the right understanding of the passage? All is passed over without notice by the writer.

It is time we should inquire what may be their import. The historic sequence of the first eight verses of this chapter, with the events described in chapter 20, may be assumed as unquestioned. The

great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them,

introduces naturally “a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21), for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” It is the eternal state, the distinguishing characteristics of which are given us in these verses. Let us weigh

them well. And first and most marked of all as to God Himself. We know something of the immensity involved in *the way* in which God is revealed and known. This forms, and contains in itself, the blessing of His people in every age. God speaks of it to Moses:

I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them (Ex. 6:3).

This was reserved as the order of Israel's blessing. Full and rich as were the resources of faith in these early days -- found in God revealed as Almighty, and Jehovah in unchanging faithfulness -- it was not enough for Him, in the full knowledge of and nearness to Himself into which He would bring His people. Even "I am that I am" was involved in inexplicable mystery that none could fathom; till He came who alone could tell it out -- the Word that was with God, that was God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

It was now the only-begotten Son telling out all that was in the bosom of the Father, to bring us into relationship with Him as His children. And when He had finished the work by which God was perfectly glorified in His own nature, and, as to sin, He could say,

I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God {John 20:17},

and send down the Holy Ghost to be the power in our hearts of a relationship so intimate and blessed {Acts 2:32, 33}. Again, the name involves the blessing, and "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" contains in it all the richest possible, as it is ours thus to know Him for ever.

But not so does the Revelation give Him to us; for Christianity, *as such*, is not the subject of it, nor the revelation of God that forms it. It is the Son of man as judge first, and the time was come that judgment should begin at the house of God. Thus we have, in Rev. 4, the glory of God in creatorship and providence, Rev. 5 bringing out the title of the Lamb to the inheritance on the ground of redemption; then the judgments that put Him in possession of it, till He comes Himself to take possession in Rev. 19. This gives its character to the revelation of God in the millennium, and the blessing of that glorious era. It is the direct government of the throne, the Lamb reigning in manifested glory. See Rev. 5, where His title is celebrated in heavenly praise before the hour of actual triumph is looked at as come.

Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.

So again, when in Rev. 7:9-17 we are carried on to the scenes of the millennial

joy:

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall tabernacle over them, . . . the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, &c.

See also Rev. 14:1-4; 19:6-9. Everywhere it is God and the Lamb that marks the blessing of that day. And

he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet: the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death {1 Cor. 15:26}.

Accordingly the destruction of death, when the resurrection of judgment has made the separation of body and spirit no longer the existing state of any one, is given us in Rev. 20:14. But now what follows in the passage I have referred to, for the expressed order in which these closing events of time take place?

Then cometh the end, when he delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father. When he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power . . . and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under Him, *that God may be all in all* {1 Cor. 15:28}.

The dispensation of the fulness of times {Eph. 1:10; i.e., the millennium} had come; all things in heaven and earth had been headed up in the once despised Nazarene, everything laid low at His feet. But what is it for? That He should give up the universal sovereignty as man. The Son also Himself became subject unto Him that put all things under Him, in order that God should be all in all. Exactly in accordance with this, in the description of the eternal state given us in the opening verses of our chapter {Rev. 21:1-8}, God is revealed as all in all.

Behold, the tabernacle of *God is with men*, and *he* will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and *God himself* shall be with them, *and be their God*.

This is the sum of eternal blessing. What for us could go beyond God thus known, and dwelling with His people? Is it not the very point to which we are already brought by faith in the Epistle to the Romans, as the climax of our joy? See Rom. 5:1-10; and then v. 11,

Not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.

So also in 2 Cor. 5:17, 18, it is similarly realized as the fruit of the new creation ground on which we are brought in Christ --

Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new; and *all things are of God*, who hath reconciled us *to Himself* by Jesus Christ.

This, then, is the brightest distinguishing feature of the new heavens and the new earth, when "the former things are passed away, and He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." God is all in all.

But hardly less marked as to man's state is the fact that all the distinctions that came in by sin in time and upon the earth are lost. We hear no more of nations. In the new creation and therefore already to faith

there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10, 11).

"The people are one," as at the first before man's pretension and pride of unity forced God to scatter and divide. One distinction alone remains,

the tabernacle of God is with men {Rev. 21:3}.

But this was not the fruit of sin in the flesh in time, but of the counsels of God before the world was. It is the church: not (as it is found only in Paul's epistles) the body of Christ, but in a twofold relationship: to Christ, as the bride adorned for her husband; and to God, as His tabernacle, the eternal dwelling-place of His glory.² Both are found in Ephesians: the first in connection with Christ's love that is preparing for presentation to Himself in glory all that He can delight in, Eph. 5:25-27, and the second in Eph 2:21, 22, when all the building fitly framed together is growing unto a holy temple in the Lord -- the result reached for both in Rev. 21. The {earthly} kingdom was prepared for the blessed heirs of it "from the foundation of the world," and when set up will last as long as time lasts (see Psa. 89:4, 27-37); but the church belongs to eternity, according as He has chosen us in Him *before* the foundation of the world. I shall have to refer again to the subject of the giving up of the kingdom, but now pass on to other characteristics of the eternal state.

"There was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1), no part of the new creation that is not brought into order and blessing.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain {Rev. 21:4}.

God rests at last, when there was fully come the declared and precious object of the manifestation of the Son. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." It {sin} was clean gone now. No trail of the serpent defiled the new creation. God had gone to the source of all that brought in sorrow, and swept it away in the judgment of the cross. The former things were passed away. The God, who had had to drive out the man and woman in tears from the Eden He had made for unfallen creatures, is able to meet us on the threshold of a new heaven and a new earth as the wiper away of all tears from our eyes.

2. {Eph. 3:21 declares the distinct, eternal place that the church has.}

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end {Rev. 21:5}.

What words could more solemnly close the eventful history of time, wherein God had used the proved ruin of man to bring out to His own infinite glory what He Himself is, to be the fountain of eternal flowings of refreshment for His people.

I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely {Rev. 21:6}.

Already we are at the source. He could say who came to make Him known, the water that I shall give shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life {John 4:14}.

Here is the full realization of it in eternity.

He that overcometh shall inherit *these* things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son {Rev. 21:7}.

Such is the close of the conflict, and such the position and portion of the overcomer in God's own presence and blessing. Then one last word that fixes in terrible contrast the eternal and unalterable doom of the lost that have "their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Here the veil of the future, lifted by Revelation, drops; as well it may. The historic sequence of events has been opened out prophetically to its term. The waves of succeeding ages break no longer on the shores of time. This is eternity, and then beyond the utmost bound of the everlasting hills faith knows its portion.

Yet once again the veil is lifted, and a scene of great glory is opened to us -- some of the elements of it such as have been already before us in the description of the eternal state, yet not without sufficient to distinguish it, as we shall see -- with even points of contrast. If it be so, what is the glory that is portrayed from Rev. 21:9 to Rev. 22:5? We must look at it a little in detail, for we are told "there is an absence of all the church's distinctive characteristics" (p. 216).

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain {Rev. 21:9, 10}.

Now, surely it is not unworthy of notice that at this point the position of John changes. It is not often that it is so ordered in the course of the communications made to him, yet never, we may safely say, without design and fitness; though whether we are able to discern it is another thing. But is an interpretation of the passage likely to be the true one that makes nothing of such a change? Nay, that has for its principle that there is none, but that in orderly connection of the

parts, the scene is one in Rev. 21 - 22:5, and John is carried away in spirit to a great and high mountain? At Rev. 21:10 too he shows what he has already seen and described from vv. 1-8. This is the system of the paper (see p. 219, where the argument is founded on it). “Thus we see the millennial city and earth are at end *before* this city descends, which is confirmed by the word that there shall be no more death . . . So also there shall be no sun, and yet no night.”

But I turn to the word, for true light we want, which is surely not lacking in it. The introduction seems to carry us back to Rev. 17. This is certainly a striking parallel in the way John was shown the very different scenes before him there.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters . . . So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness {Rev. 17:1, 3}.

