

Jerusalem And The Plan Of Redemption

The Earthly Jerusalem Dies, the New Jerusalem Is Eternal

Martin G. Collins

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What many people sometimes fail to remember is that the earthly Jerusalem of today is a totally worldly Jerusalem. The so-called "holy city" is used to give spiritual credibility to some of Satan's most popular religions—Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, and her daughters of Protestantism. This is for the express purpose of confusing the true religion of God. Do I, in this politically correct world, defy popular belief and call these religions unholy? Absolutely! I do not hesitate in saying that.

One need only look at the spiritual state of these religions to see the perversion. Judaism has its pharisaic problems and rejection of Jesus Christ. Islam is a worldwide terrorism plague of cruelty, rape, and murder. Catholicism has its problem with its pedophile priests and idolatry. Protestantism is embracing biblically-banned perversions such as homosexuality and other immoral behavior, Sabbath breaking, and stealing God's tithes. And, of course, the pagan religions are even more evil. The representation of the religions of the world is an unholy city because they are unholy religions.

There is a lot that is uncertain about Jerusalem. Many historical, archaeological, and topographical problems are unresolved. Jerusalem has played a prominent role in history, but the historical record is scant, and descriptions from literary sources are often imprecise.

Despite Jerusalem's antiquity, archaeological remains are not very plentiful, as in the case of other biblical sites such as Megiddo, Hazor, Dan, and Samaria. Many archaeological finds are very often rejected and unpublished, many times intentionally. Proof of Israel's history in Jerusalem has been purposely hidden and destroyed whenever possible for centuries. Neither Satan, nor his world, wants to see proof of God's divine intervention in the affairs of men. Satan's plan requires that the true identity of Israel be erased from history. He has sought to do that for Israel's entire history.

A case in point is the recent deliberate destruction by the Palestinians of ancient sections of Jerusalem, especially areas close to the Temple Mount that validate the presence of the ancient Israelites, especially the Jews. This is done in full view of the United Nations, but they happily turn their face the other way.

The destruction was getting so bad a few years ago, that in order to protest Palestinian changes of the Temple Mount, U.S. Congressmen sponsored the Temple Mount

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Preservation Act. Republican Eric Cantor, of Virginia, with 16 co-sponsors, sought to bar all aid to the Palestinian Authority, which was chaired by Yasser Arafat, as long as it continues unauthorized excavations that have destroyed artifacts on the Temple Mount. In introducing the bill, Cantor provided photographic evidence of massive destruction of archaeological sites.

Bulldozing of the Temple Mount took place, including the destruction of antiquities that dated back to the time of the first temple. Cantor described the excavations as "one of the most unprecedented attacks on religious heritage of our time." He added that photographic evidence shows that Arafat is intent on erasing Judeo-Christian connections to the holy site.

The confusion that surrounds the earthly city of Jerusalem today typifies the condition of religion around the world. So, in one sense, earthly Jerusalem already stands as the religious capital of the world.

New questions continue to arise concerning earlier archaeological interpretations. The fact that Jerusalem has been continuously, and often densely, inhabited for almost 6,000 years makes it difficult to excavate systematically. The accumulation of rubble from periodic destructions makes it hard to untangle Jerusalem's complex defense systems. Each time Jerusalem was rebuilt, stone robbers used masonry from previous occupations, thereby complicating the earth layers at the site.

Jerusalem's location on a mountain ridge is the source of severe topographical problems. Also, Jerusalem's contours have changed over the centuries. The Tryopoeon Valley has now been almost filled in. On the other hand, the names of architectural features, such as Jerusalem's gates, have changed from time to time, just as the names of geographical areas such as Mount Zion have shifted location.

All these problems give rise to controversy, making it almost impossible for the world to advance conclusive answers about the history, archaeology, and topography of Jerusalem. But as always, despite what its critics say, the inspired written word of God—the Judeo-Christian Bible—stands alone in truth and accuracy of the divine plan for this extraordinary city.

