

The New Creation

Heaven, Earth, Jerusalem, Bride, Temple

Revelation 21:1 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.

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³ And 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.

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

(Rev 21:1-5)

“Knowing”: The Future Heavens and Earth

A synopsis for the 2009 movie *Knowing* reads,

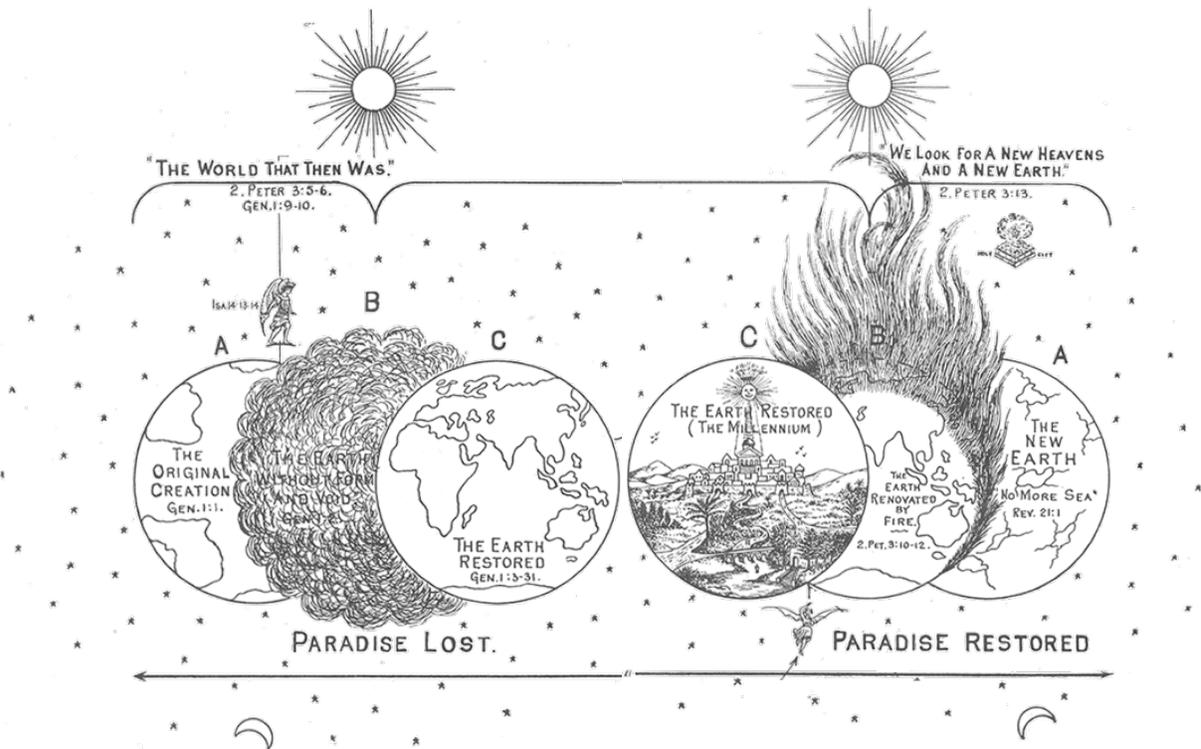
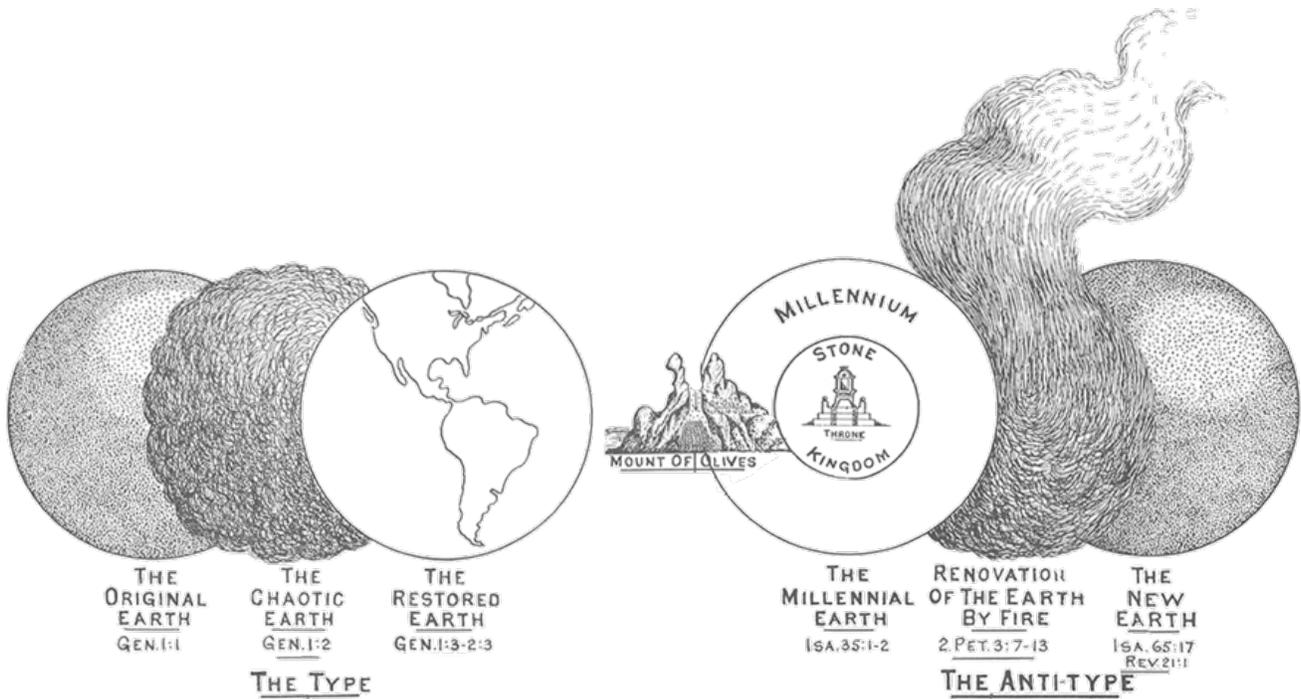
Fifty years after it was buried in a time capsule, a schoolgirl's cryptic document falls into the hands of Caleb Koestler, the son of professor John Koestler (Nicolas Cage). John figures

