

## **JERUSALEM, CITY OF REMARKABLE HISTORY AND DESTINY**

**J**erusalem is one of the world's famous cities. It dates from at least the second millennium B.C. and is considered sacred (a "holy city") by the adherents of the 3 great monotheistic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The first reference in the Bible to Jerusalem occurs quite early. It is in Gen. 14 which relates to the time of Abraham, about 2,000 B.C. Verse 18 of this chapter refers to "Melchizedec king of Salem" who was also "the priest of the most high God." ("Salem" is an abbreviation of Jerusalem Ps. 76:2).

Melchizedec was both king and priest of Jerusalem, and he went out to meet Abraham, who was returning from a victorious battle against the enemy, who had invaded the land and taken captives, including his nephew Lot. Melchizedec gave Abraham bread and wine and blessed him. He also blessed the most high God. Abraham then gave him a tenth of everything.

On this basis, it is concluded in Heb. 7:1-7 that Melchizedec was greater than Abraham. It is also concluded in Heb. 5 and 7, on the basis of a Messianic prophecy in Ps. 110:4, that Melchizedec was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy declares: "The Lord has sworn, and will not change His mind; you (i.e. Jesus) are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." This implies that Jesus, like Melchizedec, will be both king and priest at Jerusalem.

Because the name "Melchizedec" means king of righteousness, and "Salem" means peace (Heb. 7:1-2), he foreshadowed the righteous reign of Christ which will bring peace to the earth when he rules the nations in righteousness from Jerusalem. For this reason Jesus is referred to as "The Lord our righteousness" in Jer. 23:6 and "Prince of Peace" in Isa. 9:6.

Jesus is unquestionably both king and priest. Many Scriptures testify to this. For example, a prophecy in Zech. 6:13 says: "... he shall sit and rule (i.e. as a king) upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Because the two offices of kingship and priesthood shall be united in one man, there will never be any of the antagonism that divided and disgraced these offices in the past through rivalry when they were held by two men - a king and a high priest.

It is clear then that as far back as the time of Abraham, the Lord chose and desired Jerusalem as His special dwelling place on earth. The

point is made in Ps. 132:13 that: “The Lord has chosen Zion (synonym for Jerusalem); He has desired it for His habitation.”

Not only was it indicated back in Abraham’s day that Jerusalem would be the place where God’s ultimate king-priest, the Messiah, would rule and reign; but it was also indicated that it would be the place where he would be sacrificed. This is seen in God’s command to Abraham in Gen. 22:2 to “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom you love, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I shall show you.” (The “land of Moriah,” according to 2 Chr. 3:1 was where Jerusalem was situated.)

Being “born of the Spirit” (Gal. 4:29) and the promised seed and heir of Abraham, Isaac was a type of Jesus. The journey to Moriah to be sacrificed was a parable in action, portraying the sacrifice of Abraham’s ultimate seed, the only begotten son of Father God. It even portrayed the resurrection as we read in Heb. 11:17-19: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called. He considered that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which also he did receive him back, in a parabolic sense.”

## “THE PLACE”

**F**rom the time of Abraham to the time of Moses, a period of about 400 years, Jerusalem disappears from sight. It is not mentioned by name in Scripture during this period. During part of this period, Israel went to Egypt to escape famine in Canaan, and ended up staying there till the time of the exodus, when Moses led them back to the promised land.

During the exodus, God told Israel that when they finally enter the land and become established, there would be a special “place” of his choosing in that land for his name and habitation, which would be the centre of administration and worship for all 12 tribes (Deu. 12:5-7 etc). That “place” was of course Jerusalem.

When Joshua led Israel into the land to conquer it, Jerusalem was possessed by the Canaanites. The first reference to this is in Josh. 10:1. The city was also called “Jebus,” for which reason the inhabitants were called “Jebusites” (Judg. 19:10-11. 1 Chr. 11:4-5). Joshua defeated the king of the Jebusites and his allies on the battle field, but no attempt was made at that stage to enter or possess the city (Josh. 10). The Jebusites continued to dwell in it and occupy it.

Later, during the life of Joshua, the men of the tribe of Judah

attempted to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem but failed to do so (Josh. 15:63). However, after the death of Joshua, the men of the tribe of Judah managed to conquer and burn the city (Judg. 1:8). But it seems that the Israelites did not at that stage appreciate the importance of Jerusalem, because although they conquered it, they moved on to the south to fight more battles and did not occupy it.