The history and imagery regarding Jerusalem holds within it the revelation of the plan of redemption for all humanity. Yet, the world does not want to know the truth, even though it would set them free.

The imagery of Jerusalem plays a profound role throughout both testaments and has

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been central to the religious consciousness of the faithful in every age. As the plan of redemption unfolded in the Bible, Jerusalem became an important symbol of Israel's belief that God rules over the earth and that He had established David and his sons as His human vice-regents. As a result, Jerusalem became the image of Israel's grand imperial hopes.

It is not my intention to spend a lot of time on the history of Jerusalem, but it will be interwoven throughout the sermon. There is much to learn in history, and if we do not remember history we are doomed to repeat it.

We will look at some background on the origins of Jerusalem. It is very probable that the biblical origins of Jerusalem traced back to the ancient Canaanite site of Salem, the city of the priestly king Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:18-20 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.

It is interesting that right from the beginning, a tithe is mentioned as being associated with Salem. One of the major problems that the city of Jerusalem and the Israelites had, throughout their history, was not giving back to God His wealth.

The King of Salem, by name, is the King of righteousness, and by office, is the King of peace.

Hebrews 7:1-2 says "King of Salem" means "King of peace"—referring to Jesus Christ. You are all very familiar with that.

The etymology of the name "Jerusalem" is not certain, at least not in the world's eyes. It is apparently of Semitic origin. An Egyptian notice from the third quarter of the 19th century BBC mentions Urusalimum. The Tell el Amarna correspondence of the 14th century BBC refers to the town of Urusalim. The Assyrians called it Ursalimmu. You see the similarities in the pronunciation, or at least the transliteration, of the names that the city had.

According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*:

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The oldest known form, Uru-sa-lim, has been considered by many to mean either the 'City of Peace' or the 'City of (the god) Salem,' but other interpreters, considering the name as of Hebrew origin, interpret it as the "possession of peace" or "foundation of peace." It is one of the ironies of history that a city which in all its long history has seen so little peace, and for whose possession such rivers of blood have been shed, should have such a possible meaning for its name.

It is commonly believed that Abraham offered up Isaac upon the mount in Moriah, which is known to be the same mount on which Jesus Christ was crucified.

The land of Moriah refers to all the mountains of Jerusalem, which would include Mount Gihon or Calvary, the Mount of Sion and of Acra. Mount Calvary is the highest ground to the west, and the mount of the temple is the lowest of the mounts. I found that interesting, I had not realized that.

Beer-sheba, where Abraham lived, is about 42 miles distance from Jerusalem. It is no wonder that Abraham, Isaac, the two servants, and the donkey, laden with wood for the burnt offering, did not reach this place until the third day.

Genesis 22:1-4 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

The place of the sacrifice cannot be positively identified. II Chronicles 3:1 seems to locate it on the site of Solomon's Temple. Tradition has held to this view, and it would be difficult to find a more logical spot.

II Chronicles 3:1 Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

The history of Jerusalem from the time of Joshua to its destruction by Titus—a period of 15 centuries—is a succession of changes, revolutions, sieges, surrenders, and famines. Each is followed by restoration and rebuilding. You see constant churning of the city of Jerusalem throughout ancient history.

The city's greatest physical glory was reached under the reign of King Solomon. He built the Temple and a royal palace, as well as greatly enlarging and strengthening the walls of the city. One of Jerusalem's greatest humiliations was reached under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175-165 B.C., when the most violent and cruel efforts were made to destroy the Jews and their religion and the city of Jerusalem.

Joshua 10:1-4 contains the first specific biblical reference to Jerusalem, whose inhabitants were Canaanites. There, it relates to Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, who formed a coalition with neighboring kings and attacked Gibeon. Joshua defeated them. The Jebusites, the ancient inhabitants that had always been in possession of a part of it, remained there until David captured the entire city from them.