out that the encoded message accurately lists every major disaster from the past five decades, and predicts three future calamities -- one a global cataclysm. When his warnings fall on deaf ears, John enlists the help of the prophetic author's daughter and granddaughter to try to avert the ultimate disaster.

That “ultimate disaster” plays out at the end of the movie when, having done all he can to avert it and save humanity, Koestler resigns himself to their fate: Earth will be viciously blown apart in a violent fiery upheaval that will completely obliterate the planet. A lot of money was spent on the final scene which seems very much to have been inspired by **2 Peter 3:7-10**, “By the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire ... the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved...”

I grew up with this idea. Perhaps my subconscious (or even conscious) mind remembered it from **charts** in books like Clarence Larkin's, *Dispensational Truth* where earth becomes a raging fireball after the millennium.¹

¹ Cropped from **Larkin's** “The Types and Anti-Types of Scripture (Chart)” and “God's ‘Eternal Purpose’ as to the Earth (Chart),” *Dispensational Truth, or “God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages”:* *Charts* (Philadelphia, PA: Clarence Larkin, 1918).



Or maybe it is from sermons like one from John MacArthur called "The End of the Universe," where he humorously said, "The new message of Christianity is to reduce carbon

footprints. Folks, there's going to be a huge carbon footprint in the future of this universe, and it's going to be a big one from God in one great holocaust."²

At any rate, this view seems to understand that after the earth is completely annihilated by fire that God will make something **brand spanking new in its place**. This comes from the teaching in several places, including our passage today, that God will make “**a new heavens and new earth**” (**Rev 21:1**; cf. **Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2Pe 3:13**). Today we are going to look at this idea of **God making all things new**. We are going to do it, appropriately enough, by comparing Revelation to John and Genesis, along with some of the prophets. The goal is to get a biblical understanding of what it means that, after the judgment, God indeed makes all things new.

Genesis 21-22: Context and Structure

We enter into **the last two chapters of Revelation** and of **the Bible itself**. The horrors of the judgment have passed. We come to a transitional verse, “**The 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**” (**Rev 21:1**). This is

² **John MacArthur**, “The End of the Universe, Part 3,” 2 Peter 3 sermon (9-28-2008), <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-362/the-end-of-the-universe-part-3>.

transitional because it **concludes the previous section** with a “heaven and earth” **inclusio**. Earth and heaven had fled from the throne of judgment (**20:11**). Now, God is making a new heaven and new earth:

A. And I saw: Earth and heaven flee from the throne, 20:11

B. Dead stand before throne, 20:12a

C. Books opened, 20:12b

D. Dead judged according to things written, their deeds, 20:12c

B’. Sea, death, Hades give up dead, 20:13a

D’. Dead judged according to their deeds, 20:13b–14

C’. Names not in book, thrown into the lake of fire, 20:15

A’. And I saw: **New heaven and new earth, 21:1**³

But it also **prepares us for the last two chapters** of glorious hope and wonder, matched elsewhere in the Scripture only in prophetic utterances of the future and, importantly, in the first two chapters of Genesis. This is no coincidence and leads to a couple of important thoughts about **the way that Revelation is written**.

First, remember how much we have talked about the **cyclical, repetitious nature of Revelation**. This seemingly

³ **Peter J. Leithart**, *Revelation*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, vol. 2, The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments (London; Oxford; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury; Bloomsbury T&T Clark: An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 300–301.

bland and perhaps boring observation ends up making all the difference in the world for how we read and interpret the book. While the repetition exists within itself in the book's chiastic structure (centering in ch. 12) and seven cycles, it extends beyond to nearly unfathomable parallels and anti-[parallels with John's Gospel](#). However, the book does far more than parallel John.

One way to think about Revelation is how, after the cross-resurrection-ascension, God begins [working history backwards](#). He takes his seven churches which are lampstands, reminding us of [Solomon's](#) temple, moves to the enthroned "root of [David](#)" in heaven, progresses further back in time in the seven trumpets to the fall of Babylon-[Jericho](#), where people recall the even earlier "Song of [Moses](#)." Then we move back into Genesis, first with the destruction of the wicked by fire which reminds us of [Sodom](#) and Gomorrah and the [Flood](#) and then to the pristine conditions of the [Garden](#) of Eden and [Tree of Life](#) and finally to the new [heavens](#) and new [earth](#). This takes us back to the vital theme of [creation](#), and we will talk about much today.

