

## THE HOLY CITY

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All we say concerning the Book of Revelation is only ever said as part of the rich insights which are in fact linked with and integral to the Resurrection body of Jesus. This is our starting point, and where we work from, in terms of the true logic of the world. All that is said, includes the fruitful intention, and outworking of Jesus' crucifixion, seen from God's perspective. This is a central part of God's plan to redeem—to make former things new.

*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, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).*

1. 'New' earth is a Greek word 'kainos' not 'neos'. It means the evil of the **old** creation is judged, and finished, and the substance of the creation, is regenerated. There is both continuity, and discontinuity with former things. The old has passed away. Yet, as Jesus promised: 'the meek will inherit 'the earth' (Matthew 5:5).
2. The sea was no more. The sea to a person in John's community represented CHAOS. There will be no more chaos. Hopefully there will however, be fishing and surfing.

## COUNTRY LAD MEETS THE CITY

To me, a lad, growing up in the country, on a dairy farm, the city was at first, an unusual place, something of a mystery. I can recall seeing the vast suburbs on the Adelaide plains, and the city centre in the distance, from the top of O'Halloran Hill, and thinking – 'what on earth, do all these people actually do down there? What do they produce? Why do they all gather together squashed into one place?

However, the city had fascinating sights and sounds, smells, foods and clothing. The people standing on the corners, in the afternoons, with a small collection of goods, crying out '*Neewe's paper. Pop group, the Beatles to visit Australia. Read all about it*'. There was the city zoo, with an amazing collection of the world's animals. There was the peace and beauty of the botanical gardens, and the massive Moreton Bay Fig trees. There was the fun of the Ferris Wheel and the Dodgem cars at the Royal Adelaide Show,

Decades ago, the famous author, Aldous Huxley, said of the massive, highly populated, busy-bicycle, Chinese city of Shanghai "*nothing more intensely living can be imagined*".

## THE CITY FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

1. The city plays a crucial role in the story of salvation. *Abraham looked forward to the city that has **foundations** whose **architect** and **builder** is God.*(Gen. 12, Heb. 11:10).
2. At first the city seems to be a place of rebellion, and of evil. For Cain the murderer, punished and driven to be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, builds a city (Genesis 4:17).
3. Later, the Tower of Babel is a humanly devised city, with an agenda contrary to God's plan for the people of earth (Genesis 11:4).

4. Then we have the city of Babylon, where the powers of evil seek to establish themselves (Revelation 17—18). This city stood in distinction from the city of Jerusalem, the city of God.
5. Psalm 87:3 says of Jerusalem: ‘Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God’. God’s people looked forward to going up to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple.
6. Glorious things were spoken of God’s saving power as they recounted the deed of God from the Exodus of slaves from Egypt, and as they celebrated the Passover.
7. In Kings 2:11 we read of the place of the city under a King. The two cities included in the length of the reign of King David are: "The days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem."
8. Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem. II Chronicles 9:30 cites the length of time that King Solomon ruled: "Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years."
9. Jesus and his family left home from Nazareth, and visited Jerusalem as a 12 year old boy. He sat in the Temple listening (Luke 2:41-51)
10. Jesus entered Jerusalem, having sat on a COLT to serve the nations in most important way (Matthew 21:1-16). He was arrested and suffered there, and put on trial. The gospels indicated Jesus was taken outside the old Jerusalem city wall to a skull shaped hill, called Golgotha, to be crucified.
11. Babylon is depicted in Revelation as an unholy city. It is the evil counterpart of the pure City of God, the new and heavenly Jerusalem. It is called ‘the mother of harlots’, and harlotry had to do with idolatry. In Revelation, People marvel at Babylon’s wealth, and her delicacies – signify the gourmet-pleasures of the nations (Rev. 17:1-8). The hedonistic thrust, the pleasure loving part of humanity. She is deceptive. She promises pleasure, where there can only be destruction. All the nations are drawn towards her. She is a woman seated on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names with 7 heads and 10 horns. The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls. She is drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. When John saw her he marvelled. But the angel said ‘Why marvel?’. She is headed for destruction.
12. In Revelation 18, we read of the fall of Babylon, falling in one hour (Rev. 18:10), much to the dismay of weeping and mourning by the merchants and business people who have put their hopes in a false city.

In the book of Revelation was have the final picture of **the Holy City**, central to the life of the age to come, where the Lord has redeemed creation, and all remnants of evil are destroyed.

**NOTE:** “the **Celestial City** was Christian's goal in John Bunyan's ‘Pilgrim's Progress’” (1684). Synonyms: City of God, Heavenly City, Holy City. The abode of God. Pilgrim leaves home, the city of destruction and heads out for the celestial city. He must pass through the slough of despond and also ‘Vanity Fair’.

This is the Holy City into which the people of God, bring ‘**the glory and the honour of the nations**’ (**Revelation 21:26**). This must surely mean, that all of that which has been authentic, in our lives—our love and service and genuine accomplishments, sufferings in following Jesus—which have been taken up, sanctified and redeemed through Jesus Christ, continue to have significance in the age to come. This continuity, of genuine past glories, joined together with New Creation newness is great incentive to value all that we are called to be part of now, with a view to the future. (STORY: “You can’t take it with you’. ‘Yes, in a way, you can!’)

## SUMMARY

Our 4 part series considered aspects of holy life that relate to a Holy God and his new people.

- (1) Holy Trinity—an awesome God burns up guilt (Isaiah 6:1-8)**
- (2) Holy Nation—The Lord, mutually devoted (Exodus 19:6)**
- (3) Holy Spirit—Paraclete (John 14, 16) Spotlight's Christ!**
- (4) Holy City—Community of Glory (Hebrew 11:10; Rev. 21:26)**

### **What we find in Scripture is the story of TWO CITIES:**

- (1) Cain's unholy city (Gen. 4:17), the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), as well as the seductive city of Babylon (Rev. 17:5) do not endure.
- (2) However, the holy city of Jerusalem (Psalm 87) and the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-22:5) are the community of faith, made holy by grace, through the true life of Jesus Christ.

### **Reflection:**

- 1. It is hoped t-by faith, we shall see our own 'city' plans as a false hope, when made and planned and enacted, a apart from Christ.
- 2. However, in Christ, as God's people, all that is true of the current 'glory and honour of the nations' (Rev. 21:26) will contribute to the age to come. Life now counts.

**Application:** You (we) all need to know that in the Lord, your labour is not in vain (1Corinthians 15:58). Like Abraham we are to look to a city that has foundations (solid). The Architect & Builder is God.

### **Illustrations:** *Book: Building Jerusalem. By Tristram Hunt.*

- 1. There was an era where Cities were Built to depict the HOLY CITY – river parklands.
- 2. There was a man who worked at HOLDEN saying rather sadly and wistfully

Man One: 'I used to design cars, the HOLDEN FX (1948), FJ FE FC FB EK EJ EH HD HR HK HQ HX HZ. But that's all gone now....

Man Two: It's not you know, because the kings of the earth bring the glory of nations into the Holy City. (Revelation 21:24, 26). All that is done in wrong motive is burned up. But all that is true, is part of the glory, that attends your entry into the Holy City.

*Risen Lord, enable us in love to serve you, and to serve one another, now unto your glory. For this, by grace alone, shall indeed be part of our glory, and the glory of the nations. Trevor*