Joshua 10:1-4 Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it—as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king—and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, that they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty. Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel."

Here we see the first specific mention of Jerusalem. Some scholars suggest that "Jebus" was the name of ancient Jerusalem. But, archaeological evidence suggests that "Jebus" was not the name of ancient Jerusalem before David conquered it. The Amarna Tablets attest that "Jerusalem," not Jebus, was actually the name of the city.

Joshua 18:21, 28 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, according to their families, were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, Zelah, Eleph, Jebus (which is Jerusalem), Gibeath, and Kirjath: fourteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

In some versions of the Bible, translators have translated "Jebus (which is Jerusalem)," as the "Jebusite City (which is Jerusalem)." They have done this because Jebus was the family name of the inhabitants, not the name of the city.

The account of the capture of Jerusalem by David is obscure, but it seems most likely that the Jebusites, relying upon the extraordinary strength of their position, challenged David.

II Samuel 5:6-9 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, "You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you," thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). Now David said on that day, "Whoever climbs up by way of the water shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul), he shall be chief and captain." Therefore they say, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward.

David directed his followers to go up the water shaft and defeat the "lame and the blind." Then, he turned this phrase around to use mockingly about the Jebusites. It seems at least probable that David's men captured the city through a surprise attack up the great tunnels. David, having captured the stronghold of Zion, renamed it the "City of David" and took up his residence there. He then added to the strength of the fortifications. With the assistance of Phoenician workmen supplied by Hiram, king of Tyre, he built himself a house of cedar.

When David showed a lack of faith and a violent nature by numbering (or, taking a census of) Israel for the purpose of raising an army, it angered God and He brought a plague on Jerusalem and the rest of Israel.

I Chronicles 21:14-15 So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell. And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the LORD looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, "It is enough; now restrain your hand." And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

God was willing to destroy the earthly Jerusalem for its sin committed by its leader David.

Earlier, the Ark of the Covenant was brought from the house of Obed-edom and lodged in a tent in the "city of David". The threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite, was later purchased as the future site of the temple.

The religious significance of Jerusalem first became apparent when David conquered the Jebusite city and established it as the capital of Israel. God's inspiration of David's decision to secure Israel's throne in Jerusalem established Jerusalem as the permanent home of Israel's human monarchs.

However, Jerusalem became more than the nation's secular governmental headquarters. One of David's earliest royal acts was to bring the Ark of the Covenant, the very footstool of God, to reside in Jerusalem. By doing so, David also established Jerusalem as the seat of divine kingship.

The establishment of divine and human kingship in Jerusalem was furthered by the construction of Solomon's temple. God brought the nation of Israel to its economic zenith using Solomon.

With the nation secure on all sides, Solomon built a permanent temple palace for God. But God's use of the palace was conditional on Israel's obedience and righteousness, which Israel did for a short while. Thus, during Solomon's reign, Jerusalem reached its physical high point.

Jerusalem was so prominent in the imagination of the Israelites that it came to serve as a figure of speech that represented the whole nation, all 12 tribes. God's administration of blessings and curses on Jerusalem was perceived as salvation and judgment on the entire nation.

On the one hand, the prophets warned that God would withdraw His presence from Jerusalem as a result of Israel's enduring apostasy. As a result, the Babylonians defeated Jerusalem in 586 BBC and took the people of Judah into exile. The destruction of Jerusalem symbolized the rejection and removal of Israel for her sin. The blessings that once existed in the city were gone.

II Kings 23:26-27 Nevertheless the LOORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because

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of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. And the LORD said, "I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there"

On the other hand, Israel's hopes for restoration from exile were expressed from the image of a restored Jerusalem. When Israel returned from exile, in about 538 BBC, rebuilding the temple and the city was among the top priorities of those who returned from exile.

Ezra 1:1-5 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

Restoration of the nation was inconceivable without the reestablishment of Jerusalem as the seat of divine and Davidic kingship.