REVELATION: HISTORY MOVING BACKWARDS TO THE BEGINNING ⁴		
CHAPTER	EVENT	WHICH RECALLS
Revelation 1	The Lord Jesus Christ, who is Greater than Solomon, expands his temple to Western Asia Minor. His seven churches, like the temple's seven lampstands, recall the temple of Solomon.	1 Kings 7-8
Revelation 4-5	The Lion of Judah, the root of David, is enthroned.	2 Samuel 5
Revelation 9-11	Seven trumpets sound, and a great city, which is home to a whore, falls.	Joshua 6
Revelation 15	Having escaped the beast of the sea, the people of God sing the Song of Moses standing on a crystal sea.	Exodus 15
Revelation 20	Fire is poured out from heaven against the wicked of all the earth, which recalls the narrative of Sodom and the Flood.	Genesis 19, 7
Revelation 21-22	We return to the pleasant garden, and the Tree of Life	Genesis 2
Revelation 21-22	There is a new heavens and earth.	Genesis 1

In fact, the last two chapters of Revelation have, by my count, at **over thirty direct connections to Genesis 1-3**. These connections are theological, grammatical, thematic, and linguistic:

⁴ Slide by Warren Gage. The slides are not presently online, but I did find it in a video. See **Warren Gage**, "Summer Academic Series – Revelation: The Book You Never Knew," *Vimeo* (Aug 14, 2019), <https://vimeo.com/354288674>.

Genesis 1-3 – Revelation 21-22 Parallels⁵

Genesis (Probationary World)		Revelation (Eternal World)	
1:1	In the beginning...	I am ... the Beginning and the End	21:6
	God created the heavens and the earth	I saw a new heaven and a new earth	21:1
1:2	The Spirit energizing	The Spirit inviting	22:17
1:3	Let there be light	God gives it light	21:23
1:5	The darkness he called "night"	There will be no night there	21:25
1:10	The gathered waters he called "seas"	There was no longer any sea	21:1
1:16	God made the two great lights	Does not need the sun/moon	21:23, 22:5
	He also made the stars	The Morning Star	22:16
1:28	Subdue [the earth]. Rule over it.	And they will reign forever	22:5
	Command to multiply	Nations of the saved	21:24ff
2:1-3	First heavens/earth finished	New heaven and earth forever	21:2
2:8-9	Man in a prepared garden	Man in a prepared city	21:2ff
2:9	Tree of Life	Tree of Life	22:2
2:10	A river watering the garden	River of the Water of Life in City	22:1
2:12	Gold, bdellium, onyx near Garden	Gold and all kinds of precious stones in City	21:18
2:15	Human service for God	Human service for God	22:3
2:17	You will surely die	The free gift of the Water of Life	22:17
2:21-23	Bride formed for her husband	Bride adorned for her husband	21:2ff
2:22	God brings the woman to the man	"Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."	21:9
2:23-25	A man will ... be united to his wife	The bride of the wife of the Lamb	21:9-10
3:1-5	Garden accessible to the Liar	City closed to all liars	21:27
3:3	Or you will die	No more death	21:4
3:6-7	Shown a garden into which sin entered	Shown a city into which sin will never enter	21:27

⁵ (Gold:) Non Dignus, "Is This a Valid Chiasm?" (March 2, 2013), <https://www.puritanboard.com/threads/is-this-a-valid-chiasm.78133/>.
 (Green:) Dan Kidha, "Genesis/John/Revelation Parallels," Slideplayer (n.d.), <https://slideplayer.com/slide/13974755/>.

3:8-10	Walk of God with man interrupted	Walk of God with man resumed	21:3
3:13	Initial triumph of the Serpent	Ultimate triumph of the Lamb	20:10; 22:3
3:14, 17	Cursed ... cursed	No longer ... any curse	22:3
3:16-17	I will greatly multiply your pain	No more ... pain	21:4
3:23	God banished him	They will see His face	22:4
3:24	He drove the man out of the garden	I saw the Holy City	21:2
	Man's dominion ceased and Satan's begun	Satan's dominion ended and man's restored	22:1ff
	Angels guard against humans	Angels minister to humans	22:6, 16
4:3, 5	False worship	False worship	19:10; 22:8-9
4:4	True worship	True worship	19:10; 22:9

What this means is that you cannot understand what God is doing at the end of the Bible unless you also knew what he did at the beginning of it!

Second—and this should be obvious to Christians—this means that the Bible is **not complete without the NT and, especially, Revelation**. Having a canon that includes only the OT, such as the Jewish Publication Society Bible (JPS) is like having only *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Two Towers* in your library. You can't finish the story without *The Return of the King*! There are very good reasons why Genesis is the first book and Revelation is the last book of our Bible.⁶ I believe this is **God-ordained**. The ending that God has

⁶ Some canons have different orders between these two books, especially in the OT. However, all Christian Bibles have these books placed in these positions.

always had in mind for his church and the earth was deliberately planned in ages past to echo the beginning of creation. In fact, it far surpasses it! But again, without the beginning of the story, you won't get the end.

Now, there's **a lot going on** in Revelation 21-22. Much of these two chapters are connected, centering either on the **new Jerusalem** or the **new Garden**:

- A. God wipes all tears, no more death, pain, sorrow, true and faithful words (21:3-5)
- B. Foundations of the water of life (21:6-7)
- C. Abominable ... liars (21:8)
- D. Glory of God, light, jasper stone/crystal, wall, twelve gates/foundations (21:9-14)
- E. He talked with me ... measure the wall and gates (21:15)
- F. The length as large as breadth (21:16)
- G. He measured the city with the reed: 12,000 furlongs (16b)**
- F'. Length and breadth are equal (16c)
- E'. Measured the wall / measure of a man (21:17)
- D'. Jasper / clear as glass, wall, twelve gates/foundations, glory of God was its light 21:18-26)
- C'. Abomination ... lies (21-27)
- B'. A pure river of water of life (22-1-2)
- A'. No more curse, faithful and true (22:3-7)⁷

⁷ Admin, "Revelation 21:3-22:7," *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Dec 28, 2016), <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2016/12/28/revelation-213-227/>.

