

Eschatology ABF Series
New Jerusalem
November 17th

Review

Questions to Be Answered

1. What is the New Jerusalem?
2. When Does it First Appear?
3. Who will be its Inhabitants?
4. What will it be Like?

1. What is the New Jerusalem?

It is called the “New Jerusalem.”

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 city of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. by Titus of Rome, and the book of Revelation was written after this took place. This means that, for John, any Jerusalem remotely as glorious as the city he saw would have to be a “new” Jerusalem.

The newness not only refers to the fact that the old Jerusalem was destroyed, but that the entire order of the world is being remade in John’s vision. The old heaven and earth pass away, and God ushers in a new era of peace and communion with God and humans; much like we saw back in the Garden of Eden.

Relevant Passages

Isaiah 65:17-25 *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. Before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox,*

and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,' says the LORD."

Revelation 21:2-3 *"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."*

Revelation 21:22-27 *"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."*

Revelation 20:7-10 *"And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."*

John 14:2-3 *"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."*

Galatians 4:25-26 *"Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother."*

Hebrews 11:10 *"For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."*

Hebrews 12:22 *"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,"*

Hebrews 13:14 *"For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."*

2. When Does it First Appear?

At the beginning of the Millennium

Light Source Right after the Tribulation

Matthew 24:29 *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*

Revelation 21:23-24 *“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,”*

Nothing Unclean Will Enter

Revelation 21:27 *“But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”*

This implies that there are unclean people still alive, which would not be the case at the beginning of eternity.

Bride of Christ

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 Bride of Christ comes back with the Lord when he returns, which is at the end of the Tribulation and ushers in the Millennium.

At the End of the Millennium

After the heavens/earth are destroyed and rebuilt, which would not happen until after the Millennium is over and eternity is beginning.

Isaiah 65:17-18 *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.*

Revelation 21:1-2 *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

3. Who will be its Inhabitants?

The Father and the Lamb are there (Revelation 21:22). Angels are at the gates (verse 12). But the city will be filled with God's redeemed children.

4. What will it be Like?

It is holy.

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."*

"Holy" means "set apart" for a special purpose. This city is different from any city John has ever seen.

It comes "down out of heaven."

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."*

This New Jerusalem doesn't just appear: it's brought to earth from the abode of God.

This is where maybe we get "heaven" right. If this city is being prepared, and if it indeed comes to earth from heaven, then it's possible that the New Jerusalem is under construction in heaven now. That would mean that at least part of heaven may resemble John's vision of the New Jerusalem.

It is prepared.

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 night Jesus was betrayed, he told his disciples, including John, that he was going to "prepare a place" for them (John 14:2-3). This city emerges from heaven prepared.

But it's not prepared strictly for the followers of Jesus. In fact, John seems to think this city is prepared specifically for someone else, but the followers of Jesus do get to partake in it.

It is God's dwelling place among humans.

Galatians 4:26 *"But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother."*

Hebrews 11:10 *"For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."*

Hebrews 12:22-23 *"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,"*

Hebrews 13:14 *"For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."*

Revelation 21:3 *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’”*

Here’s where we start to really see what’s special about this city. To us, this sounds like a nice message about how God is moving into the neighborhood. But to the ancients, this was a big deal. In those days, humans would build places where gods could dwell among humans. These places were called “temples.”

But this is different: instead of humans building a dwelling place for their gods, the true God is building a dwelling place for himself among humans.

There will be no more death, mourning or pain.

Death is something that God plans to do away with entirely. The curse of sin will be rolled away.

Genesis 3:17-19 *“And to Adam he said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, “You shall not eat of it,” cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’”*

Revelation 22:3 *“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.”*

It is for the victorious.

Revelation 21:7 *“The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”*

But who are the victorious? The visions in Revelation seem to indicate that those who remain faithful to Jesus are victorious, or those who “overcome” in the second and third chapters of the same book.

It is the bride of Christ.

