

## The Road to New Jerusalem: Part One

Ever since the Apostle John recorded this testimony given by the LORD, many have marvelled at the perfect existence it describes; New Jerusalem has certainly captured our attention, a Paradise free of want or fear. Some are even of the view it actually means Heaven on Earth. But like all such imaginings, we should not be surprised to find a fable or two hiding in the background. So we would be wise to first establish what New Jerusalem is not.

Most dictionaries define New Jerusalem as either; the final abode of souls redeemed by Christ, or an ideal earthly community or similar. Many teach that the return of Jesus will begin a reign of a thousand years when New Jerusalem comes down from Heaven. There are numerous views, each with a version tailored to a religious belief or standpoint. It is none of these things.

Catholic teaching holds New Jerusalem is a symbol of the Roman Church, the bride of Christ. As such it exists simultaneously in Heaven and Earth through the communion of the saints. One of several Protestant views believes it to be a city Jesus will present to His Bride the Church. To the Latter Day Saints, New Jerusalem is the earth renewed where Jesus will rule for a thousand years in the New World. Others believe the Earth will be transformed with New Jerusalem as its capital, but not sure where. It is none of these things either.

William Blake's epic poem, Jerusalem is an obvious candidate for much of this thinking: *And did the Countenance Divine, shine forth upon our clouded hills? And was Jerusalem builded here, among these dark Satanic Mills?* The short answer is, No.

There are however, some opinions on New Jerusalem, which get closer to the truth believing it to be the Tabernacle of God; it certainly has something to do with in-dwelling. This is quite different from another common view that in a material sense Jerusalem and Zion are synonyms. Zion is not Jerusalem, but they are certainly tied to each other, and we will get to that in part two.

So, let's have a look at what Paul said about Jerusalem past, present and future. *For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Gal 4:25-26)*

Paul shares the difference in his first letter to the Corinthians. *Now this I say, brethren that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (1Co 15:50)* Therefore, Jerusalem above has everything to do with the spirit, and nothing to do with material things. He draws a clear distinction between the earthly and the heavenly; the flesh and the spirit; one in bondage, the other unbound and the giver of Life.

### Jerusalem which is now...

The oldest form of Jerusalem, 'Uru-sa-lim' means the city, possession or foundation of Peace. Prior to Israel's occupation, Jerusalem was the city of the Jebusites. After Joshua failed to dislodge them, Judah succeeded in preparing the way for David's reign around 1000BC. In Paul's time, Jerusalem, then under Roman control, was the largest urban centre in the region; the hub of commerce throughout Asia Minor and trade with distant cultures.

The worship of numerous ancient deities, the rise of diverse theologies, the growth of Talmudism; and the birth, death and Resurrection of the Son of Man all took place there. Christians, Jews and Muslims, each hold Jerusalem as a city of major importance. Over the centuries it has endured instability and conflict, and was under Ottoman rule for over four centuries. It is now the Capital of the Jewish State and continues to be plagued by chaos and controversy.

Now, as there is no hard evidence in Scripture Jesus will return to rule there, the belief the Jewish Capital will become the New Jerusalem of Christianity is unsafe at best. He is calling us to Him; it is not the other way round. These, and similar notions about New Jerusalem, while historical, gained greater enthusiasm around the time the 'pre' and 'post' millennial conversation entered the church along with Christian Zionism. It was the beginning of serious decline; the arrival of replacement theology, numerous schisms, novel theology, and the neglect of Biblical truth.

For example: *New Jerusalem* is mentioned only twice in the Bible, once by Jesus, once by John. *Antichrist* is seen only four times, yet these terms have taken on greater significance than almost anything else in Scripture. The terms *rapture* and *trinity* are not even in the Bible, but dominate church teaching. When it comes to God's Word, we seem to have an innate capacity to dream up all sorts of imaginary things, together with various church opinions on New Jerusalem, none of which are correct.

While our subject matter is in Revelation, the opening to understanding is found in Genesis. It is here we find signs and pointers to the gates, walls and foundation of New Jerusalem as given to John at Patmos. We also discover, when we begin to see the Bible as a whole, John's great vision makes a lot more sense. In part two we will open the Gates to New Jerusalem, look at what Jesus and the Apostles said about them, and why the son's of Jacob were each given a blessing by their mothers. And LORD willing, learn what New Jerusalem actually is...

All Honour and Glory to the LORD JESUS Christ:

In peace and love as always,

James