- A. “These words are true and faithful” (21:5-6)
- B. “He who overcomes shall inherit all things” (7-8)
- C. New Jerusalem / No need of the sun, for the Lamb is its light (9-23) + mini
- D. Gates shut / no night there (24-27a)
- E. “Those [whose names] are written in the Book of Life (27b)
- F. “The throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:1)
- G. The middle of the street, the river and Tree of Life with twelve fruits (22:2)**
- F’. “The throne of God and of the Lamb” (3)
- E’. “His name shall be [written] on their foreheads (4)
- D’. “There shall be no night there” (5a)
- C’. “No lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light” (5b)
- B’. “They shall reign forever and ever” (5c)
- A’. “These words are faithful and true” (6a)⁸

But today we are going to look more narrowly at **the first five verses**, which **encapsulate all of this “newness”** in a small structure which begins and ends with newness:

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. And I saw: New heaven and new earth (1a) B. First heaven and first earth passed away (1b) C. No longer a sea (1c) D. And I saw: holy city, new Jerusalem (2a) E. Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (2b) E’. I heard: Tabernacle of God is among men (3a) D’. They shall be his peoples, he their God (3b) C’. No longer death, mourning, crying, pain (4a) B’. First things have passed (4b) A’. He who sits on throne: I make all things new (5a)⁹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. New heaven and earth (21:1a) B. Heaven and earth passed away (1b) C. No more sea (1c) D. From God out of heaven (2a) E. As a bride for her husband (2b) F. A great voice from heaven, “The tabernacle of God is with men, he will dwell with them” (3a) E’. They shall be his people (3b) D’. God himself will be with them (3c) C’. No more death, sorrow, crying, pain (4a) B’. Former things are passed away (4b) A’. I make all things new (5)¹⁰ |
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⁸ **Christine Smith**, “Revelation 22,” *A Little Perspective* (Dec 29, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/revelation-22-2016/>.

⁹ **Leithart**, 2.341.

¹⁰ **Nigel**, “Revelation 21:1-5,” *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* (Jan 16, 2015), <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2015/01/16/revelation-211-5/>.

I Make All Things “New”

If our passage both begins and ends with “new,” then it behooves us to think clearly about what this might mean. I’ve already mentioned the view I grew up with where “new” is conceived of as almost total discontinuity—brand spanking new. Is this what Revelation is talking about? To see, we must examine the Greek word being used to describe this “newness.”

“New” appears in Revelation around nine times. In each case it is the word *kainos*. We have a new name (2:17; 3:12), the new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), a new song (5:9, 14:3), a new heaven and a new earth (21:1), indeed all things are made new (21:5). Elsewhere, in John’s Gospel, Jesus says that he has a “new commandment” for people, to love one another as he has loved us (cf. 1Jn 2:7-8; 2Jn 5). Jesus is also laid in a “new tomb” (19:41). A second word for “new” in Greek is *neos*. An example of how this word is used is “new wine” put into fresh wineskins (Luke 5:38).

Importantly, *kainos* and *neos* are often not synonymous.¹¹ *Kainos* considers newness from the aspect of quality. *Neos*

¹¹ The classic study on this is Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 9th ed., improved. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 219-25. Of our passage Beale concurs with this study saying, “The Greek word translated “new” is *kainos*, which usually indicates a

contemplates it from the aspect of **time**. Think of *neos* is something brand new while *kainos* is an improvement from something that is inferior, outworn, or marred through age. In modern analogies, **Windows** 10 would be *kainos*. Of all the Windows platforms, only Windows 1 is *neos*. When **Coke** came out with a new (and extremely unsuccessful) formula a few decades ago, this was *kainos*. Diet Coke, Vanilla Coke, Coke Plus, Coca-Cola Zero, these are all *kainos*, improved or altered versions of Coke (notice, they are all still called “Coke”). But when Coke came out for the first time as a product, it was *neos*.

Kainos is organically related to that which comes before it. **Jesus’ tomb** was *kainos* because other tombs came before it; but this tomb had not been used. Jesus’ **commandment** was *kainos* because the OT Law commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus improved upon this law because now we are to love because he loved us! On the other hand, **new wine** is *neos*. Jesus is not talking about putting a better

newness in quality or essence rather than time (in which case *neos* is normally used.” G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 464. Other studies disagreeing with the sharp distinction are Roy A. Harrisville, “The Concept of Newness in the New Testament,” *JBL* 74.2 (June 1955): 69-79, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3261306?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A59e48ea4800cd95bc93be088abb5df6e&seq=11#page_scan_tab_contents, and Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 34ff.

wine in fresh wineskins. He is talking about putting something that had never been in the wineskins in it, namely wine.

We can think of the **new things in Revelation**. We already have **names**; Jesus gives us the new and improved name. The **songs** sung in the book usually have in the background songs sung in the OT, but these are improved because of what Jesus has now done. So what might this mean for our passage where the same word is also used? Let's look at it.

First, “**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**” (**Rev 21:1**). One thing we learn here is that the first heaven and earth had “**passed away**” (*aperchomai*). What might this mean? **On one hand**, as we have seen with Peter, “**The heavens will pass away [though the different word *parerchomai*] with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved**” (**2Pe 3:10**). **On the other hand**, when God cursed man with death he told **Adam**, “**To dust you shall return** (*aperchomai*)” (**Gen 3:19 LXX**). When the evil army invaded **Sodom** and Gomorrah, they pillaged the cities and “**went their way** (*aperchomai*)” (**Gen 14:11 LXX**). When God gave the covenant to **Abram** he told him that he would

“go to (*aperchomai*)” (Gen 15:15 LXX) his fathers in peace. When the LORD ended his discussion of bartering over the people of Sodom the LORD “went his way (*aperchomai*)” (Gen 18:33 LXX). When Jesus called the sons of Zebedee, they “went away” (*aperchomai*) and followed him (Mark 1:20). When Jesus began his ministry his fame “went out (*aperchomai*)” into all Syria (Matt 4:24).

