

Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 29, Revelation 21— Bride, New Jerusalem continued Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 29, Revelation 21— Bride, New Jerusalem continued, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Dave Mathewson's course on the Book of Revelation **interprets Revelation 21's description of the New Jerusalem**. Mathewson argues that the city's detailed architectural features, including its measurements and materials (gold, precious stones), **primarily symbolize the people of God**, not a literal city. He connects this imagery to Old Testament texts, particularly Ezekiel and Isaiah, emphasizing the **theological significance of the city as a temple, a bride, and a restored paradise**. The lecture also **examines the inclusion of the nations** in the New Jerusalem, suggesting this reflects the eschatological salvation of all peoples. Finally, it **explores the symbolic meaning of the city's lack of a temple**, interpreting it as God's direct dwelling with his people.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 29 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Revelation).**



**Mathewson_Revela
tion_Session29.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpt on Revelation 21 by Dr. Dave Mathewson:

Briefing Document: Revelation 21 - The New Jerusalem

Subject: Interpretation of Revelation 21, specifically focusing on the symbolism of the New Jerusalem.

Overview:

This lecture focuses on the detailed description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, emphasizing its symbolic nature as representing the consummated people of God, rather than a literal city. Dr. Mathewson explores the architectural imagery, the measurements, and the inhabitants of the city, drawing connections to the Old Testament, particularly Ezekiel and Isaiah, as well as to Greco-Roman cultural contexts. He also discusses the tension between literal and symbolic interpretations.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Symbolic Interpretation of the New Jerusalem:

- Dr. Mathewson argues that John primarily uses the New Jerusalem as a symbol for the people of God, not necessarily as a literal, physical city. While there may be a literal city, that is not John's focus.
- He states: "John, despite the detailed description of the city, John, I think, sees it primarily as symbolic for the people themselves, and not that there will not be a literal physical city in the New Creation or cities. That's not John's purpose or his point."
- The city imagery is combined with bride and temple language, merging various images to portray the final, consummated people of God.
- The city is also portrayed as a return to the Garden of Eden, restoring paradise.

1. **Measurements and Numbers:**

- The measurements of the city (12,000 stadia and 144 cubits) are symbolic, not literal architectural specifications. The size would be approximately 1500 miles high and wide which would indicate that it is not meant to be a literal city.
- The number 12 is repeatedly emphasized and its multiples are used, signifying the people of God (12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles) and their completeness and magnitude.
- Dr. Mathewson states, "So 12,000 is another way of saying here is the magnitude of and the complete people of God in the eschatological consummation."

1. **The City as a Temple:**

- John applies temple imagery from Ezekiel (particularly chapters 40-48) to the entire city, indicating it is a holy place where God dwells.
- There is no separate temple within the city because God and the Lamb *are* the temple. This is significant because it demonstrates the direct presence of God with His people, made possible by the removal of sin and evil.
- He explains, "The whole city is a temple, but that's because God and the Lamb are the temples. God and the Lamb dwell in their midst."

1. **Gold and Precious Stones:**

- The use of gold is symbolic of the temple and the Tabernacle, where gold was extensively used in construction.
- Gold may also recall the gold in the Garden of Eden.
- The twelve precious stones of the city's foundations are associated with the twelve apostles.
- These stones also represent the beauty and splendor of the city, contrasting with the deceptive wealth of Babylon and Rome.
- Mathewson says, "The stones are meant simply at one level and at a rather obvious level to just portray the beauty of the city and the splendor as the place where God dwells. It reflects God's glory."
- The precious stones allude to the end-time restoration of Jerusalem described in Isaiah 54.

- The stones are connected to the high priest's breastplate in Exodus 28 and therefore also signify the priestly role of God's people.
- He states, "So now the stones in the breastplate, because they're associated with the foundation, we saw the foundation was associated with the apostles. So, it's not suggesting the apostles kind of forget the tribes of Israel."
- The stones can also be associated with Adam as a priest in the Garden of Eden, drawing on texts like Ezekiel 28 and other apocalyptic traditions.

1. The Inhabitants of the New Jerusalem:

- The inhabitants are primarily the people of God, represented as the bride of the Lamb.
- God and the Lamb are also residents, as they are the temple and the source of light.
- The nations are also described as being part of the New Jerusalem, but their presence is a little more difficult to understand since all the unrighteous have been destroyed by the end of chapter 20, the lecture will address this more later on.
- Mathewson points out "So, at the end of verse 20, there's nobody left. All evil, all sin, all who have thrown in their lot with a beast, everyone has now been removed in a comprehensive final scene of judgment. So, where do these nations come from?"
- The inclusion of nations reflects Old Testament prophecies, particularly in Isaiah, and highlights the theme of a multinational people of God.

1. Light and Open Gates:

- The city has no need for the sun or moon because God and the Lamb are its light, reflecting Isaiah 60.
- He quotes, "Isaiah says, "...the sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."
- The gates are never shut, signifying the security and eternal safety of God's people.