The Jebusites must have rebuilt and repossessed the city, because the Benjamites whose tribal territory included Jerusalem (Josh. 18:21-28) could not drive out the Jebusites when they attacked them (Judg. 1:21). (Although Jerusalem was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin, the Benjamin-Judah border ran through the city, but Judah ultimately took possession of it).

The city originally commanded a portion of the territory of both tribes (Josh. 15:8. 18:28). It was not until the time that David became king of Israel that the Jebusites were conquered and dispossessed of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6-10). It seems that the times and seasons of God decreed that Jerusalem was not to be possessed by Israel till the time of David. In the meantime another place called Shiloh, which was situated about 30kms north of Jerusalem, was used as a spiritual centre. The tabernacle was pitched there and sacrifices were offered upon an altar there (Josh. 18:1. 1 Sam. 1:24. Ps. 78:60).

Even before David became king, it seems that he knew that he was destined to conquer Jerusalem and establish it as the centre of the kingdom of Israel. The reason for drawing this conclusion is because after he defeated Goliath, he cut off his head and took it to Jerusalem (1 Sam. 17:54). Davis' Bible Dictionary suggests he erected the head on a spear outside the walls and in view of the city, displaying it before the eyes of the Jebusites as a sign of what awaited them. It was as if to say: "Your turn next."

It was not, of course, due to personal preference that David chose Jerusalem. We read in 2 Chr. 6:1-6 that God himself said to David: "I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there."

When David conquered Jerusalem, he established it as the centre of the kingdom of Israel over which he reigned as king. He built a palace on Mount Zion and set up a throne there. He also collected materials for a temple which his son Solomon built on Mount Moriah. Jerusalem became "the place" where the name of the Lord was named and exalted, and where all the tribes of Israel gathered to offer their sacrifices and worship.

David was a righteous king - a man after God's own heart and he executed righteousness and justice in the land. He put to rout all of his

enemies and subdued the nations around Israel and established peace and prosperity. The kingdom he reigned over was a model kingdom. It was the kingdom of God on earth - an outpost of heaven!

David was a type of Christ; so much so that Christ is referred to in some prophecies as “David” (Jer. 30:9. Ezk. 34:23-24. 37:24-25. Hos. 3:5). David’s kingdom based in Jerusalem was a forerunner of the coming kingdom of Christ which will be the restoration of the kingdom of Israel on a greater and grander scale.

During his life, God promised David on a number of occasions that the Messiah would be his seed and that he would establish his kingdom and reign from Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7. Ps. 2. 110. 132). Many of the prophets after David confirmed this: (Isa. 9:6-7. 55:1-5. Jer. 23:5-6. Ezk. 37:21-22, 25. Hos. 3:4-5. Am. 9:11. Mic. 5:2). But, before Christ’s kingdom comes, the kingdom of Israel and the city of Jerusalem were destined to suffer many upheavals and changes. As a result of apostasy, the throne of David was overthrown and ceased to exist; the children of Israel were uprooted from their land and scattered into all nations, resulting in the kingdom of Israel ceasing to exist, and Jerusalem being trodden down by the Gentiles.

These events were all prophesied, but the prophecies made it clear that this situation would not be permanent or perpetual. When Zedekiah, the last king to reign on David’s throne at Jerusalem, was told by the prophet Ezekiel that God was going to overthrow the throne, the prophet said it would not exist again “until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him” (Ezk. 21:25-27). The word “until” defines a limit to the time during which the throne would not exist, and implies that it will be restored when “he comes whose right it is” to sit on it and rule God’s kingdom. The one whose right it is to do this is of course Jesus. This is confirmed by the angel Gabriel’s promise to Mary that the purpose of the Lord was to give her son the throne of David from which he would reign over Israel forever, and of whose kingdom there shall never be an end (Lk. 1:31-33).

The same applies to Jerusalem. When Jesus said the Jews would go into exile and the city would be trodden down by the Gentiles, he added the all-important promise that it would only be “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:24). Once again the word “until” implies that the Jewish exile and Gentile occupation of Jerusalem would not be permanent. Ultimately the Jews would return to their land, and Gentile rule over Jerusalem would cease. The time to which Jesus referred was of course his second coming when he will restore the throne of David at

Jerusalem.