From the time when David brought the Ark of God into the city, until the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, the city was continually added to and embellished. There were such notable improvements as: Hezekiah's vast structures for aqueduct and water supply, and the enclosing with an outside wall of Zion and the City of David.

During the years immediately succeeding the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, it lay in ruins. As we just read in the book of Ezra, Cyrus the Great decreed the return of the captive Jews to their city and the rebuilding of the walls, which by Nehemiah's time had been broken down for 140 years. Under Nehemiah, the city regained much of its

former splendor.

Hundreds of years later—after Octavian (Augustus) established himself as ruler of the Roman world and restored order to the Empire—and after Herod the Great established himself as king in Jerusalem, the city was again restored to much of its former splendor. Under Herod, the Temple was enlarged and beautified. It was in this state that Christ found the city of Jerusalem. Under Herod the city was given a better water supply. Under Herod's grandson, Herod Agrippa, in AAD 41, the area inside the city wall was doubled. During Christ's time, and after Christ's death, quite a bit was changing in Jerusalem—but only for a short while.

The restoration of Jerusalem after the exile provides an essential background for understanding why the city was so important in Christ's teaching of restoration. Jesus proclaimed that the work of the Messiah constituted the restoration of the people of God from captivity. Many thought He meant the captivity by the Romans and previous conquerors, but of course He referred to the bondage of sin.

Jesus' work was closely connected with Jerusalem, because the Kingdom of God—the worldwide imperial destiny of God's people—could be realized, only in association with Jerusalem, as the place of divine and Davidic kingship.

But to begin to raise restoration to a spiritual level, Jesus explained to the woman with five husbands that we do not have to worship in physical Jerusalem, but should worship in spirit and in truth.

John 4:19-24 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Jesus' teaching effectively ended earthly Jerusalem's position as the spiritual center for God's religion. Jesus performed many symbolic activities in the vicinity of Jerusalem. For instance, His triumphal entry symbolized the victorious return of Davidic kingship to Jerusalem, but not as a physical headquarters on earth, but to a spiritual one—the

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Church.

Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the founding of the Church, and the giving of the Holy Spirit took place in the vicinity of Jerusalem. This was closely associated with Christ's exaltation to the throne of His father, David.

In contrast to Jerusalem's positive symbolism of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, we find the negative theme of judgment against Jerusalem. Earthly Jerusalem was the setting for the ultimate rejection of Christ. God's chosen Son of David was refused His rightful place as King of Israel.

For this reason, just as the prophets warned ancient Jerusalem of the impending judgment as a consequence of their idolatry and Sabbath breaking, Jesus prophesied that earthly Jerusalem would once again be destroyed for their sins.

Using the same imagery that the prophets used to describe Jerusalem's fall in 586 BBC, Jesus described the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AAD 70, and that would again occur at the end time.

Matthew 24:15-25 Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

What we see here is that each of the three main destructions of Jerusalem progressively got worse. During the time of the apostles, the bad government by Roman procurator—appointed over Judea as a Roman province—led to discontent and rebellion, as well as the sinful state of the people. Then Titus laid siege to the city and destroyed it in AAD 70, sacrificing one million lives in the process. The Temple was

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destroyed, and the high priesthood and the Sanhedrin were abolished. Eventually, a Roman city was erected on the site, and Jerusalem was regarded as forbidden ground for the Jews. While the physical city disintegrated, the spiritual restoration had begun.

Let us shift gears now and look at Mount Sinai.

We will take a look at Mount Sinai and Zion and compare the two in their relationship with Jerusalem. The Levites reviewed the events that took place at Mount Sinai in their prayer to God as the Israelites confessed their sins.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 You came down also on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Your servant.

We see in these verses that what happened on Mount Sinai was a very good thing. Mount Sinai in Arabia is revered here during Nehemiah's time for its awesome revelation of God, the giving of the law and the disclosure of the sacred sanctuary with its functions. Now it has fallen under the shadow of a new and grander revelation.

