

## **Mathewson Storyline Of The Bible Lecture 6 - Revelation**

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This is the sixth and final lecture by Dr. Dave Mathewson on the storyline of the Bible. In this lecture, he'll treat the general epistles and then conclude with the book of Revelation. As in all his lectures here, he will be developing the five themes, the covenant, the people of God, the temple, the land, and kingship.

Now, Dr. Dave Mathewson. What we want to do in this final lecture is two things, trace these five themes of the story throughout the remainder of the New Testament letters from Hebrews through to a couple of references of the Johannine letters. And what I'm going to do, this will not be nearly as extensive as what we did with the Pauline epistles or with the Gospels, but I just want to give you enough to demonstrate and enough examples in different portions of what are called the general epistles usually to demonstrate that, again, the theme or the story and its five themes are either assumed or they explicitly surface in several sections of the general epistles in service of the author's purpose.

Obviously, the authors can emphasize different parts of the theme or the story depending on the purpose for which they're writing or the needs that they're addressing. But nonetheless, when we put it all together, we continue to see that these five main themes as part of this story all surface in different places throughout the general epistles. And then the second thing we'll do is end by looking at how these themes climax in the final vision of Revelation as kind of the finale of the story and the conclusion to the story that emphasizes the not yet and the consummation of what is already inaugurated through Jesus and His church and His followers in the rest of the New Testament.

So, let's look at what is known as the general epistles or the rest of the New Testament exclusive for now of Revelation. But for example, the theme of people of God. One place where you find this expressed most clearly is in a text in 1 Peter and chapters 2 and verses 9 and 10, where, again, notice what I want you to note is the Old Testament language that applies to Israel as the people of God now gets applied to the church as the new people of God, as the restored people of God.

So, Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 2 and 9 and 10, "...but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." So, in applying this text to the church that Peter is addressing, he clearly concedes of them as the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of the restoration of God's people.

So language that originally referred to Israel now gets applied to the church as God's people. We said one of them, and there are other texts that we could look at, but one of the other themes closely related to people is covenant. God enters into a covenant relationship with His people.

That's what establishes them as His people. The covenant formula, I will be your God, you will be my people. The place that we probably most clearly see covenant language is found in the book of Hebrews that actually takes up the language from Jeremiah chapter 31 and now sees it as getting fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ in His death as a sacrifice along the lines of the Old Testament sacrifices.

Now Jesus' death inaugurates the new covenant of Jeremiah chapter 31. So here's Hebrews chapter 10 and starting with verse 8 and I'll read through 17. And again, much of this is a fairly extended quotation of Jeremiah 31.

So, it says, God finds fault with them when He says, the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt, for they did not continue in my covenant and so I had no concern for them, says the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God; they shall be my people. And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, for I will be merciful toward their iniquities.

I will remember their sins no more. The theme of forgiveness of sins. And then the last verse, I think I said 17, but in verse 13 I meant, in speaking of a new covenant, He has made the first one obsolete and what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

But the author goes on to demonstrate though that this new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah, which the very fact that God spoke of and promised a new covenant suggests that the old covenant would be replaced and would no longer be in force. Now the author is clear in the remainder of this section that Jesus Christ's death and Jesus Christ as a new priest ministering in a heavenly temple clearly indicates the inauguration of this covenant. So, Hebrews in particular not only assumes but clearly develops the theme of Jesus inaugurating Jeremiah's new covenant that now brings salvation to the people.

Again, I would suggest too that wherever the Holy Spirit is mentioned throughout the general letters, Hebrews up to the book of Revelation, wherever the Holy Spirit is

mentioned, once again like Paul, it assumes the new covenant. The Holy Spirit from Ezekiel 37 being the gift of the new covenant or associated with the establishment of God's covenant. So, the church, God's people are seen as the true people of God in fulfillment of this theme.

God enters into a new covenant. They are established by virtue of the establishment of the new covenant. They are constituted God's people by the establishment of the new covenant.

He is their God. They will be his people. Finally or next, the theme of kingship or Davidic rule.