Although the Jews have, during the last few decades, returned to their land and regained control of Jerusalem, this has not fulfilled the prophecy. They will again be invaded and conquered by Gentile nations prior to Christ's return. One of the reasons for Christ's return will be to deliver them from the enemy and this will be accomplished as a result of the battle of Armageddon. It will not be until Jesus comes that he will "then sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31).

### **A CITY OF REMARKABLE DESTINY**

**J**erusalem is certainly a city of remarkable destiny. Ps. 48 refers to it as: "The city of the great king" and "The joy of the whole earth." That these words are prophetic of Christ's future reign from Jerusalem is evident from his quotation of them in Matt. 5:35. He said that Jerusalem "is the city of the great king." He did not say that Jerusalem was the city of the great king, but is the city of the great king, because in the divine programme, it is to be the city where he will reign as king over the whole earth. In that day, due to his righteous reign, there will be joy and peace in the whole earth.

Isa. 65:17-18 relates to this time. God says: "... I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people; the voice of weeping shall not be heard in her anymore, nor the voice of crying ..." Also see Isa. 60.

The Jews of course were familiar with these prophecies concerning Jerusalem and were therefore in great expectation when Jesus came on the scene. They expected him at that time to expel the Romans, set up the throne of David at Jerusalem and reign as king over Israel. We read in Lk. 19:11- that on one occasion when he was heading for Jerusalem, the people were expecting him to set up the kingdom then and there. He therefore gave a parable to teach them that he firstly had to go away "into a far country" (heaven) and then return before he would set up the kingdom.

On another occasion he addressed Jerusalem saying: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to you; how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not let me. Behold, your house (the temple) is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:37-39).

There can be no doubt that the Jerusalem to which Jesus was referring was the literal physical city known by that name in the land of Israel. His statement clearly teaches that when he comes, he will come to that particular location on the planet.

This truth is taught in Acts 1:9-12 which refers to Christ's ascension to heaven. He chose the Mount of Olives on the east side of the city of Jerusalem as his launching pad. And as he ascended, an angel said to those who were witnessing the event: "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven." It can be concluded from this that the Mount of Olives will be the touchdown pad at his return.

Around 500 years before the birth of Christ, the Holy Spirit proclaimed through the prophet Zechariah that this indeed would be the case. He said: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:4).

The previous verses say that prior to this, all nations will be gathered against Jerusalem and will conquer and occupy the city, causing great tribulation and distress. Verse 3 says: "Then (at the end of the tribulation) the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." This refers of course to the battle of Armageddon. It is at this time that "his feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives ..."

The following verses reveal that a mighty earthquake will split the Mount of Olives in half, and will level the hill country around Jerusalem for miles, turning it into a plain. At the same time the site of Jerusalem will be heaved up to a much greater height. Verse 9 declares that in that day "the Lord shall become king over all the earth ... there shall be one Lord, and His name one."

In the history of the earth there have been too many rulers and religions - too many conflicting ideologies and philosophies, resulting in divisions, conflicts and wars. In order to have peace on earth, there needs to be one ruler and one religion - a righteous, immortal, infallible ruler with absolute power and authority to enforce his righteous will. Jesus Christ, the divinely begotten son of God, alone qualifies. He is "the Lord" who "shall become king over all the earth." He is "the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) and there will never be lasting peace in Jerusalem or any other part of the earth until he comes and reigns over the nations from Jerusalem. For this reason we are told in Ps. 122:6 to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem: Those who love you shall prosper." There will never be peace in the world until there is peace in Jerusalem, and there will never be peace in Jerusalem until Jesus, the Prince of Peace is in the city ruling

on his throne.

## **TRODDEN DOWN BY THE GENTILES**

**A**s a result of the Romans expelling the Jews from their land in A.D. 70 and sending them into exile, and other nations moving in to take over, Jerusalem has been “trodden down by the Gentiles” as foretold by Jesus. When the Jews returned to their land in the twentieth century, Moslems occupied Jerusalem, and a Mosque they set up there is regarded as the third most holy site in the Moslem world. In the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, Jerusalem became divided between Israel and the Moslems. Israel held west Jerusalem and the Moslems controlled east Jerusalem. But as a result of the brief 6 day war of 1967, Israel won east Jerusalem and combined it with the western zone. West Jerusalem is the modern part of the city. East Jerusalem includes the old city, the site of many ancient holy places, including the temple mount.