Then it was to see the unholy alliance of the apostate church with the world, in the last form the Gentile dominion assumes, that is, the revived Roman empire. How suited the wilderness, from which John looks out on the moral chaos where no fruit of the life of Christ was found to be fruit for good. Yet was there never to be a true connection of the church with the world? Absolutely none with the world *as it is*, out of which Christ is rejected.

They are not of the world, *even as I* am not of the world {John 17:14}.

But what when the kingdom of this world becomes the Lord's, and He sits on the throne of His glory? We shall reign with Him. Scripture is perfectly clear as to this, in spite of our author, who asks, “What has the church to do with the new earth; is not heaven, with the many mansions now being prepared, ³ her home?” It tells us,

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him {2 Tim. 2:12}.

Again,

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Rev. 3: 21).

If it said, This is in the millennial earth, and not the new earth, we have seen the church's connection with the latter as the tabernacle or dwelling-place of God.

3. {“Mansions” is “abodes,” i.e., *dwelling places*, i.e., dwelling *in nearness to the Father*. Moreover, the place was prepared the moment the Man, victorious over sin and death and hell, entered that place of glory. There is no process of getting the place ready. Let us divest ourselves of thinking about this in a geographical and spatial way!}

The truth is, that much of the confusion of this paper is to be traced to the mistaken thought of limiting the truth of the church to that which is specially revealed of it through Paul, that is, its unity as the body of Christ. Yet even there, as we have seen, it is also the temple of God. But besides what the church is corporately, there is, first and highest of all, the relationships in which those who compose it stand individually with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, as Eph. 1 unfolds them to us. It is full association with Him in all that He has entered into as man with His Father and God. Hence His place always gives us ours. If hidden now, our life is hid with Him in God: if about to be manifested, then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory. In fact, He comes “to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:10},” in bright contrast to the day when He came alone, and men “saw no beauty in him that they should desire him.” As the prism catches the ray that falls upon it, and, breaking it up into its several colors, reflects it thus in its varied beauty and perfection; so will the church be to Christ in the coming day of manifested glory.

This is what is given us in the description before us, not the home of the Father and the Son, the home of our hearts even now in a love that goes beyond the glory, because the glory can be displayed, but the love never, but the displayed glory of the kingdom, and the church’s necessary and blessed association with Christ in it, the heavenly Eve of the last Adam heir sharer with Him of it all. It is especially the heavenly part of it, where the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:43). But there is seen church and state in true connection with one another, when it is no longer Satan’s skill in counterfeit, but the fulfilment of the purpose of God for the glory of His Christ. We see thus the reason of the link between Rev. 21 and 22, if only to bring out the contrast of the things that are depicted. And do we not enter in some little measure into the wisdom and preciousness of the grace that does not give us the glorious espousal of the church, as in Rev. 19, until the overthrow in judgment of that which had held the place and profession of the Bride {the whore of Rev. 17} in the awful Satanic counterfeit? nor finally close the Revelation without the true and recognized place of the church in the kingdom, when the time had come for it, according to God? What more in keeping too, than that one of the angels of the vials, by which judgment was executed, should be chosen to show John the full positive result in glory and blessing?

May I ask here what could be the meaning of one of the *vial* angels being thus introduced according to the scheme of interpretation (if so it can be called) that I am examining? According to the paper this {i.e., Rev. 21:10-27} is eternity; and therefore the thousand years of the kingdom have intervened between the pouring out of the vials of wrath and the glory here set out before

John. Why this link taken up with events of time so long past?

But let us look at the details presented to us. John is summoned to behold the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Now this is not the first mention of her in what I conceive to be the order of the prophecy. She has been already introduced as such in Rev. 19, in the day of her public espousal in glory. And this our author fully recognizes. The wife who had made herself ready in Rev. 19, "the Lamb's wife, so loved, betrothed, and married, we see in her eternal home" in Rev. 21. This is important. We may turn to Rev. 19. (unnoticed in the paper save in this cursory way), for if the bride of the Lamb be Israel in Rev. 21, it must be Israel in Rev. 19. Now I maintain that the terms of the description in the latter preclude the possibility of it. Let me ask, Is the scene heavenly or earthly? Rev. 19:1 settles it. "After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven." It is heavenly -- not the new heavens and the new earth, where all is eternal -- but heaven, in contrast with the earth that had just been the scene of the judgment of the great corrupting whore, whose smoke rose up for ever and ever. Heaven is the scene of the joy and worship that attends the marriage of the Lamb, before it opens in Rev. 19:11 to give Him forth in the last stroke of judgment that puts Him in possession of the kingdom. Who is owned as the wife that has made herself ready? The system of the paper makes it Israel in resurrection, saved, not as individuals, but as a nation (p. 189). I do not stop here to notice this extraordinary misapplication of Rom. 11. But the remnant of Judah had never yet looked on Him whom they had pierced, to say nothing of the ten tribes needed to make up all Israel as a nation, who are only brought in after Judah is first settled in peace with Messiah in the land. The heavenly glory of the nuptials settles in itself who is the subject of them.

It is the church thus publicly owned in suited heavenly glory, when judgment had first set aside on earth that which had falsely borne His name, and assumed her place. And she is owned according to the Lamb's delight in her. In Rev. 21 characteristics are added suited to the place she is called to take with Him in the kingdom, as well as of her own personal condition, which, being perfect in glory, is of course eternal. And so John saw "that city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." It is the church as the heavenly seat of the administration of the kingdom (Rev. 22:4), as Jerusalem is the earthly.

Such is, I submit, the only consistent interpretation of the symbol. Every figure is (still) "of Jewish and Old Testament cast and character"; but the question is, What is the thing thus figured? Now, let me ask my reader, if the church is destined for this place of rule and administration under Christ in the kingdom, what more expressive as a symbol than Jerusalem, the well-known seat of royalty and center of government on earth? -- a symbol, not of its highest

relationships, and of that which is therefore nearest to our hearts (though it flows from them), but of its place and connection with Christ in the kingdom.

“Holy,” as to its state, other distinctions follow: it “descends out of heaven,” its source stamping its character, “from God.” It might have been from God, and earthly. It might have been heavenly and angelic. It was neither. It descended out of heaven from God.⁴ “And is set up -- settles in the new earth among the nations” (p.184, 185). Such is the writer’s system. But where is there a trace of it in the passage? Does descending out of heaven involve settling on the earth? Take a parallel case in 1 Thess. 4:15, 16: “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven.” Must we adopt the conclusion (of current theology indeed) that He comes to the earth? We know that He does not; but, caught up with the dead in Christ first raised, together we meet the Lord in the air -- “a glorious apparition *in the clouds*” (if the writer likes), “as some have” -- not so strangely, after all -- “imagined” (p. 219) -- even before the day of the millennial Jerusalem.

But we must proceed with the details. “Having the glory of God.” Wonderful privilege! Well may it arrest us, as we ask, to whom belongs this intimate connection with the divine glory? Has not divine grace made it already the Christian’s in, hope? “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2.) We

reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to {in} us {1 Pet. 1:11}.

He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son {Rom. 8:29}. The earnest expectation of the creature waits for our manifestation in His glorious image as the sons of God {Rom. 8:19}. But the church is set to be the display of it morally now as the epistle of Christ in the world (2 Cor. 3). And the power for this is given us in the last verse of the chapter.

Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

The glory of God shines before us in the face of Jesus, and we gaze on it in peace, for every ray of it brings into our souls the sweet witness of the perfection of His work that has set us thus in presence of the glory, and as we gaze we become like Him.

But this will be found to come out further in the symbols before us:

4. Will it be believed that this “reminds” the writer (pp. 184, 185) of the truth that Israel’s calling “was . . . not heavenly, like ours, but earthly, eternally earthly?” Could words describe anything more completely heavenly?