Again, starting with Hebrews chapter 1 in verse 5, for to which of the angels did God ever say, You are my son, today I have begotten you. Or again, I will be his father and he will be my son. That's language that comes out of Psalm chapter 2, a royal or Davidic Psalm, and 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic covenant formula.

So that now Jesus Christ is clearly dressed as the son of David. This is probably already been anticipated up in the first couple of verses of chapter 1, particularly in verse 3. He, referring to Jesus, God's son, he is the reflection of God's glory, the exact imprint of God's very being, perhaps suggesting image of God language. And he sustains all things by his powerful word.

When he made purifications for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God on high or the majesty on high, evoking Psalm 110. So clearly, Jesus is seen as the one who fulfills the promise of a vice-regent, a Davidic king, who will rule over God's people, but who will extend God's rule throughout the entire creation in fulfillment of Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and ultimately the intention for the king who would sit on David's

throne. So clearly Hebrews draws together language in chapter 1 already of both creation, but also Davidic kingship.

You find that further later on in Hebrews chapter 2, and verses 5 through 8, which again has a fairly lengthy quotation out of Psalm chapter 8, a Psalm we saw back in Ephesians chapter 1. So, the author of Hebrews says, Now God did not subject the coming world about which we are speaking to angels, but someone testified somewhere, i.e. the author of Psalm 8, What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels. You have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet. And then the author in his commentary on this song goes on and says, Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control.

As it is, we do not yet see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering and death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. So what is going on here? Basically, the author seems to be saying, Jesus Christ has inaugurated this Psalm 8, which clearly, as we've already seen, Psalm 8 goes back to creation.

It's a Psalm about the original creation, where God creates humanity in His image to rule over creation. That has now begun to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We already see Jesus, who now is already in the process of accomplishing our salvation and subjecting all things under His feet in anticipation of the time when this Psalm will, in fulfillment of God's intention for creation, will find its ultimate expression.

But notice, Jesus is the one who tastes death for everyone. Later on, He's described as the one who brings verse 10, It is fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their

salvation perfect through suffering. So, Jesus, who fulfills Psalm 8, is the means by which we achieve our destiny of fulfilling God's intention in Psalm 8 of humanity ruling over all of creation.

So, clearly, the author of Hebrew sees Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of both of the Davidic promises of a vice-regent, a king, who would rule, but also, ultimately, connecting it back to creation with a text like Psalm 8. Our intention, our destiny that was intended to be accomplished by Adam in Genesis 1 and 2, is now accomplished through Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith and our salvation. To just give you a demonstration of another text, one that we've already read that clearly talks in terms of kingship that now applies specifically to the people, we've already looked at 1 Peter 2 and verses 9 and 10, but to repeat verse 9 of 1 Peter chapter 2, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood. Notice the language of kingdom or royalty, a holy nation.

Again, Israel's intention was to be both a kingdom and a priesthood in fulfillment of God's intention for His people and, ultimately, creation. Now, that gets applied to God's people. Again, there are other texts that we could point to that connect Jesus, perhaps, to the fulfillment of the promises made to David or that connect to the theme of ruling, but we'll look at that more explicitly when we get to Revelation chapters 1 and 2. So, people of God, new covenant where God establishes a covenant relationship with His people, the theme of kingship expressed in the Davidic king, the vice-regent fulfilled in Christ, but also to spread throughout ruling the entire earth in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2. What about temple language or temple imagery? 1 Peter, again, 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 4, 5, and especially verses 4, 5, and 6 as well, we'll read that, verses 4, 5, and 6. And verse 9 as well, where they are called a royal priesthood, the people are called a royal priesthood.

But back to chapter 2 of 1 Peter in verses 4 through 6, and what I want you to notice is how, like Paul and other New Testament authors, Peter uses temple language to apply to the people themselves so that the restored temple is found in the people themselves, not a separate structure. So, 1 Peter 2, 4 through 6, you come to Him, a living stone to Jesus Christ, though rejected by mortals, yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, you yourselves are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture, see, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will be not put to shame.

