

The New Jerusalem, Part Four: No Temple, No Sun, No Night (Revelation 21:22–27)

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Introduction

1. Sin brought judgment in Genesis; judgment will remove sin in Revelation. Revelation 21 and 22 present a new heavens and a new earth in which there will be no sin.
2. The purpose of Jesus' coming to earth was to redeem His people and His creation from the rebellion of Genesis 3—a rebellion that is portrayed as Babylon, which is judged and destroyed in Revelation 18. The evil powers that orchestrated the Babylonian rebellion are judged and punished in Revelation 19 and 20. What began in Genesis ends in Revelation.
3. The response to this victory of the Lamb is set forth in 19. It is the celebration of the *judgment* that ends sins reign on earth.

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” Once more they cried out, ‘Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever’” (Rev. 19:1–3).

Thus we are presented with the result of judgment's awful desolation of sin and evil:

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” (Rev. 19:6–8).

4. Sin and rebellion, having being purged by fire, are no more and a newly renovated heaven and earth are presented, having been made ready for the New Jerusalem—a new Eden, the new location of the throne God. No longer in heaven, the throne of God will be in the Jerusalem.

“And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’” (Rev. 21:5).

Out from under the throne will flow the river of life, watering the garden of God in which is the tree of life yielding 12 kinds of fruit for health and healing.

5. Even more gloriously: John declares: *“I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God’” (Rev. 21:3).*

What God desired in Genesis 3—to dwell with His image-bearers, in now fully and gloriously realized in Revelation 21. Sin marred the first Eden; judgment restored the second Eden. A sinless Adam fell in the first Eden, sinful sons and daughters of the first Adam now purified in the Last Adam are set to enjoy the glories of His full and unveiled presence.

6. The verses before us (22–27) further amplify the initial vision of the New Jerusalem introduced in verses 1–8.

Three marvelous facts are presented here: first, there is no temple in this city because the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple in it. Second, there is no sun or moon to give light to city because the glory of God provides all the light needed and the Lamb is its lamp.

Third, the city gates are never closed because there is no night there—it is a land of endless day.

I. No Temple Needed

1. The desire of God to dwell among His people (Lev. 26:11–13).

“I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect” (Lev. 26:11–13).

2. Observe the promise of 3:12: *“The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of [better, that is (appositional genitive)] my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”*
3. Earthly temples are necessary because God cannot openly dwell with His people for two reasons.

- a. His people are guilty of iniquity from which they need to be purged and cleansed

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden of God is often misunderstood. Why would God place this tree in the midst of the garden if He knew that Eve would fall for the temptation to eat of it?

What we must understand is that the tree was a symbol of faith and trust. It was meant to aid in Adam’s worship of the Lord by his believing and trusting Him in all things.

When Satan tempted Eve, she acted out of self-will. Adam also deliberately acted out of self-will and plunged the human race into the iniquity of rebellion. Iniquity is acting out of self-will rather than believing, trusting, and obeying God. The throne symbolizes God’s authority. Humans want to be self-enthroned, so they refuse to obey God. It is inherent in one’s nature to trust one’s own mind and heart and not God.

This portion of Revelation is a commentary on Ezekiel, chapters 40–43. Here is a portion of chapter 43:

“And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

“While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, and he said to me, ‘Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name’” (Ezek. 43 2–7). Israel is referred to as “a rebellious house” some 15 times in Ezekiel.

“As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits

and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out. This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple” (Ezek. 43 10–12).

b. His people need protection from the holiness of God.

God’s holiness is dangerous to sinful humans. *“Our God is a consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29).*

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: ‘Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?’” (Isa. 33:14).

“Moses said, ‘Please show me your glory.’ And he [God] said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live’” (Ex. 33:18–20). In Rev. 22:4, however, we read, “They will see his face.” Why?

4. Jesus Christ became the true temple, the true priest, and the perfect sacrifice for sins in order to purge and cleanse His people from all their iniquity and make them holy.

The temple in Jerusalem at the time of King Solomon was glorious but because of Israel’s persistent rebellion, God sent Babylon to destroy the city and sanctuary. When the captives returned, they were instructed to rebuild the city and the temple. Those who remembered the glory of the first temple wept over the inferior second temple. The prophet Haggai gave them God’s Word concerning this temple: *“The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:9).*

The latter and greater glory of the house was that Christ Jesus came into it. He also became the chief cornerstone to even the greater glory of the new temple, the church of Jesus Christ.

As Paul describes it: We are *“waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness [iniquity] and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works [people who trust and obey]” (Titus 2:13, 14).*

II. No Sun Needed

1. The first created order in Genesis 1, the sun and moon serve as providential servants to illuminate the earth, giving warmth and life and dividing the days into their proper periods of day and night, seasons and years.

These natural and created luminaries will not be able to compete with the glory that God will bring to the New Jerusalem: *“the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (v. 23).*

2. The presence of God in all His fullness of glory will be the only light needed.

I am often disappointed in those who call themselves believers who seem to be more enamored of the beauties of heaven's golden streets and walls with their gem-studded foundations. The statement that John gives about the Lord God's and the Lamb's presence out to fill us with such wonder that nothing else matters. "I've Got a Mansion Just Over the Hilltop" should be "I've Got a Savior Just Over in Glory."

Some churches seem so preoccupied with the glories and trapping of worship that they miss the true glory of God's house, which is Jesus Christ. There are churches who seek for simple and plain worship in order to focus on the glories of Christ, alone. We should also.

III. No Night There

1. There is no more danger, no more enemies, no thieves, no invaders or powers seeking to overthrow the city take it captive, but the nations will enter only to contribute their worship.

The sea is gone which once divided the nations of the earth. Now the nations come freely into the city to contribute to its worship.

"And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. . . . Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. . . . Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession" (Isa. 60:3, 5, 11).

"By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9).

Only those whose names are found in the Lamb's book of Life will be there

2. Jesus has finally and fully banished darkness (symbolic of sin and evil) from the new creation.

Application

The church of Jesus Christ is meant to be a model of the new creation.

1. A temple where true worship is carried out by a people purged from iniquity, pursuing holiness, and walking in trust and obedience to King Jesus.
2. A light of Christ to the nations, reflecting His glory in the earth.
3. A city where all the nations can come to bring their worship to honor Christ through the gospel.