And her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

The word for “light” is more fully “shining” (*Φωστήρ*), only used before in the New Testament, in Phil. 2:15. “Her shining” is like jasper. The force of this is at once seen by the only previous use of jasper in this book. He that sat upon the throne “was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone” (Rev. 4:3), as the symbol of the glory of God. It is the same thing already beautifully expressed for faith, in 2 Cor. 4:6, “*God* hath shined in our hearts for the *shining forth* (*Φωτισμόν*) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” So again, in the passage before referred to, where the very word is found (Phil. 2:15), we are set to be the display of the glory in its moral characteristics in the world, “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights (*Φωστῆρες*) in the world,” for this is just what Christ was. The only difference is that now we possess the treasure in an earthen vessel that too often obscures the manifestation of it.

But in the new Jerusalem the vessel is suited to the glory it contains, and there is the perfect shining of it, “like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Now all this is of no account with the writer, who says, as he passes over it, “the next feature that bears on this inquiry is the great high wall” (p. 185). The glory of God is not a feature of any significance. Let the simple Christian judge who has no theory of interpretation to maintain.

“And had a wall great and high.” Let us see how this is treated:

There was ever in Israel one characteristic which distinguished its constitution from that of the church, namely, the wall of partition, by which its exclusive right to God’s presence and blessing was asserted against the nations round about.

Now, if we look at Eph. 2, where the middle wall of partition is spoken of, it is the symbol of the enmity between Israel and God, as much as between them and the nations -- “even the law of commandments contained in ordinances:” so little is the writer’s account of it the truth. And this was abolished in the death of Christ. But it is well to note how easily the writer himself abandons his theory of the material. For it could not be seriously maintained that this is the ordinary purpose and meaning of the wall of a material city. It is its defense and security; nor otherwise does v. 27 consistently interpret it. The heavenly city is enclosed and shut in thus against all that is unsuited to the glory of God, of which it is the dwelling-place. And the suited material of the building of the wall of it was jasper (v. 18), that which symbolized the glory. A “middle wall of partition” has, indeed, no place in the constitution of the church. But is there nothing that answers to the wall of the heavenly city, in the responsibility of the

church as the house of God on earth to maintain the holiness and truth that alone consists with His presence? And if it is just in the breaking down of this that it has utterly failed, how blessed to see that no thought of God shall fail of its full accomplishment! The glory of God will itself maintain what is suited to it and to His dwelling-place in the day of glory.

But what of the angels at the gates (v. 12)? The paper is silent, for, according to the system of it, it would be hard to account for their place. But “to angels hath he not put in subjection the world {age} to come *whereof we speak*” {Heb. 2:5}, and this is just the subject before us. To whom, then? Now this is given us in the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on the gates of the city. For it is not denied that every figure is still of Jewish and Old Testament cast and character, and that the cast of this is taken from Ezekiel’s prediction of Jerusalem on the earth. But here it is an expressive symbol of what is deeper. The gate is the place where rule is administered in the East. The order of government on earth was ever connected with Israel and its twelve tribes, as the center of it. But now that which is thus its fitting symbol is found connected with the heavenly city, in the names of the tribes inscribed on the gates. To us, the heavenly saints, the church, under Christ, is entrusted the judicial administration of “the world {age} to come.”

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? (1 Cor. 6: 2).

He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . . even as I received of my Father (Rev. 2:26, 27).

I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them (Rev. 20:4).

“All doubt as to its being the special home of Israel must now be removed, for not only the nation, but its tribes, are all found there, each with its own special portion” (p. 186). Where is there anything of this in the passage? There is not a word of the *nation*, nor of the *special portion* of the tribes. There are the names of the tribes, but that is all; fulfilling a most leading part, as we have seen, in the symbolic representation of the church’s ascertained place in the kingdom. It is its polity that is described in its special millennial place. The inhabitants come afterwards as a distinct thing.

In full consistency is the connection of the twelve apostles with the foundations.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb {Rev. 21:14}.

Certainly they were not the foundations of the relationship in which Israel has stood, or will stand, with God. That they were to have a special place of privilege in the administration of the kingdom we know from Matt. 19:28.

Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Yet was the church, as the habitation of God, builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets {Eph. 2:20}. Their promised place in the kingdom would not in any way interfere with their being of the body of Christ when it was formed at Pentecost, for the church was also to have intimate connection with the kingdom, as we have seen. Yet to Paul was as specially assigned the revelation of that higher heavenly relationship, but in wise shutting him out of part in the earthly. (See 1 Cor. 4:8.) Thus all is consistent. Divine distinctions and order were to be observed as fully in the introduction of the twelve here as in the omission of Paul. To be of the body of Christ was much beyond any special place of rule in the kingdom reserved for any, but such was not here the subject. I have said so much, because the paper says, "Paul &c., saw no place found for them in the new Jerusalem." But the church did not cease to be the body of Christ and the tabernacle of God, because it was also to be the Lamb's wife and the new Jerusalem. I would note here that, in page 186, Matt. 19:28 is quoted for the system of the paper, which is that Rev. 21, 22 is the eternal state. But is "the regeneration" equal in force to "the new heavens and the new earth?" And does the Son of man sit in the throne of His glory eternally? 1 Cor. 15:28 tells us expressly that He delivers up the kingdom to God.

But other points demand our attention.

The twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl {Rev. 21:21}.

That which first meets the eye as a walled city is approached in its gate. Thus at every approach there shines out amid the surrounding wall of the divine glory the pearl -- the chosen symbol of what the church was to Christ, of His own special delight in it as He saw it in eternity, into His own thoughts about it --

who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it {Matt. 13:46}.

Every several gate showed out this.

"And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." The gold of divine righteousness, the glass of transparent purity, are but the symbols in glory of what the new man is already created in, "which *after* God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4: 24.) "And the street of the city" was of the same material (v. 21). What rest it will be to walk where there is nothing ever again to defile! In danger of defilement now at every step, there the very streets we walk on will answer perfectly to what we are, and both to what God is. And I saw no temple therein, "for the Lord God Almighty and the

Lamb are the temple of it.” True to the characteristic privileges of the Christian, as is every detail, all that marked the distance of Israel’s relationships is unknown. The millennial Jerusalem on earth will have its temple {Ezek. 40-48}, but not so the heavenly city. The unveiled presence of God is there, where we have been brought even now by faith.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light (or lamp ⁵) thereof {Rev. 21:23}.

It is the light that has made all so bright for our hearts already, “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God {2 Cor. 4:4}. It is the glory of God on the face of Jesus -- God ever to be known, in Him in whom He was manifested in humiliation, the man Christ Jesus -- “the Lamb is the Lamp thereof.” And we can gaze undazzled upon the brightness of glory, because we see it in the face of Him “who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his own blood.” And so we gaze already by faith, “and are changed into the same image from glory to glory” {2 Cor. 3:18}.

“And the nations shall walk in the light of it.” “Of them that are saved,” as is well known, has no authority, and it is “by,” or “by means of,” rather than “in,” as in the received text. The world should have been able to walk by the light of the church now. “Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid” (Matt. 5:14-16; see also 2 Cor. 3:3-5; Phil. 2:15,16). In a sense it is so, in spite of all the church’s failure, for, apart from the revelation of God in Christ possessed by it, there is nothing but darkness in the world. But when the Lamb is the Lamp, the faithful and true witness, if all else has failed, the church will fulfil its function to the nations according to the mind of God, become in glory the *perfect* vessel of the display of the light in which they walk.

“And the kings of the earth do bring their honour and glory to (εἰς, not ἐν) it,” owning it in its due place as the heavenly metropolis of the throne of God and of the Lamb -- so v. 26.

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there. The light of an endless and unclouded day is the sure and sufficient protection of the entrance to the city, even as it is given us already as the Christian’s armor -- “the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12). For that which doth make manifest is light. It detects and exposes all that is unsuited to itself, and thus guards the avenues of the heart against everything incompatible with the enjoyment of His presence who is light -- where we have been set. Hence v. 27,

There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither

5. See Rev. 22:5, where it is translated “candle” {JND, “lamp.”}

whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Here, for the first time, we have the thought of inhabitants of the city. Up to this it has been the church corporate, in its relation to the millennial earth, expressed by the symbol of a city.