So, Peter seems to pick up on that idea of the church as a temple, a spiritual temple, whose sacrifices are not the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, but whose sacrifices now are sacrifices of praise and worship and obedience that are offered to Jesus Christ. Hebrews chapter 10, to go back to the book of Hebrews again, Hebrews chapter 10, and verses 19 through 22. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened up for us through the curtain that is through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed by pure water.

And there's a lot of that language that we could talk about what that might mean, but what I want you to look at is the fact that this language, again, reflects temple imagery. This language of approaching God and approaching his presence, the language of the priesthood, the language of being pure and being sprinkled clean and washed with pure water, all of that resonates with Old Testament language of the priesthood and the temple. So that once again, the author is suggesting through Jesus Christ, a new temple has been established.

We have immediate access to God's presence. And in fact, again, the church itself is the temple where God's presence resides. To the people of God, God has established a people in fulfillment of his intention from creation to have a people, to enter into a covenant relationship.

The new covenant has been established. God will be their God. They will be his people.

The Davidic kingship has been established with the Davidic king ruling from heaven over his people in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, in fulfillment of the Psalms, but also rules over all creation. God's people themselves are a kingship and participate in this rule. The temple has been established.

God's dwelling is now with his people. His tabernacle temple dwelling is now with his people who are the true temple as opposed to a separate physical structure. The last theme is land and creation.

Again, the theme of the land given to the people, given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2, given to Israel as a place of blessing in God's presence, but then the promise restoration eventually of a new creation, all of that language crops up as well. And again, I want to touch on just a handful of texts, starting again with 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1 in verses 3 and 4. And as I read this, I want you to notice again the inheritance land type of imagery. Verse 3 of 1 Peter 1, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by his great mercy, he has given us a new birth, which is creation language, or new creation language, into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the inauguration of the new creation from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept for heaven for you.



So note, again, not only the new creation language of new birth and resurrection but also the inheritance, so that now the inheritance, the heavenly inheritance that we now enjoy is seen as the ultimate fulfillment, I think, of the promise of inheriting the land. What the land typified and pointed to was ultimately now the blessings of salvation and the new creation that have already been fulfilled and inaugurated in the person of Jesus Christ. That was 1 Peter 1 verse 3 and verse 4. A text that we haven't looked at yet, but John chapter 1, to look at the creation land theme or more new creation theme from a different angle, 1 John chapter 2 and verse 17.

If I can back up to verses 15 and 16, "...do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world. For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride of riches, which some have often linked back with the original temptation in Genesis chapter 3, they come not from the Father, but from the world.

And the world and its desires are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever." In other words, here we see the decreation theme. The present world is already passing away in anticipation of a new creation. And again, John does not use the new creation language explicitly here, but he certainly uses the notion of a decreation of the present earth.

The present world is already passing away in anticipation of the inauguration and fulfillment of a new creation. James chapter 1 and verse 18, again, just to bring in another text that we haven't looked at yet. Chapter 1 and verse 18, "...in fulfillment of his own purpose, he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creation." Notice the language of new birth, fruits, and creation combined in that one section.

So again, I think James is assuming that the new creation has been inaugurated. The text from the Old Testament prophets that refer to a new creation, a new birth, the fruitfulness that will spring up now is found in James' statement that God has given us a new birth, that we might become a first fruits of his creation. The new creation has already been inaugurated by those who respond to the word in faith and obedience, according to James chapter 1 and James chapter 2. But probably the text that says more than any other text, in the general epistles at least, about the theme of the land and creation is Hebrews, back in Hebrews, in chapters 3 and 4. And I don't want to read this whole section, but this is in the context of one of the warnings that dot the literary landscape of Hebrews.

And in this section, the author warns his readers, probably Jewish Christians, not to miss this rest. That is, they have a rest available to them. And the author clearly identifies that rest as, we might say, resting in Jesus Christ, as salvation in Christ Jesus.

So, he's warning his readers, don't miss that and turn away from that. But what is intriguing is the way he does so, by comparing the author of Hebrews, whoever that may be, comparing his readers to the Old Testament people of God. In other words, he compares his readers to their ancestors who wandered in the wilderness up to the promised land.