It is difficult given the seemingly great differences in usage of this word to decide just from this what might be happening. So now we need to add the second thing that we see. There will be *no more sea*. I believe this is figurative language. It is not telling us that there will literally be no more oceans, only dry land, as if the new earth becomes a kind of post-apocalyptic desert like Mars. How would that possibly be better? Rather, this is theological messaging.

Revelation sees a movement in its depiction of the sea, a kind of theological progression. At first, we are transported to heaven where there is a sea of glass, like crystal (Rev 4:6). But as we move down to earth, we find angels harming the sea (7:2), living creatures dying in it (8:9), and a raging sea with monster coming out of it (13:1). After this, the sea of glass becomes mixed with fire (15:2). This is judgment (18:21), and thus we find the dead coming out of it to be

judged (20:13). Suddenly, after the judgment, there is no more sea! What it being described is the end of chaos and death. This is all stock ancient imagery. Heiser explains,

Throughout the ancient Near East, the sea monster symbolized the war between good and evil, between the gods and chaos ... this builds on the fact that for the nations surrounding the Mediterranean basin, the sea meant unfathomable depths and the chaos of death. Thus, Leviathan or the “dragon” came to represent all the terrors of the sea and thus the presence of evil and death.... It also signified nations that stood against God and his people.¹²

Long ago Augustine agreed. “This world of ours, made restless and stormy by the lives of men (and, hence, figuratively, called the sea), will [pass] away” (Augustine, *City of God* 20.16). If the sea being no more is symbolic language, could that be a hint on how we are to interpret the new heavens and new earth?

Just here I need to bring up Isaiah, for John takes this language from the end of Isaiah. “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be

¹² Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, The Watchers & The Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 62.

remembered or come into mind ... For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain” (Isa 65:17; 66:22). Before we look specifically at what Isaiah says about this new heavens and earth creation, it is important to notice that **the very next verse** says, “But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I *create Jerusalem* to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness” (65:18). The new heavens and earth are followed by the creation, obviously a *new* creation, of **Jerusalem**. But this is what we also find immediately in Revelation 21. “As I saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God...” (Rev 21:2) The creation of Jerusalem in Isaiah is equal to “new” Jerusalem in Revelation. So now in both texts we have a new heavens, earth, and Jerusalem. But what does Revelation say about this new Jerusalem?

This is vital to understand. It **equates Jerusalem to the Bride of Christ**. “... coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (2). This is a **simile**: The new Jerusalem is as a bride. It is also a mixing of **metaphors**: a city and a marriage.

We’ve **seen this woman previously**. “The marriage of the Lamb has come, and *his Bride* has made herself ready”

(19:7). This Bride is not old covenant Israel, but the new covenant church. “The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (8). If the linen is their deeds, then the saints must be the Bride. Who are these saints? Throughout the NT, they are Christians (see 20:9). “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up ... [and Peter] went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda” (Acts 9:31). “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1Co 1:2). “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints” (14:33). If John is getting this from Isaiah and John is telling us that Jerusalem is the church, then that’s precisely what Isaiah is saying, for it would be improper for John to make it mean something totally different.

A further identification is given in vs. 3. “And 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...’” “Dwelling place” is the word (*skēnē*), “tent” or “tabernacle.” Therefore, this new Jerusalem, this Bride of Christ is now called a third thing: God’s tabernacle. This is also theology we find throughout the NT. You are a temple,

“in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21). “You [plural] are [God’s] temple” (1Cor 3:17). Even in Revelation, the tent has been identified as the church (Rev 13:6). This is all in accordance with prophecy, “I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen” (Acts 15:16; cf. Amos 9:11-12). In fact, John takes this statement from Ezekiel, which we have seen is very much the pattern for the last few chapters of Revelation. The Dry Bones passage predicts, “My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Ezek 37:27).

So we have a new heavens and earth, a new Jerusalem, and even, we might say, a new tabernacle. We are now ready to look at Isaiah’s context of the new heavens and earth. Isaiah says, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind” (Isa 65:17). Isaiah gets very specific about what these things **not to be remembered** are. Contrary to what might be the opinion of some, he says nothing about not remembering places like Mt. Everest or the Big Island of Hawaii, or things such as the Big Dipper or any other well-known geographical or heavenly features, as if those things

will no longer exist because the new heavens and earth will be utterly dissimilar to what came before it.

Instead, he lists **seven things** that will no longer be remembered. These are **sadness (18-19)**, **death (20)**, **difficult labor (21-23)**, **hostility with God (24)**, **hostility in the animal kingdom** which represents the world (**65:25a**), **hostility in the church (25b)**, and **war (25b)**. As Motyer says, “**It will be a life totally provided for (13)**, **totally happy (19cd)**, **totally secure (22-23)** and **totally at peace (24-25)**.”¹³

Curiously, this is essentially the state we find in **the Garden of Eden**, which the Revelation city emulates. In **Gen 2:23-25**, man and woman were **perfectly happy** (see the opposite in the curse; **Gen 3:16-17**). **Gen 2:8** shows us that they were **perfectly secure**, for God put Adam in the Garden that he had formed and there was a wall around it (see **3:24**). They had **perfect peace** with God and the earth, as **2:19** and God bringing the animals to Adam shows us. Access to all the trees (**2:16**) and living forever by eating the Tree of Life (**Gen 3:22**) implies that they were **perfectly healthy and provided for** (indeed, Adam still lived 930 years; **Gen 5:5**). The curse of **Gen 3:17-19** implies that they were originally

¹³ **J. Alex Motyer**, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 520.

perfectly prosperous, but now thorns and thistles and sweat would get in the way. They had perfect communion with God according to Gen 2:16-18 as also implied by their hiding when God came in judgment (3:8).