Although Mount Sinai is a constant presence in Exodus and Deuteronomy, it hardly appears again in the rest of the Bible. After the revelation to Moses it plays no more physically significant role in biblical history. Unlike Mount Zion, it is not closely associated with ongoing political and religious institutions; physically it belongs to the past.

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul develops an allegory of Mount Sinai and the "Jerusalem above", with Sinai representing the old covenant, slavery, and the "present Jerusalem," in contrast with the freedom of the "Jerusalem above".

Allegorizing on the two sons of Abraham—Ishmael by the slave woman, Hagar and Isaac (a type of the Christian) by the free woman, Sarah—Paul contrasts sharply "the present Jerusalem" and "the Jerusalem above." He does not make the contrast between "the present Jerusalem" and "the future earthly Jerusalem."

Galatians 4:21-26 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman

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was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

In the allegory, the existing Jerusalem is equated with the earthly Sinai, but then the earthly Jerusalem gives way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Hagar symbolizes "the present Jerusalem," and Sarah symbolizes "the Jerusalem above."

For us, God's dwelling is no longer "the present Jerusalem," nor is "the present Jerusalem" the real mother. As verse 26 says, "but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all." Now the Jews, in their ignorance, I suppose you would say, look to Jerusalem as their mother. They miss the point totally and do not have the truth.

In the New Testament the Jews of the earthly Jerusalem, by sinning and rejecting Christ, became the bondwoman, whereas Jerusalem above (our spiritual mother) is made free by the truth. We are all familiar with the scripture that says "the truth shall make you free."

The Jerusalem above is the center of the spiritual Kingdom, as the old Jerusalem, or Mount Sinai, was the center of Judaism. The Jerusalem above is a symbol of the covenant that produces freedom and the true faith of God.

Galatians 4:27-31 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband." Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

Spiritually, Jerusalem is the exact opposite of Babylon. By apostasy the faithful city became a spiritual prostitute slave. Isaiah 1:21 describes Jerusalem as a degenerate city, "How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice and righteousness

lodged in it, but now murderers."

Today, the Jews look to a corrupt physical Jerusalem as their spiritual mother, not realizing that they have willingly distanced themselves from the true spiritual Jerusalem—the Church.

Mount Sinai represents the realities of the law. God appeared there in thunder and fire and thick darkness. The law demands absolute obedience, or else punishment. It is in contrast with Calvary, where God appeared in human form in tender loving kindness, and in love. He did not do away with the law, but He fulfilled it, and showed us how we should keep it.

The wicked condition of Jerusalem at the time of Christ, with its sin and the destruction, produced by its enemies, was clear evidence of the tragedy that follows the broken laws of Mount Sinai.

Let us shift gears again and look at Zion. How does Zion fit into the imagery surrounding Jerusalem?

Zion is sometimes used metaphorically, at other times topographically. While the designation has changed across time, originally Zion was equated with the City of David, signifying the southeast hill of Jerusalem.

The Temple Mount to its north was also known as Zion. From the Byzantine period, Zion has been applied to the hill south of the southwest corner of the existing Old City. Zion also designates Jerusalem as a religious capital, and has references to the Church.

Earthly Jerusalem, the fair-skinned "daughter of Zion" has taken on the tragic and weathered likeness of "Hagar" from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery as we saw in Galatians 4:24-25.

Isaiah 1:7-8 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

This image is analogous to Isaiah's comparison of Zion, with its walls evacuated by the exile, to an abandoned wife, or a bereaved and barren mother.

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Isaiah 49:14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me."

In Hebrews 12, the imagery of Mount Sinai represents the Old Covenant, while Mount Zion represents the New Covenant that takes its place. "Heavenly Jerusalem" is the name given to our eternal home in glory and is also sometimes a reference to the Church.

Hebrews 12:18-24 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

The heavenly Jerusalem is the place of the New Covenant sealed through the blood of Christ.