Yet, if you remember this Old Testament story, when God's people after God rescued them from Egypt and the Exodus, led them through the wilderness up to the promised land, they refused to go in. They refused to obey God's promise and His command to go in. And because of disobedience, they were not permitted to do so.

Until later on, Joshua would take them in. But notice that in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4, the author tells his readers, don't miss this salvation rest that has now been provided by Jesus Christ. Do not miss this rest that comes in Christ.

I take it that's what he means by rest. But notice how he links that back to the Old Testament. In chapter 4 and verse 2, he says, For indeed, the good news came to us, the author of Hebrews' readers in the first century, just as to them, the Old Testament people of God who wandered in the wilderness.

But the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said. So clearly, his readers can enter this rest, which if you read chapters 3 and 4, he clearly links with salvation in Christ, with resting in Christ and trusting Christ for their salvation.

Verse 10, again the idea of rest, For those who enter God's rest also cease from their own labors. So resting and trusting in Christ, not one's own works and one's own labor. Verses 12 and 13, Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joint from arrow.

It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all stand naked and lay bare before the eyes of the one whom we must render account. So it's the word of God that judges according to who enters this rest.

So, there's a promised rest available to the people of God determined by Jesus Christ himself. At times I wonder if the reference to the word of God as a living, active, sharper than any two-edged sword is meant to refer to Christ himself. Although again, it could refer to the gospel or the word of God that is proclaimed.

But clearly this is meant to judge as far as who enters that rest. And the warning, don't fall short of this rest, don't miss this rest that is inaugurated in Christ, this resting and trusting in Christ. But I want you to note two things.

Notice how this is linked, first of all, to the promised land given to Israel. Verse 8, For if Joshua had given them rest when he took them into the promised land, God would not speak later about another day. That is, there's Psalm 95 that the author's quote, seems to anticipate that there's still a rest available.

And now the author says if Joshua had given the people the final rest, even though it was rest, if that was all there was, why was God still promising a rest much later in Psalm 95? And now the author of Hebrews is saying that rest is now available through Jesus Christ. So again, what the rest that the people enjoyed in the promised land that was given them in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham is now ultimately fulfilled in resting in Jesus Christ and the salvation that he provides in Hebrews 4 and 5, 3 and 4. This is, again, why the people are told, don't miss this rest that is still available to you through the person of Jesus Christ. So it's linked back to the promised land.

I take it that the rest that Christ provides is the ultimate fulfillment and the inauguration of the rest that was only typified and anticipated in the land of blessing and God's presence that was given to Israel. But notice how this rest is also connected all the way back to creation. Genesis 3 and 4. For we who have believed entered that rest, just as God said, as in my anger I swore they shall not enter my rest, quoting Psalm 95.

Though his works were finished at the foundation of the world, for in one place it speaks about the seventh day as followed, and God rested on the seventh day from

all his works. So, notice how the author links this back to the creation narrative. So at the very least, although there's other things going on here, at the very least, the author sees the rest that can be experienced in Christ, the salvation that one participates in in Christ, that's described in the rest of Hebrews, is a fulfillment of the promised land, the rest that the people were to enjoy in the land of promise given to Israel, but ultimately the rest that was associated with the original creation back in Genesis chapter 3 and 4. Now that story reaches its climax in the rest that is now enjoyed in the person of Jesus Christ.

So again, ultimately the promise of land, the original creation, the promise of land to Israel reaches its fulfillment in resting in Christ and trusting in him for one's salvation. So in conclusion to the general epistles before we look at Revelation, the general epistles as well at times explicitly surface, but at other times just underneath the surface lies the assumption of this story and these five main themes of land and creation, of the temple, of people of God, of the new covenant, and of kingship, Davidic kingship, and rulership. Now throughout the New Testament, Paul's epistles, even back to the Gospels, Paul's epistles and the general epistles that we went on a very brief and hurried tour of, we see that the emphasis is primarily on, that we focused on has been on the already aspect, the inaugurated aspect of the story, but there are plenty of hints scattered throughout Paul's letters and the rest of the New Testament of the already or the not yet dimension, the consummated dimension that is yet to come.