In Biblical times, for about 1,000 years, Jerusalem was regarded by the Jews as the capital city of Israel, because it was their political and religious centre. The Jews today naturally still regard it in the same light. But the Moslem nations and other non-Moslem nations influenced by them, refuse to regard the city as Israel’s capital. They strenuously contend that the city belongs to the Moslems and point to the Mosque as proof. All sorts of pressures are continually exerted against Israel to relinquish Jerusalem, resulting in much tension and division. Bible prophecy refers to this as “the controversy over Zion” (Isa. 34:8) and it will ultimately lead to the battle of Armageddon.

Controversy over Zion and ownership of other parts of the land of Israel has raged many times in the U.N. assembly, and has become a heavy burden for the nations. Significantly enough, this was prophesied in the Bible. Zech. 12:3 declares that Jerusalem would become “a burdensome stone for all nations,” and warns that: “All who burden themselves with it, shall be cut in pieces” i.e. all who take it upon themselves to support Israel’s enemies in an attempt to take Jerusalem away from Israel, will suffer terribly.

Zech. 12:3 goes on to say that the nations will ultimately be gathered together against Jerusalem, which will involve invasion of the land of Israel. But v4 goes on to say that the Lord will intervene and smite them. This will be the time of the second coming of Christ and the battle of Armageddon. The following verses declare that the Lord will save the Jews and strengthen them and pour upon them the spirit of grace. Verse 10

reveals that it will be at that time that “they shall look upon him whom they have pierced.” They will realise that their Messiah who delivered them is indeed Jesus of Nazareth whose crucifixion they instigated. They will be overwhelmed with remorse by his grace which saved them in spite of their rejection of him. Verses 11-14 tell us that every Jewish family will mourn profoundly due to the realization of the historical blunder they had committed.

From that day forward, Jerusalem will never again be a “burdensome stone” to the nations, but “the joy of the whole earth,” for, as we read in Isa. 24:23: “The Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his elders in glory.”

### **JERUSALEM SHALL BE CALLED THE THRONE OF THE LORD**

**I**n Biblical times when the temple of the Lord was at Jerusalem, it housed the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. The ark of the covenant represented the Lord’s throne on earth, and His presence was manifested upon it. Only the high priest ever got to see the ark and only once a year when he went into the most holy place to make atonement for Israel. No one else was ever able to see it. However, as worshippers came up to Jerusalem from year to year, they would think about it. It would be foremost in their mind, because they knew the presence of God was there.

As a result of the Babylonian invasion and the destruction of the temple in 587 B.C. the ark of the covenant and David’s throne disappeared and have never been seen since. To the Jews, this disappearance was a huge loss. The ark of the covenant was a vital and key element to their religion and the throne was a key element to their government. Ever since the disappearance of these precious and priceless articles of furniture, they have been the continual topic of conversation.

However, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in his glory and manifests the presence of God, and restores the throne of David at Jerusalem, the ark of God will be forgotten and will never be discussed again. The surpassing glory of Christ will overshadow it! Jer. 3:16-17 relates to this: “When your land is once more filled with people, says the lord, you will no longer wish for the good old days of long ago when you possessed the ark of God’s covenant. Those days will not be missed or even thought about, and the ark will not be reconstructed. At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall be gathered into it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem, (for the Lord

Himself will be there); neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.”

This is a rich theme in Scripture and many prophecies present it. A particularly good presentation is in Mich. 3:12 to 4:3: “Because of you (i.e. Israel’s sins) Zion shall be plowed as a field and Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the temple mount a jungle hill. But in the last days it shall come to pass that the temple mount shall tower above the mountains, and people shall flow to it. And many nations shall come, and say, come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house (temple) of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people and settle disputes for strong nations afar off. They shall hammer their swords into plows, and their spears into sickles; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall there be training for war anymore.”

There is almost a verbatim version of this prophecy in Isa. 2:1-5.

## TOWER ABOVE THE MOUNTAINS

**B**oth prophecies in Mic. 4 and Isa. 2 refer to the temple mount towering above the mountains. This connects with the prophecy in Zech 14 which says Jerusalem is going to be heaved up to a much higher position by the mighty earthquake that occurs at Christ’s return. Other prophecies also relate to this. For example, Ps. 48:2 says Mount Zion will be “beautiful in elevation” when Jerusalem becomes “the city of our God” and “the joy of the whole earth.”