- The open gates and light also attract the nations, who bring their glory and honor into the city.

1. **Greco-Roman Context:**

- The New Jerusalem reflects certain features of ideal Greco-Roman cities, like a central street, square shape, and a good water supply (seen in chapter 22).
- John uses these familiar concepts to present the New Jerusalem as the true fulfillment of the ideals people might seek in earthly cities.
- He states, "Now, it's as if John wants to say that the true fulfillment of the ideal Greco-Roman city is not found in any city in Rome but will only be realized in the New Jerusalem."

Points of Tension and Further Discussion:

- The interpretation of the nations entering the city after the judgment in chapter 20 is a point of tension that the lecture will address. The nations are not to be taken as survivors of the judgement because everyone has been destroyed in chapter 20.
- The balance between literal and symbolic interpretations of the New Jerusalem is an ongoing theme, where the instructor emphasizes that the symbolism outweighs the importance of a literal depiction.

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathewson's lecture on Revelation 21 emphasizes the symbolic richness of the New Jerusalem. The city is not merely an architectural marvel but a representation of the redeemed people of God, a holy temple where God dwells, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and hopes. The lecture encourages a reading that prioritizes the theological and symbolic meaning over a literal interpretation.

This briefing document should provide a good overview of the key ideas in this lecture excerpt. Let me know if you have any other questions.

4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 29, Revelation 21— Bride, New Jerusalem continued

Revelation 21: The Bride, New Jerusalem Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences based on the provided lecture material.

1. According to Dr. Mathewson, what is the primary symbolic meaning of the New Jerusalem, despite its detailed description?
2. What are the two main aspects of the New Jerusalem that are measured, and what does this act of measuring signify?
3. What is the symbolic meaning of the numbers 12,000 and 144 in the description of the New Jerusalem?
4. How does the lecture explain the use of gold in the construction of the New Jerusalem?
5. What do the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem represent, and how are they associated with both the apostles and the Old Testament?
6. How does the description of the New Jerusalem contrast with the description of Babylon in the book of Revelation?
7. Why does the New Jerusalem not have a physical temple, and what replaces it?
8. What is the significance of the New Jerusalem having no need for the sun or moon, and what provides its light?
9. What does it mean that the gates of the New Jerusalem will never be shut?
10. According to the lecture, where do the nations that walk in the New Jerusalem's light come from since all nations are destroyed at the end of Revelation 20?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Dr. Mathewson suggests that the primary symbolic meaning of the New Jerusalem is the people of God themselves, not a literal physical city. The detailed description serves to represent the consummated people of God in the new creation, not an actual architectural blueprint.

2. The city itself and its wall are measured. Measuring signifies both the eternal preservation and security of God's people, and the vast extent and magnitude of the consummated people of God.
3. The numbers 12,000 and 144 are multiples of 12. The number 12 symbolizes the people of God, specifically the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles. These numbers are meant to signify the magnitude and completeness of the consummated people of God.
4. Gold symbolizes that the New Jerusalem is a temple or tabernacle and also recalls the gold of the Garden of Eden. It is not a literal architectural feature, but rather represents the city as a holy space and a dwelling place of God.
5. The foundation stones represent the twelve apostles. They are also associated with the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. This signifies that the church is built on the apostles, including both Jews and Gentiles.
6. The New Jerusalem is decked in stones, precious jewels, and gold as a representation of God's glory. This contrasts with Babylon, which is portrayed as exploiting these same elements for selfish gain. This also signifies the saints are compensated for the sacrifices they have made.
7. The New Jerusalem does not have a separate, physical temple because God and the Lamb are its temple. Their presence within the city makes a physical temple unnecessary as they dwell directly among their people.
8. The New Jerusalem has no need for the sun or moon because the glory of God and the Lamb provides its light. This highlights that the city is completely infused with God's presence and is a holy temple in which He dwells.
9. The gates of the New Jerusalem are never shut because there will be no night and no evil, symbolizing the eternal security of God's people. The open gates also welcome the nations.
10. The nations that walk in the New Jerusalem's light are to be understood symbolically within the framework of Isaiah's vision of end-time restoration. John does not intend this language to be taken too literally, and this image simply echoes the idea that all nations are included in eschatological salvation.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the interplay between temple, city, bride, and Garden of Eden imagery in Revelation 21, as explained by Dr. Mathewson. How do these symbols contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the New Jerusalem?
2. Discuss the ways in which Dr. Mathewson uses the Old Testament, particularly the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Exodus, to interpret and explain the various aspects of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21.
3. Explain and critically evaluate Dr. Mathewson's interpretation of the numbers, measurements, and materials used to describe the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. What does he argue these details represent, and how does this understanding shape our interpretation of the text?
4. Explore the tension between the literal and symbolic interpretation of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 as presented by Dr. Mathewson. In what ways does he emphasize that the vision is not meant to be understood literally, and why is it important to read it symbolically?
5. Analyze the implications of Dr. Mathewson's argument that the nations entering the New Jerusalem should not be taken literally but as a reference to the fulfillment of the Old Testament's inclusion of the nations in salvation. How does this argument reframe the understanding of the final state of God's people?