We saw that in connection, for example, with Paul's reference in Ephesians 1.10, that God's plan is that one day all things will be summed up in Christ and find the rightful, all things in heaven and earth will find the rightful place in relationship to Christ. But it's Revelation 21 and 22 that have the most detailed articulation of the consummation of this story. Here's the finale.

Here's the kind of conclusion to the story found in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. And what I want to demonstrate in this section again is that virtually all the five themes, as well as some other things, but all five themes that we've talked about clearly find their climax in and finale in Revelation 21 and 22. So that all the threads of the story that keep emerging in other sections and intertwining now all come together in all their glory and all their fullness in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 in this apocalyptic vision that John has.

And as we talk about this, it's clear that John goes all the way back to the Old Testament, the prophetic text, as well as creation, but also sees them in light of the New Testament and how they've been fulfilled in Christ. But now they have reached their final fulfillment. So, for example, we'll start with the theme of the people of God.

This final vision of Revelation centers around, in some respects, focuses on the consummated people of God, starting with God's intention to create a people in Genesis 1 and 2 that now is fulfilled in God's choice of Israel as his people, his nation. And we saw in the New Testament now gets fulfilled in Christ and his church, now finds its ultimate expression in the people of God, the vision of the people of God in Revelation 21 and 22. So, for example, let me just point out some of the features of the theme of people of God that pick up previous Old Testament texts.

In Revelation chapters 21 and 22, we find the consummated people of God referred to as a bride, which, again, is Old Testament language. God's people in the Old Testament were frequently referred to as God's wife, as God's bride, as a woman that God married and was entered into a relationship with, a covenant relationship with, which raises the issue of covenant. That gets picked up in the New Testament.

For example, Paul's letters where the church is the bride of Jesus Christ. But now in Revelation chapter 21 and verse 2, and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And verse 9, then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb.

So clearly the marriage imagery, the nuptial imagery from the Old Testament to depict God's relationship with His people now gets fulfilled ultimately in the marriage that gets consummated and ultimately takes place in Genesis chapters 21 and 22. Notice two other features that occur that kind of bring the redemptive history of God's dealing with His people together now in one place is this city, again, John is seeing a vision so that I take it that we're to take this with seriousness as a symbolic depiction of what he sees. But still, the symbols and images come right out of the Old Testament.

So, John sees a city which I would argue that this, what John sees is not a physical city. What it refers to is not primarily a physical city, but much like we saw in earlier New Testament text where building and temple imagery refer to the people, what this city that John sees primarily refers to is the people themselves. What God sees is the perfected consummated people themselves.

So that in verse 12, this city has great high walls with 12 gates, and at the gates, 12 angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. But the city also has foundations. And in chapter 21 and verse 14, he says, and the wall of the city has 12 foundations and on them, on these foundations, are the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

So, John sees the consummated perfected people of God consisting of both Old Testament Israel, but he seems to give primacy of place to the new people of God,

which is built on the foundation of the apostles. But clearly he sees continuity between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God that now come together in John's vision of the perfected consummated people of God. There are other things we could say about that theme.

Intriguingly, ultimately, this people of God is a light to all the nations. So, in verses 23 and 24, the city has no need of the sun or moon to shine, for the glory of the Lord is its light. The nations will walk by the light.

The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. So now in fulfillment of God's intention for humanity to fill all of creation with God's glory, that now reaches its climax with all peoples coming to the New Jerusalem in response to its light. The theme of covenant, we said at the heart of the theme of the people of God or related to it is the theme of God's covenant.

In Revelation chapter 21 and verse 3, John hears a voice from the throne and it says, see, the dwelling of God is among his people or humanity. He will dwell with them. They will be his people.

And God himself will be their God and will be God with them. This section is one of the closest things we find in Revelation to an actual quotation of an Old Testament text. Without having the formula, this took place to fulfill what was written.

The wording here is very, very close to Ezekiel chapter 37 and verse 27 and the covenant formula where you will be my... The new covenant formula, you will be my people. They will be my God. I will be your God.