The elect of God have no connection with an earthly city. As the author of Hebrews put it in Hebrews 13:14, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come."

The city to come will stand forever, but no earthly city is enduring. All earthly cities are temporary. But we are looking for an abiding city to come. Most people love to focus on earthly security. But the best earthly security is at best insecure. The Jews fruitlessly put their efforts into maintaining their grip on a fleeting earthly city, but we must earnestly endeavor to be obedient to God and overcome our sins.

The names "Zion" and "Jerusalem" often stand for the body of citizens (even when far away in exile or dispersed), the whole of Judah, the whole of Israel, or the entire people of God—the Church.

Jerusalem is at the same time the place of Jewish unfaithfulness and disobedience, and also the place of God's election, presence, protection, and glory. The process of history demonstrated the unfaithfulness and disobedience, which inevitably provoked divine anger and punishment; the glories of the city can only lie in the future, in the heavenly Jerusalem, not in the earthly Jerusalem.

As we saw earlier, geographical images are overlaid with allegory in the epistle to the Galatians. Paul begins with earthly Jerusalem as the symbolic center of Israel's history and then the widely regarded hub of the early Christian movement with its acknowledged leaders, James, Cephas, and John. Paul refers to these men as pillars in Jerusalem.

Paul retains the traditional Jewish imagery of "going up" to Jerusalem, but he also subverts the favored symbol of Jerusalem as the exalted center of the world for that time, as Isaiah prophesied.

Isaiah 2:2-3 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LOORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LOORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LOORD from Jerusalem.

These are the words of the prophet, not of the people. The phrase "God of Jacob" underlines the special relationship of the true God with historical Israel, while "Zion" and "Jerusalem" represent divinely ordained worship and divinely authorized government. Now God ordains and authorizes such things through His church under Jesus Christ's leadership.

Isaiah declares that the law would go from Zion; that is, Zion would be the center from which it would be spread abroad. Zion is put here for Jerusalem, and means that the message of mercy to mankind would be spread from Jerusalem, from Zion, from the Church.

Therefore, Christ commanded His disciples to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Jesus also said that repentance and remission of sins should "be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

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The law, or will of God, under the reign of Jesus Christ, proceeds from Zion. The written word of God is the message of His mercy and plan of redemption for humanity. Zion, or the Church, is the promoter of religious truth, and the center of religious influence in the world.

This influence is manifested in several ways:

(1) Zion was the source of religious truth to the ancient world.

Anciently, a lot of knowledge was gained by traveling, but little of the knowledge pertaining to God in ancient Greece was acquired by contact with the sages of distant lands. The truths held in Zion or Jerusalem thus radiated from land-to-land, and mind-to-mind.

(2) The church is now the center of religious truth to the world around it.

The world has never been able to convey any just view of God, or the way of salvation by its humanly reasoned philosophy. The most crude, unsettled, contradictory, and vague opinions on religion prevail in the world. If, in this world, there are any opinions that are true and valuable, they can in all cases be traced to the written and spoken Word of God. They are the result of the instructions of faithful parents and ministers, or to the general influence that Christianity exerts on the world.

(3) The church holds the power of "reformation" in her hands according to the will of God. Especially in the Western world, most cases of morals advancing or retarding is affected by the work of the Church. It is determined by whether she enters into the work, or as she withdraws from it. It is especially affected by her diligence in righteousness according to God's will.

(4) The world cannot grow in grace and knowledge without the Church.

There are no systems of truth that start with human reasoning.

There is no dynamic energy in a worldly mind.

There is no recuperative power to bring it back to God.

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There is no progress made toward the truth by any worldly person or nation.

There is no independent wellspring of life to purify a person's mind.