That John also has this in mind is made even clearer by Rev 21:4 which says, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” This is straight out of Isaiah. It should go without saying that these qualities are not ontological, geographical, or material, but ethical and spiritual. What will not be remembered is evil, not Colorado.

For this reason, we need to understand now that some of the cosmic language that we find in similar passages where earth seems to be obliterated actually refers to events that have already transpired! For example, in the sixth century B.C., Jeremiah looked around and proclaimed, “I looked at the earth, and *it was formless and empty* (lit. *tohu wabohu*, the same phrase found elsewhere only in Gen 1:2); and at the heavens, and their *light was gone* ... I looked, and there were *no people; every bird* in the sky had flown away. I looked, and the fruitful land was *a desert; all its towns lay in ruins*” (Jer

4:23-26). This language describes the destruction of Judah by Babylon.

We find the same thing describing the conquest of Egypt by Babylon in Ezekiel 32, “When I snuff you out, I will *cover the heavens and darken their stars*; I will *cover the sun* with a cloud, and *the moon will not give its light*. All the shining lights in the heavens *I will darken over you*” (Ezek 32:7-8). Edom’s fall also in that same century is described by Isaiah, “All *the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll*; all *the starry host will fall* like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree” (Isa 34:4-5). This is obviously the same kind of language used elsewhere in Revelation and, for example, in 2 Peter which we have seen talks about a new heavens and earth.¹⁴

It is for this reason that some (partial) Preterists have taken our passage today to describe, not the obliteration of the present cosmos and *ex nihilo* creation of a brand new one, but the spiritually cataclysmic ending of the old covenant in the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. That event ended

¹⁴ We can do the same thing for example with “melting” language (2Pe 3:12). “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts” (Ps 46:6). “The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth” (Ps 97:5). “The Lord GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt” (Amos 9:5). “The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it” (Nahum 1:5).

once-for-all the old covenant rituals which to this day have never been renewed. I sympathize with this, as even the term “new covenant” refers to the same *kainos* newness, a making infinitely better the covenant that had previously been cut.¹⁵ It also helps us make sense of a whole lot of language that is clearly a **present reality**, at least to some extent, about Revelation 21-22.

We’ve already seen that **the dwelling place of God is with man**, in the church. Is this a reality that we must wait until the conflagration of all things to see realized? Later in the chapter, the city is described as having **the foundation of the Apostles (21:14)**. Are we still awaiting the laying of this foundation? God forbid. The church is “**built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**” (**Eph 2:20**). We also find things here that were promised earlier in the book to the seven churches. Jesus walks in the midst of the seven lampstands (**2:1**) even as the **Tree of Life** is in the midst of the streets of the city (**22:2**). Jesus offers the Tree of Life to the Ephesians (**2:7**), the very Tree that he makes accessible to the churches (**22:2, 14**). Is there no sense in which this is available now? If not, then who among us can possibly have eternal life right now?

¹⁵ See **my book** *Covenant Theology: A Reformed Baptist Primer*, 119-20.

A.	1:1. Things that must happen quickly (202)
B.	1:3. Hears the words of this prophecy (200)
C.	1:8. Alpha/Omega ... beginning/end (195)
D.	1:17. When I saw, I fell at his feet (186)
E.	1.19. The things which shall take place (184)
F.	2:1. In the midst of seven lampstands (182)
G.	2:7. the tree of life (176)
H.	2:17. White stone, new name written (166)
I.	2:26. He who overcomes ... will give authority (157)
YY.	12:9. Dragon/serpent/devil/Satan thrown down who deceives world
YY ¹ .	12:10. Salvation/power/kingdom/authority of God and Christ ... accuser is thrown down
I ¹ .	21:7. He who overcomes I will give these things (159)
H ¹ .	21:12-14. New names written ... the city had twelve foundation stones (164-66)
G ¹ .	22:2. The tree of life (181)
F ¹ .	22:2. In the midst of its street (181)
E ¹ .	22:6. The things which must take place (185)
D ¹ .	22:8. When I heard and saw, I fell at his feet (187)
C ¹ .	22:13. Alpha/Omega ... beginning/end (192)
B ¹ .	22:18. Hears the words of the prophecy (197)
A ¹ .	22:20. I am coming quickly (199)

Is not Jesus that very Tree (**Prov 3:18**): “The stump of Jesse” (**Isa 11:1**), the “Righteous Branch” (**Isa 4:2**; etc.), the “green pine tree” (**Hos 14:8**), “the Vine” (**John 15:5**), the fig (**Luke 21:29**), the olive (**Rom 11:17**)?

This is important to see, because you need to understand that Revelation 21-22 have an “already” aspect to it. What Jesus Christ has done is truly heaven altering and earth rending. Usually that language is reserved for destruction. In this case, I’m using it for what he has made new. And if you do not grasp this, then his First Coming will have much less importance to you than it needs to in order to bring you to **salvation** and to help you in all the areas you need to presently **sanctified**. In this sense, the new heavens and earth, the new Jerusalem, the Bride, the temple of God with man

has come. You may cross through into *its holy space*, you are invited to attend *the wedding feast*, you may come in through *its gates*, you may behold the *new creation* by being made a new creation yourself through faith in Christ. That's all it takes, is simple faith that the King will let you in. And when you are in, you can begin to know the joys of this eternal state brought to the here and now that all of God's people have seen, though only as through a glass darkly, in this life.