We saw that the new covenant was already fulfilled in Christ and in his people, but now the new covenant reaches its climactic fulfillment in the consummated, perfected people of God in a covenant relationship with God himself. The easy one,



and here's where we get some closure to one of the themes that didn't seem to emerge quite as clearly, and that's the theme of land and creation. Chapter 21 verse 1, in a sense, provides a summary for understanding the rest of this section.

And in chapter 21 and verse 1, then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away and the sea was no more. That is clearly, again, almost word for word from Isaiah chapter 65, and the new creation text, of which mentions the heavens and the earth goes back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2. So now, in analogy to the first creation, where God creates an environment, a land suitable for his people to live in, where God will live in their midst, now in a new creative act, in continuity with Genesis 1 and 2, in fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 65, now John sees the new creation emerging as a gift for the people, as a blessing given to the people.

In fact, later on in verse 7, in kind of an exhortational conclusion to this vision of a new creation, verse 7 says, those who conquer will inherit these things. Notice the language of inheritance that, as we said, is connected back to Abraham and his ancestors in Israel inheriting the land. But now it says, those who conquer will inherit these things.

What things? This new creation and the new covenants are described in 21, 1 through 4. So now God's people inherit not the promised land of Israel, but now they inherit the new creation. The goal and climax of the creation were inaugurated through Jesus Christ. The land that was given to Israel, that itself was to reflect the original creation of Genesis 1 and 2, now that finds its ultimate climax and expression in the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, that John envisions in this final chapter of Revelation.

To demonstrate, though, that John goes back not only to Isaiah chapter 65, but to the original creation, is chapter 22, the first couple chapters of 22. Then the angel showed me, that John was having a vision, a common feature of apocalyptic visions was for a supernatural angelic being to take the person on kind of a visionary tour, and so now the angel takes him and shows him something. Then the angel showed me, Revelation 22, 1, show me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city.

On either side of the river is the tree of life, with its 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and its leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nation. Now, notice all the features of new creation, that actually they come via Ezekiel 47, this much of Revelation 21 and 22, is modeled on Ezekiel's vision in chapter 40 through 48, so this is clearly modeled on Ezekiel 47, but Ezekiel 47 itself goes back to Genesis 1 and 2, and John himself goes back to Genesis 1 and 2, with the clear reference to the tree of life, which Ezekiel does not have, Ezekiel has a number of trees, but only John here has the tree of life, a clear allusion to Genesis chapter 2, and the mention of the tree of life, so the idea of the water flowing from the garden, back in Genesis 2, and all the fruitfulness, the tree of life, all of this suggests that John envisions the new creation as a return to Eden, so the long-awaited fulfillment of the intention of God for his creation, in Genesis 1 and 2, of the land as a suitable environment, a place of blessing and life, a place where God's presence resided with his people, that has now been fulfilled in the Edenic-like conditions of the new creation, in Revelation chapter 21 and 22. Kind of an aside, but it's still related to the new creation and the land motif, what about this mention in chapter 21.1, where the sea is no more, the author said, I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away in fulfillment of Isaiah 65, but then he adds, and the sea was no more, which you don't find in Isaiah chapter 65, and I often wondered, why does John include this as a part of his vision of a new creation? This has troubled some people, including my wife that likes the sea and the ocean, and wondering, will there be

oceans in the new creation? But I think we need to understand what John is doing with this image.