The view of the water of life has its source there from the throne of God and the Lamb, the figure being still unquestionably borrowed from the future Jerusalem on earth. But, as we have seen in each fresh characteristic given us of the heavenly city, the thing symbolized in glory has been already made true by the Holy Ghost to faith in the Christian. So here --

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water: but this spake he of the Spirit which they that believe s on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37-39 {cp. Acts 2:32, 33}).

The Holy Ghost, come from the glory where Jesus is, and dwelling in us, brings into our hearts in the knowledge of Him more than all the joy of the millennial feast of tabernacles, and makes us channels (though much more, being in communion with the source; it is "out of his *belly* shall flow") of the living waters now.

In the glory of the heavenly city there is also found another church link, in the symbol of that which gives special character to the church's testimony. The tree of life is there, already given in promise to the overcomers in the epistle to the church at Ephesus --

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God {Rev. 2:7};

and here there is not only unhindered access to and enjoyment of it for ourselves for ever, but "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The church will be still in millennial glory the witness of grace to the nations, in marked contrast with millennial Jerusalem, which preserves its character too, as connected with, and the earthly center of, God's ways in government --

the nation and kingdom that shall not serve thee shall perish (Isa. 60:12).

"And there shall be no more curse." Here the Jerusalem of that day, that has supplied us with many a figure of a glory beyond hers or Israel's, gives us a contrast, for there the curse still lingers, if only upon the sinner -- "the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 60:20). "But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him." How sweet the assurance for any who have sought to serve Him now ever so feebly, and who know the grace that makes so much of the least done truly to Him! It shall be theirs to serve Him without hindrance or ceasing for ever.

“And they shall see his face.” “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, then shall I know as also I am known” {1 Cor. 13:12}. Thus the Lord meets the longing He has Himself created in our hearts, as He knew nothing else could meet it. We shall reign, and that for ever, for the throne never passes from Him as it did from one to another before Him, though He gives it up as man to take it as God. But, more blessed still, a witness of all that is deeper and more intimate in our association with Him is preserved in simple words, but how full for hearts that know Him -- “they shall see his face.”

“And his name shall be in their foreheads.” Surely there ought to be the moral imprint of Christ left by the glory in which we know Him on our hearts and lives now; but how marred, how dimly seen, is His image in any of us -- bearing His name too often to His dishonor. Then we shall bear it before every eye, no more to fail to represent or glorify Him in anything.

“And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God shall shine upon them (not as more feebly ‘giveth them light’), and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

This leads me to notice the foundation of the argument of the paper I am commenting on, namely, “that Israel is the elect nation of God to hold an eternal place before Him, not only in this world, but also in the new.” This that had to be proved is assumed on page 184 at the very outset, although proof “for the benefit of those who have never perceived it” is attempted at page 188.

Now the texts on which this rests are all from the Old Testament, save one in Rom. 11, which is to dispel the last lingering doubt of any one who demurs to the startling doctrine, and Rev. 19, 21, which has to be proved to have anything to do with them. But I doubt whether this treatment of the subject will commend itself to those who read their Bibles. Of such I would ask if it is in the Old Testament that the veil is lifted to let in the light of eternity, where eternal life is only twice mentioned, and the eternal counsels of God are not revealed according to the express statements of the New. (See 1 Tim. 1:9),

Who hath saved us . . . according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility (for that is the word in the original) to light through the gospel.

And Titus 1:2:

In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began, but hath in du time manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to me ({see} Rom. 16: 25, 26; Col. 1: 25, 26 {;Eph. 3}).

The New Testament is the revelation of eternity, and sheds the clear light of it on the passing scene of this world. The cross, that is the ground in time and on the earth of the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, lays also the foundation for the bringing in of that which was before all promise -- the eternal purpose of God.

The counsels of God are thus connected with eternity, as the promises made to the fathers are {connected} with time. Now, the only passage quoted from the New Testament to prove that these last are eternal is Rom. 11. But this scripture brings us down in express terms to the tree of promise on the earth. God had not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Some of the {Jewish} branches had been broken off because of unbelief, and branches of a wild olive-tree grafted in to partake of the root and fatness. These are warned that they only stand by faith, and may in their turn be cut off {Rom. 11:22}, and the natural branches grafted in again into their own olive-tree. Even so it shall be; and in this way all Israel shall be saved, as a nation {Rom. 11:26}, instead of a remnant, blessed as now according to the election of grace. And so Isa. 59:20, 21 would have its fulfilment: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" {Rom. 11:29}. But if blessing had come to the Gentiles through their {Israel's} fall, how much more through their fulness; "for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" So then, what Christianity as a professing system had been cut off from on earth, Israel is to be grafted into again. This, we are told, is eternity, and the proof of Israel's portion, "of eternal distinctness" (p. 188), and "in exact correspondence with Rev. 21" (p. 189). Is the reader at a loss for any trace of such a correspondence? The author supplies it, by introducing in the bias of his system a resurrection condition of things wholly foreign to the truth of Rom. 11 -- "in a risen people, a people raised from the dead, Abraham shall read the fulfilment of the everlasting covenant. And so in resurrection all Israel shall be saved, not as individuals, but as a nation." It remains for us to consider what is the force of the Old Testament expressions that seem to make the duration of Israel's blessing eternal. The Psalm (89) I have already referred to must be held to throw important light on the subject; see vv. 1-4; 28-37, in which Israel's full future blessing is before us, founded on the mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah, and set up in the king of whom it is said, "I will make him, my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." But how is the duration of the blessing defined? "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." Again, "As the sun before me; it shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

The use of the expression is the more remarkable as applied to that which is eternal, according to full New Testament revelation, that is, the throne which

never passes from David's Son, though He gives it up as man {1 Cor. 15:28} to take it as "God all in all." But even when that part of the blessing which is essentially eternal is spoken of, the language used does not go beyond the utmost limit of time -- "it shall be established for ever as the moon."⁶ The last verses of Isa. 66 are quoted (p. 188), as though the new heavens and the new earth spoken of were identical with the new heavens and new earth of Rev. 21:1. It is easily seen that this is not so by the mention of them in the previous chapter, Isa. 65:17-25, which describes the course of government against the ungodly and transgressors. It is the great moral change that takes place in the regeneration, when "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption with the liberty of the glory of the children of God" {Rom 8:21}, that is spoken of -- not the heavens and the earth of the new creation.

Two passages remain to be noticed as supposed to "bear upon this study." (See p. 217.) The first is Gal. 4:26, of which it is said, "this has been supposed to confirm the view that Rev. 21 describes the church." We shall see whether it does or not. "But examine the passage with its context," and see if it says anything like what the writer makes it say -- "To Israel has been committed the oracles of God, and through Israel, that is the inspired Jews whom God employed to write and preach the glad tidings, have the Gentiles received the grace of life: Israel is therefore the mother of us [all]." This is the result of our author's reasoning, that "our mother must be something of the past," instead of examining the passage with its context, in which we find the apostle explains himself by quoting Isa. 54:1. This speaks of what Jerusalem *is yet to be* by grace, as free, in contrast with its condition under law. In that coming day of its millennial liberty and joy, Jerusalem will look back and own us Christians, the children of promise, as Isaac was (v. 28), as her children, and that thus the period of her apparent desolateness was really fruitful to her in the richest way: only that, while the apostle speaks thus, he adds a word which just connects us with even a higher thing than Jerusalem emancipated, namely, "Jerusalem, which is above all, is free." There is a heavenly Jerusalem as well as a restored earthly one.

Many a passage of Old Testament scripture gives us the earthly; Rev. 21, 22 gives the heavenly, and in this the Christian has his portion, "for our

6. {The notion, while common, that Israel shall have a distinct national existence in the eternal state, is quite erroneous. When the promises for Israel (or David) are said to be "forever," there are texts, such as the one quoted, which show that the duration is as long as the present earth subsists. The promises for Israel are for the present earth. This is quite in keeping with Israel's earthly calling. The saved of Israel, as the saved Gentiles in the OT and in the millennium, will be among the "men" of which Rev. 21:3 speaks. The church is eternally distinct (Eph. 3:21) and is "the tabernacle of God" in Rev. 21:3.}

citizenship (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven.”