But I say this last bit because there is in fact still *an unrealized consummation* of what we are considering here. I believe that any view which sees these chapters as *only fulfilled* and *not yet future* goes too far. What will it be like? What will God do? Will he literally incinerate the earth and somehow, out of the ashes, like a phoenix, resurrect it into glory? There is certainly language that points us in this direction. Notice what the Apostle says about the relationship between Christians and creation:

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

(Rom 8:18-23)

Jesus himself says, “Heaven and earth will pass away (*parerchomai*), but my words will not pass away (*parerchomai*)” (Mk 13:31). In other words, one really is temporary; the other is eternal. There is a bondage to corruption from which the creation itself will be **set free**, the very thing it was subjected to because of us.

However, I confess that the older I get and the more I get to know God’s word that I need to take more seriously than I used to other teachings such as, “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’” (1Cor 2:9). **It does not yet appear what we shall fully be** (1Jn

3:1), is this not also true of the new heavens and earth, that better country that we all long for (Heb 11:16)?

As you contemplate what this might be like, I believe you must see here is the continuity between what is and what shall be. As Beale and many others have said, “The new cosmos will be an identifiable counterpart to the old cosmos and a renewal of it, just as the body will be raised without losing its former identity.”¹⁶ This view is very old in the church. Oecumenius said,

They do not say this as though heaven and earth and sea are destroyed and pass into nonexistence and that other things come into being in their place. Rather, they mean that the present realities have cast off their corruption and become new, putting off their filth as though it were an old and dirty garment. For that is called “new” which is not such as it was formerly but is as it has now become. The creation shall then be free of every corruption that it contracted through the transgression of humankind”

(Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 20.13-21.2).¹⁷

¹⁶ G. K. Beale and Sean M McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1150.

¹⁷ Likewise, “This passage does not speak of the obliteration of creation but of its renewal into something better. For as the apostle says, “this creation will be freed from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” Also the holy psalmist says, “You change them like a raiment, and they pass away.”¹³ The renewal of that which has grown old does not involve the annihilation of its substance but rather indicates the smoothing out of

What kind of a world will it be and who can imagine it? No more tears? No more crying? No more death? No more mourning? No more pain? This is literally all we have ever experienced. Of course, I do not mean that we have no moments of joy and life and happiness. I mean that we cannot eradicate these other things thing from our present experience, though most of humanity seems hell-bent on trying to forget that they are real. But in the future, these will not even come to mind. My mind cannot conceive of such a state, though my heart tells me it must be glorious and unimaginable. I long for it and look forward to what it is going to be like.

This is clearly **the longing of every creature**. This is because not only do we all know innately that **the present** evil of this world must be judged and ended (God has put this into our consciences through his law), not only has utopia been put into our hearts as a longing for **a future** that is not quite yet in our grasp, but it also comes from **a past** that none of us can quite seem to remember as clearly as we should. Hence, I return again to how Revelation comes back

its agedness and its wrinkles” (Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 21.1) Quotes in William C. Weinrich, *Revelation*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 12 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 354.

around to the very beginning of the Bible, ending as it begins ... only better—New!

I have a couple more specific ways I want us to think about this today and then in future weeks we will look at them more closely. First, some have suggested that chs. 21-22 unfold **chiastically like the seven days of creation** in Genesis 1. This is not a tight word-chiasm which are usually obvious. It is theological. The point of such a structure is to reinforce that we are in fact dealing here with a new creation, just like Isaiah said about heaven, earth, and Jerusalem.

- A. Day 1: Light in the city (21:10-11)
- B. Day 2: Boundaries and measurements of the city (21:12-17)
- C. Day 3: Materials of the city (21:18-21)
- D. Day 4: Sun and moon of the city (21:22-23)**
- C'. Day 5: Swarms of kings into city (21:24-27)
- B'. Day 6: Garden (22:1-2)
- A'. Day 7: Throne and light (22:3-5)¹⁸

Second, retuning again to our **Gospel of John parallels** can be extremely informative, not only to the old creation, but also to the new creation and truly to when it was

¹⁸ Leithart, 2:368, following James Jordan, *An Exposition of the Book of Revelation: Lecture Notes* (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1999).

inaugurated. I'm going to look here at some parallels that exist throughout chs. 21-22 in the inverse matches. Most are familiar with the way the Gospel of John begins. "In the beginning was the Word..." (John 1:1). Well, nearly the last verse of Revelation uses similar language, "I am ... the beginning and the end" (Rev 22:13). But what does this remind us of? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1).

This kind of thing continues throughout John's first chapter as well as in the last chapters of Revelation. John tells us that "the light shines in the darkness ... [Jesus] was the true light which gives light to every man" (John 1:5, 9). This corresponds nicely to the first day of creation, "And God said, 'Let there be light'" (Gen 1:3). But it also corresponds to Revelation, "There shall be no night there; they need no lamp nor light, for the Lord God gives them light" (Rev 22:5).

Like the seven-day theological chiasm of Revelation, John's Gospel is more explicit that Jesus is beginning a new creation. It literally counts out the days.