Glossary of Key Terms

Bride: In the context of Revelation, the bride symbolizes the people of God, the Church, who are united with Christ.

Cubits: An ancient unit of measurement, based on the length of the forearm, used in the description of the New Jerusalem.

Eschatological: Relating to the end times, the final events in history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity and the world.

Garden of Eden: The paradise in Genesis where God originally dwelt with humanity. The New Jerusalem is portrayed as a restored Eden.

Gold: A precious metal used extensively in the description of the New Jerusalem, symbolizing the holiness and divine nature of the city, as well as referencing the Tabernacle and Garden of Eden.

Lamb: A symbolic reference to Jesus Christ in Revelation, representing his sacrificial death and redemptive role.

New Creation: The transformed state of the world after the destruction of the old creation, characterized by the absence of sin and evil.

New Jerusalem: The symbolic city of God, representing the consummated people of God in the new creation. It combines elements of temple, city, and bride imagery.

Stadia: An ancient Greek unit of length, roughly equivalent to 200 yards, used in the measurement of the New Jerusalem.

Temple: A sacred space in both Old and New Testaments; in the New Jerusalem, God and the Lamb themselves are the temple, indicating their direct and unhindered presence with God's people.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 29, Revelation 21— Bride, New Jerusalem continued, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Revelation 21 and the New Jerusalem

1. **What is the primary symbolic meaning of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21?**
2. While described with architectural detail, the New Jerusalem is primarily symbolic of the people of God themselves, not a literal, physical city. It uses building, temple, and even bridal imagery to represent the consummated, end-time community of God's people. The measurements and features are meant to convey their eternal security and magnitude, not a literal blueprint for a future city.
3. **Why does the text emphasize measurements of the New Jerusalem, like 12,000 stadia and 144 cubits?**
4. The measurements are symbolic, not literal. The numbers 12,000 (12 x 1000) and 144 (12 x 12) are multiples of twelve, representing the people of God. The measurements signify the completeness, security, and immense scope of the consummated people of God in the new creation. The huge dimensions are used to underscore the symbolic nature of the vision, that it's not a literal city but a transformed people.
5. **How is the New Jerusalem portrayed as both a city and a temple?**
6. John merges the imagery of a city and temple. The whole city is considered a holy temple where God dwells, eliminating the need for a separate temple within it. This is a departure from traditional Jewish thought and even Ezekiel's vision that typically included a temple inside the restored Jerusalem. The entire city functions as the dwelling place of God and the people of God are the priests within it.

7. What is the significance of the city being made of gold and adorned with precious stones?

8. The use of gold and precious stones symbolizes the city's purity, splendor, costliness, and reflection of God's glory. Gold is also reminiscent of the Tabernacle and Temple, highlighting the city as a holy space. Furthermore, the gold and precious jewels could also be a reference to gold in the Garden of Eden. The precious stones are also a stark contrast to the riches of Babylon, demonstrating that the new Jerusalem surpasses the values of earthly empires. These precious stones also correlate with the precious stones found on the high priest's breastplate.

9. What is the symbolic meaning of the 12 foundation stones of the city?

10. The 12 foundation stones, each a different precious stone, are associated with the 12 apostles. They represent the beauty, splendor, and costliness of the city. These stones are also symbolic of the high priest's breastplate, connecting the city to the temple and representing the priestly nature of God's people, highlighting that all believers become priests in this new reality. Additionally, there's a connection of the stones with the Garden of Eden.

11. Why is there no temple in the New Jerusalem?

12. There is no separate, physical temple in the New Jerusalem because God and the Lamb are its temple. The presence of sin, which necessitated a physical temple, is removed, allowing God to dwell directly with his people without a physical intermediary. The entire city, therefore, becomes a temple with God at its center.

13. Why is there no need for sun or moon in the New Jerusalem?

14. The New Jerusalem does not need the sun or moon because God and the Lamb are its light. The glorious presence of God, and the light associated with that presence, completely fills the city. This symbolizes the all-encompassing and overwhelming nature of God's presence in the new creation, creating a city that is completely infused with the divine.

15. Who are the "nations" that enter the New Jerusalem, and where do they come from?

16. These nations are the converted people of all nations that have been redeemed and are now part of God's people. They represent the fulfillment of the theme of universal salvation that pervades the book of Isaiah and which is present throughout Revelation. This imagery from Isaiah is used by John to demonstrate that the new Jerusalem welcomes all peoples, not just the traditional "chosen people". They are not outside of the new creation looking to get in, but the symbolic language of "entering" uses imagery from Isaiah of the nations coming to the light of the new Jerusalem as a way to highlight that salvation is universal for all the nations that are brought in by that light.