The first thing to recognize is consistent with other Old Testament texts and consistent with apocalyptic literature that John resembles, the sea was often symbolic of or emblematic of evil and chaos, that which was opposed to God's people, that which caused trouble for God's people, and so by envisioning that the sea was no more, I think John is simply saying, everything in the new creation that opposed God's purpose, that was chaotic and evil, and caused trouble for God's people, has now been removed, so that John can not only say the sea was no more, but he's also going to say, crying in pain and mourning are no more, why? Because the sea has been removed, the sea is no more, the trouble of the new creation, and chaos and evil have been removed, they're no more, so trouble and sorrow and mourning and pain are no more as well in chapter 21 verse 4. But to push that a little bit further, I think John, in addition to that, and in connection with that, is also evoking another motif, and that is, where in the Old Testament do you find the notion of removal of water that poses a threat and a hindrance to God's people entering into their inheritance? The Exodus. In fact, it's the book of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah, that most clearly resonates with the New Exodus theme, and all through the prophet Isaiah, you find this theme of the disappearance of different bodies of water, of drying up the water. One of the clearest examples of that is found in Isaiah chapter 51, I think is the one I want, Isaiah chapter 51, where the author says this, here it is, verses 9 and 10, Awake, awake, again, referring to the restoration of Israel as a New Exodus.

He says, awake, awake, put on the strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the days of old, as you did in the Exodus, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea away for the redeemed to

cross over? Now, what's interesting is the connection of Rahab and the dragon, which are chaotic beastly figures with the sea. It was common in apocalyptic-type literature and other literature to associate the sea as a place of chaos and evil with the beast or dragon type or beastly-type, serpent type figures.

And what is even more interesting, is the Targum of Isaiah chapter 51, the Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament, the Targum of Isaiah 51 identifies Rahab and the dragon as Pharaoh. So here in Isaiah chapter 51, the author has combined the Exodus and the disappearing and drying up of the sea as the place of that of chaos and evil associated with the dragon and Rahab, this dragon-type, serpent-type, beastly type figure. So the first Exodus was in a sense seen as a new creation where God overcame evil and chaos in removing the threat of trouble and evil and chaos so that the people could walk over and enter into their... the redeemed could cross over into their inheritance.

Now what John is doing is picking up on that new Exodus theme and saying in the same way, the Red Sea, in the same way God did so in their first Exodus and in fulfillment of the anticipation of a new Exodus in Isaiah 51 and other Isaiah texts, now in Revelation 21, God once again dries up the Red Sea of chaos and evil and distress and trouble that form a barrier to God's people enjoying their land. He removes that so that now God's people can cross over into their inheritance, chapter 21, verse 7, their inheritance, which is the new creation. And so again, more is going on here than just John sees a new creation is clearly this is the end of a long story that goes all the way back to Genesis 1 and 2, weaves its way through creation, the Exodus, and God's establishing of his people Israel in the land and now that finds its climax in the new creation of Revelation 21 and 22.

The remaining two themes, the theme of temple, is rather clear in Revelation 21 and 22, though John does something very different with it. The fulfillment and

establishment of a temple is already indicated in verse 3. Which we just read in association with the new covenant.

And by the way, in Ezekiel 37, where John gets the new covenant language, Ezekiel connects the new covenant with the dwelling of God, with the theme of temple. So now, likewise, John says, I heard a voice from the throne saying, see the dwelling, the dwelling of God is among mortals, he will dwell with them. That's the verb of taking up residence, used of God taking up residence in his temple.

God will dwell with them, they will be his people, God himself will be with them, the covenant formula. So 21.3 clearly broadcasts God's intention to restore his temple in fulfillment of the prophetic expectations of a renewed temple, Ezekiel 40-48. Now John sees that as being fulfilled, yet the way that happens is very different.

In most Jewish apocalypses, what they all have in common is they all envision, consistent with the Old Testament prophetic vision, the restoration of a physical temple. Yet John is at odds, John is at odds with the prophetic text, but he would have also been at odds with the common Greco-Roman architecture of a city and the layout of a city. When John finally gets to the center of the city in chapter 21 and verse 22, John says, and I saw no temple in the city.

So, John's city doesn't have a temple. Why? He goes on and says because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. In other words, what the temple realized and symbolized, the temple that was kind of a miniature Eden and kind of just a snapshot of what God intended for the entire creation to be, has now been realized.

Now that sin and evil have been removed, now that there's a new creation, the very thing that necessitated a temple in the first place, that is sin and a world under the dominion of the powers of evil, now that that's been removed, there's no longer

need for a separate temple. So, John says, unlike the Old Testament visions and other apocalyptic visions of the future, unlike what he may have found in a traditional Greco-Roman city, now John doesn't see a separate temple. Why? Because it's no longer needed.