“Another passage quoted against this interpretation,” according to the author, is Heb. 12:22, though he does not say where he finds the argument (p. 218), that “ye are come to the new Jerusalem,” means that we *are* the new Jerusalem! I am glad to be able to accept in the main what he says of it, that it is “an enumeration of the glorious circle of the saints’ inheritance.” It is the circle of things we are connected with by grace, through a glorified Christ, in contrast with a living Messiah on earth. The passage says nothing as to “the nature of the connection,” and therefore cannot be taken in proof of the writer’s interpretation any more than of that which is opposed to it. Still I do not think the order is without significance, or that there is wanting in it what confirms the truth, as we have seen it, of Rev. 21, 22. For is there not an ascending and descending scale of glory here, so to speak?

The eye first rests on “Mount Sion” on earth, the seat of the nation’s establishment in grace under the king (see for the type 1 Chron. 15-16; 2 Chron. 5:2; Psa. 78:97-72).

Then the eye lifts, and sees what is connected with the center of earthly blessing, but yet is above it -- “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Then, as more immediately connected with the divine center of all -- “an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly.” But in the innermost circle round the throne, the church, in its own proper character as “the church of the first-born which are enrolled in heaven.”

Then, having risen up “to God the judge of all,” we come down next “to the spirits of just men made perfect,” the Old Testament saints, in their ordered place and blessing; “and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant,” thus looked at, in connection with the people to whom it belongs; “and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,” inasmuch as it lays the ground for the whole blessing in both its heavenly and earthly parts, instead of crying for judgment.

Thus, if place was found in this circle of glory for the church’s connection with the kingdom, as Mount Sion naturally leads on to it, we have it in its own essentially heavenly character and calling as well.

I do not know that, there is anything else in the paper that calls for remark. The Lord give us a deeper understanding of the things so freely and richly unfolded to us in His word, and, above all, the abiding enjoyment of them as the things in which we live in communion with Him.

J. A. T., *The Bible Treasury*, vol. 10, 1874.

The New Jerusalem

The City is the Bride

ARGUMENTS FOR A LITERAL CITY

The New Jerusalem Is Both People and a Place. First of all, it is objectionable to say that the New Jerusalem is the abode of the bride. Not so. It is the bride, symbolically viewed from the standpoint of governmental administration -- from the standpoint of being the heavenly seat of Christ's reign (Rev. 21:9-22:5). Another error, as stated by Lehman Strauss, is:

From the viewpoint of the people in it, the New Jerusalem is "*the Lamb's wife*." From the standpoint of the place, it is an actual city. From the viewpoint of John, which is the one given in Rev. 21:9, 10, the bride is the city.⁷

Since the Bride Is Not Literal, the City must Be Literal. An objection about the size is based on taking this to be a literal city, which is an idea that flies right in the face of vv. 9, 10, which clearly show that the city is the bride; i.e., the church. It is not a literal city. Observe how John F. Walvoord attempted to show that it is a literal city:

Actually, the bride of Christ is composed of people, those who have accepted Christ in the present age and who form the church, the body of Christ. In showing John the Holy City, there is a relationship to the bride in that the beauty of the Holy City is similar to the beauty of the bride. Obviously, a literal meaning cannot be that it is both a city and a bride, and so one must complement the other.⁸

Since a bride is not a city, it seems best to accept the passage as a description of a city that is beautifully adorned like a bride prepared for marriage.⁹

Obviously the bride is not a literal bride -- he has himself indicated *that* in the first sentence quoted here. But he concludes that because the bride is not literal *therefore* the city must be complementary, i.e., literal. "So one must complement the other" does not logically follow; for both could be non-literal, which they are, but which he rejects -- and does so right in the face of Rev. 21:9 10. These

7. *The Book of Revelation*, Neptune: Loizeaux, p. 349 (1965).

8. *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, p. 636.

9. *Prophecy -- 14 Essential Keys to Understanding the Final Drama*, Nashville: Nelson, p. 168 (1993).

are figurative and symbolic descriptions used to designate some aspect of the church, just as in Paul's writings the church is a body, a temple, a house, a bride, etc. "Since a bride is not a city," but is the church, how could she have been a temple or a house? How can the bride be the body of Christ?

His idea of the "relationship" of the city to the bride is a figment imposed upon the passage. In reality, the bride *is* the city, not merely related to it. What does the text *state*?

Come here, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife (v. 9).

. . . showed me the holy city, Jerusalem (v. 10).

I ask you, since the angel told John he would show him the bride,¹⁰ why was John not shown the bride; why was he shown a city (and, allegedly, a literal one, at that!) instead of the bride, if the city is not the bride presented in symbolic form? Why was he rather shown, allegedly, where the bride was going to live, rather than being shown the bride? Yes, why was John not shown the bride when the angel said he would show him the bride? Talking about the city as showing John "a relationship to the bride" is an effort to circumvent the express statement of the text. The angel did not say, 'Come here, I will show you something related to the bride,' but that is the meaning the above quotation attaches to the angel's statement. Is this the way to find out what the teaching is here? Is it not rather an effort to have a literal city, a distinct place for Israel, and others divided into nations, in the eternal state?¹¹

Commonly, a City's Name Refers to Both the Structure and Occupants.

Alva J. McClain took this tack:

The name of the city, as in common usage, refers to both the structure and

10. See *Letters of J. N. Darby* 1:426, 427.

11. William R. Newell really makes numbers of offensive remarks. Let us hear two samples:

2. A second reason to consider the city a literal one, *is*, that child-like faith in reading the account always regards it as such. As the little girl asked her mother concerning the preacher who said that our Lord's words in John 14, "*I will come again*," did not mean that He would come back in *person*: "Mamma, if Jesus did not mean what He said, why *didn't* He say what He *meant*?" . . .

4. If the New Jerusalem *is* not to be taken literally, we could not claim that the millennial Jerusalem of Ezekiel 40-48 and Zechariah 14 can be literal. But to deny these *is* wholly to abandon faith in the accuracy of God's Word! (*The Book of the Revelation*, pp.348, 349).

A *child* does not understand the book of Revelation. His remark is ludicrous! The reality is that he has a problem with symbolic language. And, there were many able expositors before W. R. Newell who understood Ezek. 40-48 literally and the city in Rev. 21 symbolically (J. N. Darby, W. Kelly, etc). The inference from his words is that they abandoned faith in the accuracy of God's word, whereas the real problem is *his*, engaging in pseudo-literalism.

those who dwell there.¹²

Take New York: ‘Come, I will show you _____, and he showed me the city New York. Or Rome: Come, I will show you _____, and he showed me the city Rome. He *wants* to have the city be literal, and that is what this is about:

If the King of the New Jerusalem and also its inhabitants are literal, there is no reason for balking at the literality of the city itself.¹³

Let it pass that there is no such thing as a *King* of the New Jerusalem. He assumes the city has literal inhabitants and then reasons from that error to his desired literalism.

Christ Is Building the City Right Now. Having referred to John 14:2, 3,¹⁴ Henry Morris wrote:

. . . there is even now a great city being built by Christ far out in space somewhere. To this city go the spirits of all who die in Christ, there to await His return to earth. When He comes back, He will bring the holy city with Him and set it up for a time somewhere in earth’s atmospheric heavens, perhaps orbiting the earth. There will be established His judgment seat, as well as the heavenly temple and its altar, to which John frequently refers in Revelation. The resurrected and raptured saints will dwell in this city, though with occasional visits to the earth, during the tribulation and millennial periods.¹⁵

Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy wrote:

Jesus told His disciples in John 14:1-3 that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for believers. Apparently the place He is constructing in heaven, at His Father’s house, is the heavenly or new Jerusalem. Although built in heaven, it will be earthly in that it is physical and geographical . . .¹⁶

12. *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, Winona Lake: BMH Books, p. 511, 1992 [1968]. Herman A. Hoyt wrote:

This is a real city in which the Bridegroom will dwell with His perfected bride, the church (Eph. 5:27; John 14:3). Every detail should be taken literally (*Studies in Revelation*, Winona Lake: BMH Books, p. 142 (1977)).