New Creation Week of Christ's Public Ministry		
Day 1	Testimony of John	John 1:19-28
Day 2	Baptism of Jesus	John 1:29-34
Day 3*	Calling of Andrew and Peter	John 1:35-42
Day 4	Calling of Philip and Nathanael	John 1:43-51
Day 7	The Wedding at Cana	John 2:1-11
* Morris sees the Andrew/Peter day as two, with them staying the night in an inn. Thus, my Day 4 would be his Day 5. See also Rainer Riesner , "Bethany Beyond The Jordan (John 1:28) Topography, Theology And History In The Fourth Gospel," <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> 38 (1987): 46.		

This is John's **new creation (first) week**: First we read a rather unremarkable temporal announcement in **vs. 29**, "The next day ..." Then we see it again in **vs. 35**, "The next day ..." We read it a third time in **vs. 43**, "The next day ..." **2:1** then adds this interesting phrase, "On the third day ..." When you add these up you have **seven days**, with the seventh culminating in a wedding feast and a glorious day of rest! As Leon Morris says, "Just as the opening words of this chapter recall Genesis 1, so it is with the framework. Jesus is to engage in a new creation. The framework unobtrusively suggests creative activity."¹⁹ It is curious, therefore, that as he is called during this first week, Peter is given a new name

¹⁹ [Leon Morris](#), *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 114.

(John 1:42). What's even more interesting is that Peter already means "Rock," and yet his new name becomes Cephas, which means Stone. And Revelation 21:14, 19 says, the new Jerusalem has twelve foundation stones (see NAS), inscribed with the names of the apostles. Upon this Rock I will build my church!

In another, John famously tells us that the Word became flesh and "tabernacled" among us (John 1:14). This is the verbal form (*skēnoō*) of the noun (*skēnē*) that we saw earlier. This is important to Genesis because all the ancient people understood that what God was primarily doing in Genesis was building his temple. As it says in Isaiah 66:1, which is right in the middle of Isaiah's discussion of the new heavens and earth, "Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?'" But again, this exact same idea is found even in our passage today, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man and he will tabernacle among them" (Rev 21:3).

That Genesis temple was embodied by the glorious Garden of Eden with its river flowing out of it. And so we read in John's new creation counterpart that all these things took place "beyond the Jordan ..." (John 1:28) and he even

called one of his disciples while he was under the (fig) tree (48). And our parallel in Revelation 22 tells us that John was shown the river of the water of life and the tree of life flowing from the center of the city (Rev 22:1-2).

My point today is simple. You are confronted with God making things new. Not just heaven and earth, of which we all have our own ideas of what that is going to be like, but also Jerusalem, a bride, and a temple. All of this echoes creation. But it is not just a return to creation. It is a *new* creation, the very word used to describe Christians (2Co 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10)! Not brand new in the sense of time, but new in the sense of quality, excellence, superiority. “They will all wear out as a garment, You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away” (Ps 102:26).

This is spiritual newness the likes of which the world has not understood. But then the physical follows. The Apostle talks about the relationship of the physical and the spiritual in terms of the resurrection. He speaks of the two Adams. “The first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam became a life-given spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from

heaven” (1Co 15:45-4). Thus, what the Second Adam does is usher in the new creation, spiritually speaking—new birth, new Jerusalem, new Bride, new temple. John helps you see that this begins today! These spiritual realities will one day be wed with an eternal physical reality to go with it—physical and spiritual together, unified, glorious, and one. This already-not yet is what you need to take away from our passage today, for this is the newness being shown to you.

Hear these words of the Holy Spirit to finish our passage. It ends, “And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true’” (Rev 21:5). Why does that matter? The parallel at the end of John’s Gospel teaches you, “This is the disciple who ... wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true” (John 21:24). His witness is true because he testifies to the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation (Rev 3:14), the one who is called “Faithful and True” who rides the white horse (19:11) and is even now making all things new.

21:24 “this is the disciple who ... **wrote** these things; and we know that his *witness* is **true**”

21:5 “And He said to me, ‘**Write**, for these words are *faithful* and **true**”

The Word and the Old Creation	The Word and the New Creation
<p>1:1 “In the beginning was <i>the Word</i>”</p> <p>1:3 “all things <i>came into being by Him</i>”</p> <p>1:5, 9 “the light shines in <i>darkness</i> ... He (Jesus) was the true light which gives light to every man”</p> <p>1:14 “the <i>Word</i> became flesh, and tabernacled among us”</p> <p>1:28, 48 “these things took place ... beyond <i>the Jordan</i> ... ‘when you were under <i>the fig tree</i>, I saw you.’ ”</p> <p>1:29 “the Lamb of God who <i>takes away the sin of the world</i>”</p> <p>1:32 “<i>I beheld</i> the Spirit descending out of heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him (whom John identifies as the Bridegroom, 3:29)</p> <p>1:39, 46 Jesus says, “Come and see!” Philip, who hears, says, “Come and see!”</p> <p>1:42 Peter, one of the apostles, is given a new name, “Cephas,” meaning “<i>stone</i>”</p>	<p>22:13 “<i>I am</i> ... the beginning and the end”</p> <p>21:5 “behold, <i>I make</i> all things new”</p> <p>22:5 “there shall be no <i>night</i> there; they need no lamp nor light, for the Lord God gives them light”</p> <p>21:3 “the tabernacle of <i>God</i> is among mankind and He will tabernacle among them”</p> <p>22:1–2 “And he showed me <i>the river of the water of life</i> ... and <i>the tree of life</i>”</p> <p>22:3 “there is <i>no more curse</i>; the throne of God and the Lamb is there”</p> <p>21:2 “And <i>I saw</i> the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband”</p> <p>22:17 “the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ” and “let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ ”</p> <p>21:14, 19 the New Jerusalem has twelve foundation “<i>stones</i>,” inscribed with the names of the apostles.</p>

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