Revelation 21:2, 9-10 *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband ... Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,”*

In John's vision, the New Jerusalem is prepared specifically for Jesus Christ. We often associate "the bride of Christ" with the Christian church. But in John's vision, the New Jerusalem is described as the bride of the Lamb. This makes sense: the city of God is prepared as the capital of King Jesus's kingdom, not just "a big, big yard where we can play football."

It shines with the glory of God.

Isaiah 60:19 *"The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."*

Revelation 21:11, 23-25 *"... having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal ... And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there."*

John says the city shines like a brilliant jewel. Moreover, because God the Father and the Lamb dwell in the city, the sun and moon are pretty much pointless; there's no night in this city.

There is no temple.

Revelation 21:22 *"And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."*

That is because Jesus and God are already dwelling openly in the city. There's no need for one sacred room in which they can interact with humans. The whole city is sacred.

It is the ultimate temple.

This city is the ultimate version of the Jewish temple. The whole city is a study of twelves:

12 gates

12 angels at the gates

The gates feature the names of the 12 tribes of Israel

12 foundations of precious stone

The foundations feature the names of the 12 apostles

The city is 12,000 stadia (1,400 miles) long, wide, and high (that's 2.7 billion cubic miles) (which is almost exactly ½ of the total surface area of the United States in square miles). To compare, the International Space Station orbits about 240 miles above the earth, so the top of the city will extend almost six times as far out as the space station.

Walls are 144 cubits thick (12*12)

Let's think about this from John's first-century Jewish perspective.

John is not shy about this being a direct reference to the twelve-tribed nation of Israel. And that really shouldn't surprise us. Jesus is the son of David, the Messiah from the line of Israel's greatest king.

The 12 foundations of precious stones and the 12 tribes inscribed on the gates would conjure up images of the Jewish high priest's garments, particularly the breastplate that featured a precious stone for each of the 12 tribes.

Exodus 28:15-21 *"Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions--the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. It is to be square--a span long and a span wide--and folded double. Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes."*

Now, look at the dimensions of the city itself. To us, that sounds like a ritzy place to be. But to the ancient Jews, this would have been a direct reference to the holiest room in their temple: a room called the Holy of Holies. This is where the ark of the covenant rested, and where the high priest of Israel would atone for the sins of Israel once per year. When Solomon built this room, it was also perfect cube.

1 Kings 6:19-20 *"He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar."*

You can see how this would be exciting for a first-century Jew to see. Jesus was coming, and bringing with him a temple far, far greater than anything Solomon, Herod, or Moses could have imagined!

The New Jerusalem leads the other nations.

John states that the nations walk by the light of this city. But he also notes that the kings of the nations bring their splendor into the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:24 *"By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it ..."*

Nothing impure enters.

This is yet another reference to the Jewish temple.

A good deal of the Law of Moses deals with laws regarding purity—that is, how to live in a way that allows the Israelites to stay in the presence of God without being completely consumed by the intensity of his glory. As a rule, the closer you came to the living God, the purer you had to be.

Priests had to maintain high levels of purity, as they spent the most time in God's dwelling place.

The people didn't need to be as pure, but they still needed to abstain from certain behaviors.

John sees that in the New Jerusalem, the whole city is pure.

Revelation 21:27 *"But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."*

There is a river of life flowing through the street.

John writes in his gospel that Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well:

John 4:14 *"... but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

Perhaps John recalled this when he saw in his vision a river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb out into the street of the city.

Revelation 22:1 *"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ..."*

The tree of life is there.

In the Garden of Eden, God planted a tree of life whose fruit, when eaten, could sustain life forever. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were driven away from the tree of life.

Genesis 3:22-24 *"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever', therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."*

However, John sees a vision of Eden restored in the New Jerusalem. The tree of life is back, yielding fruit month in and month out.

Revelation 22:2 *"... through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."*

It has streets of gold.

Revelation 21:18, 21 *“The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass ... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”*