13. *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, Winona Lake: BMH Books, p. 511 (1992) [1968].

14. P. L. Tan likewise injected John 14:3 into the discussion (*The Interpretation of Prophecy*, p. 291. So did Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, Winona Lake: BMH Books, p. 511 (1992) [1968].

15. *The Revelation Record*, Wheaton: Tyndall House, p.438, 1983. So did Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, Winona Lake: BMH Books, p. 511, (1992) [1968].

16. *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy*, Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, p. 141 (1997).

Oliver B. Greene wrote:

Jesus ascended back to the Father (Acts 1:10, 11), and for 1900 years He has been preparing a home (the New Jerusalem, the Pearly White City) for His bride.¹⁷

Is it not right to ask *what is taking the Lord Jesus so long to finish* the city? -- especially since He can move it about so easily, as is implied. I suggest to you that not only does the city *not* refer to the Father's house in John 14:1-3, but also that the place that the Lord Jesus was going to prepare for His own was prepared and ready the instant He was there in glory above. His entrance there as Man, victorious over sin and hell and death, instantly prepared the place for His co-heirs. Moreover, "mansions" means "abodes," spiritual dwelling places -- not large and small, nor near and far -- of nearness to the Father. It refers to dwelling in nearness to the Father, as does that blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Himself. The Father has given us Christ's place before Him. This is not the subject of the book of Revelation at all. Moreover, the Lord Jesus is in heaven itself and at death our spirits go to be with Himself (2 Cor. 5:8), not in space somewhere in a pseudo-literalist city being built in space (or, perhaps, at, or inside, the Father's house). Dr. Morris,' and others,' comments are quite imaginative, not to say distressing to the soul -- distressing because they cloud the meaning of John 14:1-3 as well as Rev. 21.

Ingress and Egress. An interesting variation is that of Clarence Mason, who, while taking the city to be a literal city, said he

would like to submit a thought proposed by Ironside, Scott, and others, that the city will not only be the *eternal* abode of the righteous, but that beginning at {Rev.} 21:9 (where a new chapter should begin anyway), we have a description of that city accompanied by a number of statements that would suggest that this city is related to earth *during time* -- that is, during the millennium.¹⁸

Of course, it was not H. A. Ironside or Walter Scott that "proposed" the point about this being a millennial scene. At any rate, he rightly sees the thrust of such statements as the nations walking in the light of the city, etc., while, sorry to say, he indulges in imagination of various "ingress and egress . . . of the great ones of earth . . ." ¹⁹ It is taking the city as a literal city that leads to such imaginations. Bow to Rev. 21:9, 10 that John was shown the bride, and you will

17. *The Revelation*, Greenville: The Gospel Hour, p. 510 (1973).

18. *Prophetic Problems With Alternate Solutions*, Chicago: Moody, p. 242, 1973.

19. In 1844, J. N. Darby remarked, "of course the inhabitants of the earth cannot enter into the heavenly city . . . the city is the bride, the Lamb's wife . . . it sets aside the whole force of the symbols" (*Collected Writings* 8:307).

be delivered from these imaginings.

A Suspended City. Oliver. B. Greene thinks the city will be suspended:

It is my belief that the Holy City will be suspended between Heaven and earth . . .

Oh yes -- it will be a literal city; never let anyone tell you this is a spiritual application . . . Certainly it will take a great wall to support a city fifteen hundred miles high . . . Someone may be asking, "Why twelve foundations?" The wall of the city will be fifteen hundred miles high and it will take a good foundation to support such a wall . . . Remember, there are 12 foundations, and the wall rests upon them. I gather that the foundations graduate in thickness, the twelfth one being extremely thick; and they graduate on up to the beginning of the wall which will be 216 feet thick . . . Yet it must be thick and strong because the city is pure gold, with all kinds of jewels and diamonds.²⁰

It is pseudo-literalism which rejects the symbolism of the city. The true literalism and symbolic interpretation, taught by such as J. N. Darby and W. Kelly, gives us the true, and balanced, view of these matters.

Other Cities Are Literal. Robert Govett, who wrote during the 1800s, reasoned:

We have seen that two other cities are named in this book -- Jerusalem the Old, and Babylon the Great. Are these not literal? They are. So, then, the city which supersedes them both.²¹

First, the fact that if two mentioned cities are literal, that does not *prove* a third one is literal. Secondly, the city of Babylon of Rev. 18 is not the literal city of Babylon. The city of Babylon of Rev. 18 is the woman of Rev. 17. The references have to do with Rome, which is, of course, a literal city, the earthly seat of this woman. The city of Rev. 21 is the woman of Rev. 19:7, 8. Both as women and as cities the two should be carefully compared.

A Literal City May Be Portrayed Symbolically. Another variation is given by David L. Turner, already quoted above for his imagination. He tells us a solution to having a literal city without being bound by the description of it:

{P. L. } Tan, who argues that an actual literal city may be portrayed just as it is, never seems to grasp the fact that an actual literal city may be portrayed through symbols.²²

The fact is that he has no evidence that a literal new Jerusalem is being

20. *18. The Revelation*, Greenville: The Gospel Hour, p. 518-520 (1973).

21. *The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture*, London: Thynne, p. 565, 1920 ed., abridged from the four vol. ed., 1864.

22. *Op. Cit.*, p. 276.

portrayed symbolically. It is merely more imagination in which he indulges freely, a reprehensible thing in divine matters.

A Literal City Fills a Longing. Some who take the city to be a literal city give numbers of reasons for their view of it, but all these reasons need not detain us. However, there is one by P. L. Tan, who advocates taking the city literally, that I will quote:

. . . although a literal, material New Jerusalem may be difficult for theologically trained scholars to accept, it comes naturally and logically to the thinking of most uncritical laymen. A literal eternal city seems to fulfill the longings of the soul.²³

Neither “theologically trained scholars,” as such, or “most uncritical laymen,” as such, have anything to do, as such, with understanding the intention of the Spirit of God in the passage (1 Cor. 2:9-16).

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN REVIEWING IS A PSEUDO-LITERALISM

What I mean by pseudo-literalism is that the idea that the New Jerusalem is a literal city is not genuine literalism, as we speak of spiritualization versus literalism in interpretation. It purports to be literalism in Scripture interpretation; but it is not proper scripture literal interpretation of prophecy. It is like taking Dan. 12:2 to mean literal resurrection when in fact the passages use resurrection figuratively, as such are virtually compelled to acknowledge is the case in Ezek. 37. It is an unfounded concern about compromising “literal interpretation” of prophecy that gives rise to such pseudo-literalism. And now we shall see some things that issue from pseudo-literalism.

Is the City a Pyramid?

Since the city is the bride, we know the origin of the city. If it is a literal city, when was it constructed? Or are we to imagine it existed eternally? The city will come down out of heaven. So at some point there will be this allegedly literal city in heaven itself. We know that the bride will be in heaven. How came this literal city to be there? The truth is that there are no literal cities in heaven, nor horses (Rev. 19:11-14), for that matter. Observe the following idea from J. F. Walvoord:

Debate continues on whether the city is a cube or a pyramid, although the evidence seems to favor a pyramid shape, inasmuch as the water from the

23. *The interpretation of Prophecy*, pp. 291, 292.

throne at the top of the city flows down its sides (22:1).²⁴

Where did he read that the throne was at the top -- and that water flows down the sides? Think of it; a 1500 (some say 1380) mile high pyramid, with a base 1500 miles by 1500 miles square -- is it a flat base or does it follow the curvature of the earth? -- with water flowing down from a throne at the top! -- down all four sides? Even if only on one side, where does all the water go? Think of it, water eternally flowing down the sides of a huge pyramid. Does it pour off the pyramid base on to the earth? Does it create huge holes where it hits the earth? Either that means an infinite amount of water drowning the earth, or perhaps it flows through several gates, wraps around under the bottom of the city and goes back up through a shaft in the center of the pyramid to be recycled to flow back up and out of the throne again.