The entire city is so infused with God's presence that a separate temple is no longer necessary. And again, sin and evil have been removed. But John goes beyond that in that, interestingly, he takes temple imagery, though, in a sense, there still is a temple.

Yes, there's no separate temple, but in a sense, there still is a temple, because John takes the temple imagery from Ezekiel 40 through 48. Remember, Ezekiel 40 through 48 was largely devoted to a description of a restored temple. Now John applies that to the city.

So what gets measured in Revelation 21 and 22 is not the temple, as you find in Ezekiel, but what gets measured is the city itself. The city, which we said symbolizes the people, is now the temple. The entire city, which is the people, is a grand temple where God now takes up residence, where God's presence is now found.

In other words, John is reflecting, in consummated form, John is reflecting basically what other New Testament authors were saying, that the people themselves were the temple, that the people are being built up. Perhaps we can see Paul and Peter as looking at the process of building, and now the building is complete in Revelation 21 and 22. John sees the consummated people temple, people temple, city temple, as the place of God's presence, the fulfillment of God's intention to live with His people that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

In fact, there's other features that suggest this is a temple. Notice, when you read this, how many times gold plays a feature. You're familiar with the streets of gold, but the city in verse 18 is pure gold.

There are streets of gold. Gold was one of the features of the Old Testament temple. Go back to Exodus 25 and following, 1 Kings 5-7.

But again, gold goes all the way back to creation. Gold is one of the precious metals found in the Garden of Eden. So the fact that the city shimmers with gold suggests it is the temple, the dwelling place of God.

In chapter 21 and verse 16, the city is shaped like a cube. The city lies foursquare. Its length is the same as its width.

That language comes out of the description of the Holy of Holies. This is not an architectural feature that John is trying to emphasize, just for its own sake, but this repeats the description of the Holy of Holies back in 1 Kings. Its length and breadth were equal.

It's cube-shaped. So now, by depicting the city as cube-shaped, again, all the temple imagery is now applied to the city of God. The precious stones which were used in the building of the temple now are part of the city.

So again, what is John saying? The true intention of God to dwell with His people in creation that was thwarted and ruined because of sin, but what began to be realized with the establishment of the temple, what that pointed to is ultimately realized not in a restoration of a physical temple, but like creation in Genesis 1 and 2, God dwelling in the midst of His people in a new creation. The final theme, kingship, and rule, emerges in chapter 22 and verses 3 and 5. In the final descriptions of this city-slash-temple, people-city-slash-temple-slash new creation, John says, Nothing

accursed will be found there anymore, but the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship them. Notice again, the throne as an image of kingship and rulership.

But then verse 5, And there will be no more night, they, the people of God who live there, need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever in fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2, that His people would fill the earth with His glory and represent, as His image-bearers represent His rule and spread His rule throughout all creation. Now His people reign forever in a new creation. So, Revelation 21 and 22 brings us to the end of a long story, the climax of a long story of God's redemptive dealing with His people and with all of creation.

A story that begins in Genesis 1 and 2, where God creates a people to enter into a covenant relationship with. He gives them a land, creates a land, an environment for them to live in, gives it to them as a place of blessing. God will dwell in their midst.

Their mandate, God's intention for them is that they might, as His image-bearers, represent God's rule and spread His glory throughout all creation. Yet that intention fails so that God... The rest of the Bible is how God intends to fulfill His original intention from Genesis 1 and 2. How will God restore His intention for a humanity that He lives in a covenant relationship with, that lives in a land, that place of blessing that God gives them? God dwells in their midst, and humanity ruling over all of creation and spreads God's rule throughout all creation. That story that winds its way through the Old and New Testament, that sometimes has its stops and its starts, but that gets inaugurated in Jesus Christ and His people, now finds its consummation in Revelation 21 and 22 with God dwelling His temple, tabernacling presence with His people, dwelling with His people in new covenant relationship with them on a new earth, in a new creation, with humanity fulfilling the purpose of ruling over all of creation.