

Revelation 21: The New Creation and the Bride, New Jerusalem

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Dave Mathewson examines Revelation 21:1–21, presenting the New Creation and New Jerusalem as the definitive climax and fulfillment of God's redemptive story. He demonstrates that the New Creation represents a physical transformation and renewal of the earth rather than a disembodied heavenly escape, entirely stripping away evil, death, and chaos. Drawing extensively on Old Testament backgrounds—particularly Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Exodus motif—Mathewson explains how the New Jerusalem bride symbolizes the perfected, consummated people of God dwelling eternally in God's sanctuary presence.

Outline

I. Introduction to Revelation 21 (Rev 21:1–8)

- A. Climax and final phase of the Book of Revelation
- B. Transition from judgment in chapter 20 to the final climactic vision
- C. Introduction of foundational themes developed in Rev 21:9–22:5

II. The Vision of the New Creation (Rev 21:1)

- A. Arrival of the new heaven and new earth following final judgment
- B. Old Testament Backgrounds
 - 1. Fulfillment of Isaiah 65:17 regarding post-exilic restoration and new creation
 - 2. Restoration of original creation ruined by sin in Genesis 3
- C. Physicality, Continuity, and Transformation
 - 1. Qualitative newness and renewal versus total annihilation or ex nihilo creation
 - 2. Rejection of Gnostic eschatology: Earthly physical destiny versus disembodied cloud existence
- D. Symbolic Removal of the Sea
 - 1. Sea as the realm of chaos, evil, death, and demonic beasts (Rev 11, 13, 20)
 - 2. Removal of sea as a barrier to inheriting full salvation and reward
 - 3. The New Exodus motif: Drying up the eschatological Red Sea (Isaiah 51:9; 40–66)

III. The Covenant Formula and Divine Presence (Rev 21:2–5)

- A. The New Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband
- B. Auditory Interpretation: Tabernacle Dwelling of God
 - 1. Fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant formula (Leviticus 26:11–12; Ezekiel 37:26–27)
 - 2. Expansion of covenant blessings beyond national Israel to all nations, tribes, and tongues
- C. Total Removal of the Old Order's Effects (Rev 21:4)
 - 1. Wiping away tears born of worldly suffering, pain, and persecution
 - 2. Absolute elimination of death, mourning, crying, and pain
- D. Divine Proclamation: "I am making everything new" (Rev 21:5; Isaiah 43:19)

IV. Promises and Heritage for the Overcomers (Rev 21:6–8)

- A. Divine Sovereign Titles: Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End
- B. Provision of the water of life without cost (Isaiah 55:1) versus Roman economic exploitation
- C. Inheritance of the New Creation
 - 1. Ultimate consummation of the Abrahamic land promise to God's people
 - 2. Application of Davidic covenant sonship (2 Samuel 7:14) to all believers in Christ
- D. Exclusion and judgment of the unfaithful in the lake of fire / second death (Rev 21:8)

V. The Vision of the New Jerusalem Bride (Rev 21:9–10)

- A. Angelic introduction mirroring the judgment vision of Babylon (Rev 17)
- B. The "Hear and See" Literary Motif
 - 1. What John hears: "The bride, the wife of the Lamb"
 - 2. What John sees: "The holy city, Jerusalem"
- C. Equating the New Jerusalem with the consummated, perfected people of God

VI. Architectural Features and Symbolism of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:11–21)

- A. Sanctuary of Divine Presence and Glory
 - 1. Radiance like precious jasper, connecting back to God's throne in Rev 4
 - 2. Confluence and merging of heaven with earth
- B. Gates, Foundations, and Structural Makeup
 - 1. Twelve gates inscribed with the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 48)
 - 2. Twelve foundations inscribed with the twelve apostles of the Lamb
 - 3. Synthesis of Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Church into one unified people
 - 4. Allusion to Isaiah 54:11–12 and Qumran Scroll symbolic interpretations
 - 5. Gate ordering (East, North, South, West) following Ezekiel 40 court measurements
- C. Temple and Holy of Holies Imagery
 - 1. Pure gold construction of streets, city, and measuring rod (1 Kings 5–7)
 - 2. Perfect cube dimensions (12,000 stadia length, width, and height)

3. Direct allusion to the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:20)
4. New Jerusalem as the ultimate fulfillment of Ezekiel's end-time temple (Ezekiel 40–48)