The writer also suggested this:

Though there is little evidence in Scripture to support the concept, possibly the new Jerusalem will be a satellite city above the earth during the millennium.²⁵

Is that possible? -- I mean all this imagination -- a monstrous pyramid satellite, with water going down its sides from a source about 1500 miles above the earth? Never mind criticizing me as sarcastic, or whatever you chose; get sober and serious about this! Depart from pseudo-literalism in 'dispensationalism' as well as from pseudo-spiritualism in Covenantism!

The *sanctuary* in the Tabernacle and in the temple was a *cube*, where the Shekinah was. And this symbolic city has no temple, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22). Thus the symbolism depicts the church as the dwelling place of God and the Lamb, which is quite in keeping with Paul's doctrine of the church. But the presentation we have of the church here is not viewing it as the body of Christ. The city is the bride, but depicted as the seat from which the millennial government emanates, but executed by Israel on earth. The city is characterized by the number twelve, the perfection of governmental administration in man's hands.

We now get its proper perfection. It is measured with its gates and its walls. It is finitely perfect. It is four square -- the length as large as the breadth -- its platform was perfect. It was twelve thousand furlongs, the number twelve again marking the administrative perfection in man, only largely multiplied in fact; but it was as complete as its platform was perfect. It was a cube, not merely a square -- a circle or sphere has neither beginning nor end -- a square and cube are equal in every dimension, but

24. *Prophecy . . .*, p. 172.

25. *Prophecy . . .*, p. 170.

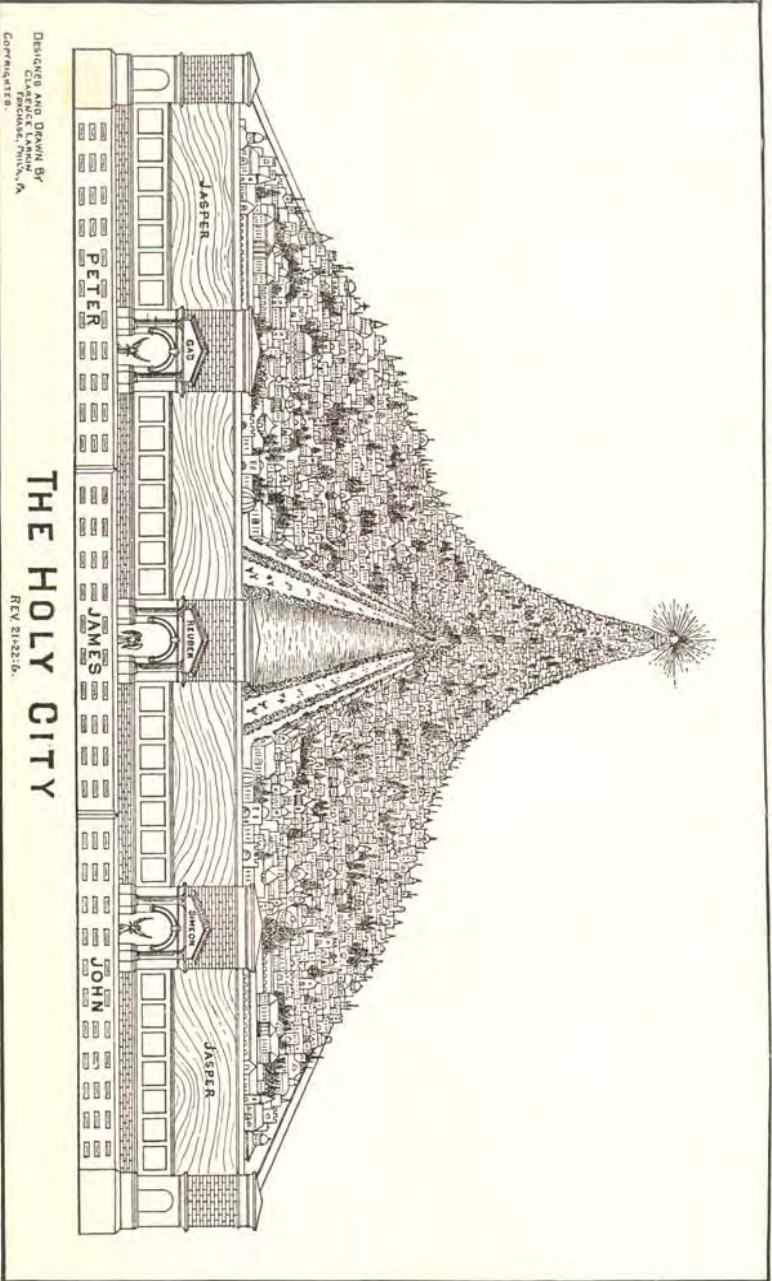
each line ends. They are finite perfection; the square in principle; the cube in completeness also. The wall has its perfection, 12 x 12. It is not divine in its nature -- it is the measure of a man, though God measures it by the angel. The wall, its security, is divine glory. The jasper here, is not spoken of as clear. It were out of place. The city is divine righteousness and fixed unalterable purity; as it is said: -- "after the image of him that created him," "and in righteousness and true holiness."²⁶

We may rest satisfied that there is no spiritual reason to bring forward the idea of a pyramid shape, particularly a *literal* city shaped like a pyramid, with water flowing down its sides -- for some imagined necessity for literalism, in the face of the *symbolic* character of the book of Revelation, and in the face of the direct statement of Rev. 21:9, 10 that John was to be shown the bride. Nor does the text speak of streets of the city, but rather of its street. While I am happy to note that Henry Morris was insistent that the shape is a cube, he pointing out that the pyramid is associated with paganism, his taking the city literally led to him imagining and calculating geometrical accommodations for those he supposes will occupy the literal city. It results in 1/30 of a cubic mile for each, corresponding "to a cubical 'block' with about seventy-five acres on each face."²⁷

A literal-city-view, a pyramid in shape, was illustrated by Clarence Larkin; and it is on the next page in the hope that it might help some who hold erroneous views about the city and the eternal state, to divest themselves of such thoughts.

26. J. N. Darby, *Collected Writings* 30:402.

27. *The Revelation Record*, p. 451.



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THE HOLY CITY

REV. 2142216

The Heavenly Seat of Millennial Government

While it is true that there are those who regard the city to be a literal city who also understand the shape to be a cube, the notion of a pyramid shape seems to be closely associated with the literal city idea. The truth is that the city of Rev. 21:9-22:5 is the bride, the church, viewed as the heavenly seat of the government administered by Christ during the administration of the fulness of times (Eph. 1:10), i.e., the millennial reign.

The gates with the names of the twelve tribes ... the twelve angels. . . The twelve apostles of the Lamb. For God evidently in one way or another connects with the holy city associations of government, whether angelic, Jewish, or apostolic. It is the heavenly seat of the kingdom; and it will display in that day, what is even ours now to say in faith, that "all things are ours." Paul was not given to so describe the church's glory, but speaks of her as the heavenly Eve of the heavenly and last Adam. John, while expressly identifying the Bride, the Lamb's wife, with the new Jerusalem, develops here only the city side.²⁸

There will be an earthly seat of millennial government -- that WILL BE the literal Jerusalem here on earth. The hierarchy of manifested glory will be, then, first Christ, and then the new Jerusalem, and then the earthly Jerusalem.

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the gates of the new Jerusalem. The gate is, in Scripture, the place of judgment and government. This depicts, symbolically, judgment proceeding from the new Jerusalem, via the gates, to Israel on earth, the seat of earthly government. There are also seen angels, God's providential instruments of His will, at the gates. All is in harmony for carrying out the reign of Christ and the administration of all things in heaven and earth by Him who, as man, is in the highest place in the universe. The new Jerusalem and the earthly Jerusalem, the respective seats of the heavenly and earthly government, express Christ's headship over all. The cube will be found in connection with both Jerusalems. The new Jerusalem is itself symbolized by the cube (and having no temple) while the Jerusalem on earth will have a sanctuary that is cubical. The earthly will have the Shekinah restored; but the new Jerusalem shall have Him who is represented by the Shekinah as its temple (Rev. 21:22). In His very presence we shall have fulness of holiness unto the Lord and unhindered, holy worship:

and his servants shall serve *{latreuo}* him, and they shall see his face; and his name is on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4, 5).