In the world, the effect of time only deepens the darkness, driving them farther from God. The world is becoming worse and worse. If it is ever brought to the truth, it must be by a "foreign" influence and not the world. That influence will not go forth from philosophy or science, but from the Church and the inspiration of God. If the light of truth is ever to spread, it must go forth from Zion. Whether the world likes it or not, it is dependent on the Church for the truth of God and of the righteous way to life. We just read in Isaiah 2:3, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law." Of course that law, initially, comes from heaven from God's throne.

The glorious earthly Jerusalem of the Millennium will be the earthly representative and forerunner of the heavenly and everlasting Jerusalem that will follow the destruction of the old earth and its atmosphere.

Jeremiah 3:14-18 "Return, O backsliding children," says the LOORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. "And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. "Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LOORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LOORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. "At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LOORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LOORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.

The citizens of the future holy Jerusalem constitute the wife of the Lamb. It is a perfect cube, denoting the complete elect church. During the millennium the elect saints reign with Christ as kings and priests over the earth and over Israel and the nations.

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There will be the heavenly Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from our God.

Revelation 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

The Greek for "new," as in New Jerusalem, implies that it is new and different from, and superseding, the old worn out Jerusalem. The first foundation of the spiritual church was laid in the earthly Jerusalem. But it was never a part of the earthly Jerusalem, meaning physically. Referring to Isaiah 28:16, Peter wrote in I Peter 2:6, "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.'"

This spiritual church is the earnest of that everlasting Jerusalem which will come down from heaven to abide permanently in the new heavens and new earth.

To have a part in the New Jerusalem we must have endurance, live by faith, and not draw back. We, in this physical life, must give allegiance to the heavenly Jerusalem—the new city—rather than the old dying city of earthly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 10:32-39 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

We certainly have our work cut out for us as God works with us to bring us to the point where He wants us to completion.

As the earthly Jerusalem came to symbolize Israel's imperial destiny, the New Jerusalem signifies the full realization of that Kingdom promise. The New Jerusalem is a heavenly city that will far transcend the glory of its earthly counterpart.

In the New Jerusalem the people of God will enjoy unhindered worship and fellowship under the great Davidic King, Jesus Christ. All things will be made new. There will not be any remnants of the earthly Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:1-4 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:22-24 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

What a contrast this is to our present endurance of "a great struggle with sufferings" as we just read in Hebrews 10:32. The conception of a "holy city" as mentioned in verse 2 is based on prophecies that predict a glorious future for Jerusalem after the judgment.

Now, continuing in verse 9, it allegorically depicts the final state of the church. This is when the new heaven and the new earth will have come into being.

Revelation 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."

This picture is drawn from a twofold perspective:

1. The New Jerusalem is a restoration of Paradise; it is also the ideal of true

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religion realized.

2. The New Jerusalem is the city that descends "out of heaven from God" which characterizes it, on the one hand, as a product of God's supernatural workmanship, and on the other hand, as the culmination of the historic process of redemption.

The New Jerusalem is the full realization of the grand destiny of the people of God. It represents the time when the reign of God will be fully actualized on earth through the vice-regency of the great Son of David—Jesus Christ! The New Jerusalem is the place in which we will live and dwell in happy fellowship with God and His Son through eternity.

Revelation 22:6-14 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." "And Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

We can see here the urgency that God gives us in not delaying our overcoming, enthusiasm, zeal, and diligence. Jesus parts with us here in great kindness, and assures us it shall not be long before He comes: "Behold, I come quickly." As when He ascended into heaven, after His resurrection, He parted with a promise of His gracious presence, so here He parts with a promise of a speedy return.

If any say, "Where is the promise of His coming, when so many ages have passed since this was written?" let them know He is not slack to His people, but long-suffering to His

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enemies. His coming will be sooner than the world is aware, sooner than they are prepared, sooner than they want. But to us, His people, it will be a suitable time. When God's will is done, the timing is always right.

This promise is for an appointed time, and will not delay. He will come quickly. Let this promise be always sounding in our ears. Let us give all diligence that we may be found by Him, in peace, enduring our great struggle, without spiritual blemishes and blameless.