It is the service of worship. The longings of our hearts to worship without hindrance or distraction will be eternally satisfied! We shall have the unspeakable privilege of beholding forever that face in which **His** very creatures did spit in their hatred for Him who loves us and has washed us from our sins in His blood. And think of **His** blessed name in our foreheads. We are His eternally, and all our thoughts of Him.

The Mediating View

There are some Scofieldian age-ists who take the view that Rev. 21:9-22:5 is a millennial scene. This acknowledges the validity of the retrospective view of this passage and solves the problem concerning the nations bringing their glory unto the city, etc. However, this view still maintains that the city is literal, and that Israel will be eternally distinct -- thus ignoring that the "everlasting" covenants in the OT refer to the present earth. They ignore what their view entails (Chapter 7.1 in this series). J. D. Pentecost took a mediating position. Interestingly, he quotes W. Kelly frequently, but in the final analysis, the only real agreement he has with WK is the retrospective view. W. Kelly certainly did not accept the notion of a literal city, OT saints in the city, that John 14:1-3 refers to the new Jerusalem, a distinct place for Israel in the eternal state, and other accompaniments of that view. J. D. Pentecost's survey of the wide range of opinions on this subject is interesting. But we will here give only the summary of his view:

The study has led to the conclusion that the mistake lies in trying to establish an either-or proposition. A mediating view, that the eternal state of the resurrected during the millennium is seen in the passage, is suggested as a better view. When the occupants of the city are described it must be seen that they are in their eternal state, possessing their eternal inheritance, in eternal relationship with God who has tabernacled among them. There will be no change in their position or relation whatsoever. When the occupants of the earth are described they are seen in the millennial age. They have an established relationship to the heavenly city which is above them, in whose light they walk. Yet their position is not eternal nor unchangeable, but rather millennial.

The Lord promised to prepare a place for His own {John 14:1-31. At the rapture and resurrection of the church the saints of this age are, after judgment and marriage, installed in that prepared place. They are joined by the saints of the Old Testament at the time of their resurrection at the second advent. This dwelling place prepared for the bride, in which the Old Testament saints find their place as servants (Rev. 22:3), is moved down into the air to remain over the land of Palestine during the millennium, during which time the saints exercise their right to reign.

These saints are in their eternal state and the city enjoys its eternal glory. At the expiration of the millennial age, during the renovation of the earth, the dwelling place is removed during the conflagration, to find its place after the recreation as the connecting link between the new heavens and the new earth.²⁹

The reader should note that this view does not set forth the proper, distinct glory of the church as seen in the new Jerusalem. Though the Scofieldian ageism system distinguishes between Israel and the Church, it does not give to the church the place that was so well brought out in the ministry of J. N. Darby. I speak generally; while here, specifically, the glories set forth by the symbols are mitigated by making the city a literal city and the home of the raptured and resurrected saints of all ages.

Difficulties Regarding this Subject

The reader should have noticed that different writers come to different conclusions depending on what factors weigh most heavily with them in understanding Rev. 21 and 22. Any particular view will have difficulties associated with it, and it is sought to explain these difficulties so as to have what occasioned the difficulty fit in with the general approach taken to the passage. Regarding Rev. 21:1-8 as the new heavens and earth, but Rev. 21:9-22:5 as a retrospective view of the millennial glory of the church, also entails a few points that appear to be against this understanding of these chapters. Mainly, it involves the bearing of Rev. 21:27 and Rev. 22:14. These passages appear to distinguish the city from inhabitants. This appears to support the thought that the city is not the church and that other saints dwell in the city. And that appears to

29. *Things to Come*, Findlay: Dunham, p. 580 (1958).

In a recent book, Bruce Larson seems to take a like view:

The New Testament saints who constitute the church and the angels will rule with Christ (cf. Matthew 19:28, "Judging the twelve tribes of Israel"; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; 2 Timothy 2:11-13). Somewhere in this universe there exists the New Jerusalem, the city of God (Hebrews 11:10), which will descend from heaven and exist like a gigantic space module in relation to earth (Revelation 21:1-5). * As described in the Revelation, the garden *city* of God will be like a huge chandelier over the earth (Revelation 21:10). The saved nations will walk in the light of it (Revelation 21:2). This is literally the rule of the heavens over the earth. This is not heaven through all eternity; it is New Jerusalem in time-space. It is the interim kingdom.

*Louis T. Talbot was the first in my experience to give this understanding.

Israel and the church share the same sphere, but Israel *is* forever to be on the new earth and the church *will* be forever in the new heaven (*Jews Gentiles & the Church*, Grand Rapids: Discovery House, pp. 311, 321).

support the idea that the city is a literal city. It remains to say a few words about this before considering the city itself in some detail.

ENTERING INTO THE CITY

It might be claimed that since several texts speak of entering the city that therefore the city cannot be the bride. But such a conclusion leads to other results. For example, look at this:

Blessed [are] they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city. Without [are] the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone that loves and makes a lie (Rev. 22:14, 15).

It might be said that v. 15 shows that all others, all saints of all ages, must be inside the city, and all persons in the eternal state must be inside. The text tells us who is outside. So there are no blessed persons outside who could go inside. Might it not be well to reconsider the point about going into the city?

WHAT IF ALL SAINTS ARE IN THE CITY?

If all saints are in the new Jerusalem, then various conclusions follow:

1. There is no need of the sun and moon in the new heavens. Perhaps the new heavens and earth do not have them? There shall not be any night in the city (Rev. 22:5).
2. There can be no blessed men outside the new Jerusalem. But if the new Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God and it is *with men* (Rev. 21:3), the implication is that there are men on the new earth that are not in the new Jerusalem.
3. We are told that the glory and honor of the nations shall be brought to it (Rev. 21:24). How so, if only the wicked are outside the new Jerusalem? The nations must be inside the city. But that is a contradiction.
4. How is it that persons enter into it (Rev. 21:27) if all are in the new Jerusalem?

There may be additional reasons to reject the idea that all saints will be in the city. And, we can see that the statements about entering the city need to be rightly understood.

WHAT, THEN, DOES ENTERING INTO THE CITY INDICATE?

The understanding of Rev. 21, 22 is not determined by this one point concerning what enters into the city. Rather, this one point is determined by the proper understanding of Rev. 21, 22.

There was a short answer given to a question concerning Rev. 21:27 in *The Bible Treasury* 2:64:

I take Rev. 21:27, in a general way, as stating who they are that have to do with the new Jerusalem -- those written in the Lamb's book of life. For we must ever remember that the Church, or the bride, is that holy city, instead of the city being the mere region of our future glory.

No matter what view of Rev. 21 and 22 one takes, there are difficulties that need to be explained, if indeed explainable. What mainly directs our understanding in these pages is this:

1. We are aware that taking the everlasting covenant with Israel, in the OT, to apply to the new heavens and earth, leads to absurdities like eternal procreation of persons, etc.; while other "everlasting" covenants also lead to strange results. In reality, those covenants apply as long as the *present* earth lasts. And, therefore, the idea that Israel has a distinct place in the new heavens and earth has no Scripture warrant.
2. Eph. 3:21 shows that the church has an eternally distinct place.
3. The new Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God, is with *men*, in the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21:2, 3).
4. Rev. 21:9, 10 shows that the city *is* the bride, the Lamb's wife; and this answers to Eph. 3:21.
5. The church, having been in heaven before the new heavens and earth were made, does not change (when the new heavens and the new earth come into being), and is not merged with others, nor are others subsequently incorporated into the church.
6. The book of Revelation is for the church (Rev. 1:4; 22:16-21).

I suggest, then, that Rev. 22:14 and 21:27 speak of saints who compose the bride, the city, entering in a figurative way. Actually, it is not a literal city, and thus entering is not literal either; *entering* is a figure of speech. The thought of entering it has to do with partaking of a blessing; namely, partaking of the tree of life. The city itself *is* the bride, the Lamb's wife. But all saints will share in the blessing of the tree of life -- depicted figuratively here as entering in by the gates of the city, having a right to the tree of life.

R.A.H.

Notes