Ps. 68:15-16 indicates that it will be the highest mountain in the land, higher than Mount Hermon which is the highest in that part of the earth at the moment, being 2,773 metres (9,100 feet) high. This is suggested by the fact that Mount Hermon (Mount Bashan) is asked the question: “Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain, at the Mount (Zion) which God desired for His abode, where the Lord will dwell forever?”

The end time earthquake is going to reduce the height of mountains around the world, causing them to tumble down into, and fill valleys, and even disappear in some cases (Isa. 40:4. Ezk. 38:20. Rev. 6:14. 16:20). In view of this it is possible that Mount Zion could end up being the highest mountain on the earth.

Ps. 102:13 declares that God’s purpose is to “arise and have mercy on Zion” when “the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come.” It will be, of course, when Jesus comes in power and glory and manifests himself,

that he will “arise.” Verse 16 goes on to say: “When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.” The Hebrew word translated “build up” is used elsewhere for building something to be elevated. For example, the tower which reached up to heaven which men “builded” in Gen. 11:1-5. When the Lord’s appointed time arrives to come and appear in his glory, he shall “build up” Zion by a mighty earthquake, elevating it to a greater height. This seems to be the message in Ps. 102:16 and is, as we have seen, confirmed elsewhere.

## THE TEMPLE IN EZEKIEL’S PROPHECY

**W**ith these thoughts in mind, we go to Ezk. 40 where reference is made to the prophet being taken in prophetic vision to the land of Israel. In this vision he saw and sat upon “a very high mountain,” on the south side of which (not on the top!) was a structure the size of a city. The following chapters reveal that it was not a city, but a temple, the size of a city, measuring about 1,600 metres (one mile) square. Not only will this temple be larger than the Old Testament temple built by Solomon, and the New Testament temple built by Herod; but according to Hag. 2:9, “the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” And the “very high mountain,” on the south side of which the temple will be built, is the elevated site of Jerusalem referred to in the Scriptures quoted before.

The ensuing chapters in Ezekiel’s prophecy reveal that the temple will be used by the mortal population among the nations, to worship the Lord during the Millennial reign of Christ. This is “the house of the Lord” referred to in Mic. 4 and Isa. 2 to which the nations will go, saying: “Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways ...”

Other prophecies also refer to this. For example, Isa. 56 refers to both Jews and Gentiles being gathered by God to His holy mountain and making them joyful in His house of prayer. He says: “Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (v7). The words “shall be called” indicates that the statement is prophetic of the future, when not only Jews, but also Gentiles will be allowed to have access. Jesus quoted this prophecy during his ministry and retained the words “shall be,” indicating that the fulfilment was in the future (Mk. 11:17). It did not relate to Solomon’s or Herod’s temple. It is also clear from the context of his statement that “the house of prayer for all nations” related to a literal

temple.

Isa. 66:15 refers to the Lord coming in anger with fire to rebuke and execute judgement upon all nations, resulting in many being slain. Verse 22 goes on to say that it will be around this time that the Lord will make the new heavens and the new earth, i.e. renew the atmosphere and earth by eliminating all pollution. Verses 13-24 conclude by saying that month by month and week by week “shall all flesh (mortal population) come to worship before me, says the Lord. And on their way out (from the temple) they will see the carcasses of those who have transgressed against me: for their maggots shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and the sight of them shall be disgusting to all mankind.”

The prophet Zechariah was also inspired to proclaim messages concerning worship at Jerusalem in the age to come. He said: “Thus says the Lord of hosts; peoples shall come, even the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another saying: Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I am going. Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the favour of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of one who is a Jew, saying: we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” (Zech. 8:20-23).

Again in Zech. 14:21 we read: “And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be that the rain shall be withheld from any nation that refuses to come to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of hosts ... In that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘holiness to the Lord:’ and the cooking pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the sacred bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness (sacred) to the Lord of hosts. And all of those who sacrifice shall come and take them, and boil the flesh of the sacrifice in them; and in that day there shall no longer be the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.”

## A GREAT AND HIGH MOUNTAIN

**T**here is one more important reference to consider in Rev. 21 to a “high mountain” and Jerusalem. Verse 2 says the apostle John saw “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.” In order to see this he was carried away in the spirit from the isle of Patmos

(Rev. 1:9) to a “great and high mountain” (21:10). The fact that John had to be transported to this mountain to see the city descend, indicates that the city was descending to the geographical area or country to which the mountain belonged.

It is generally accepted that this great and high mountain is the same “very high mountain” to which the prophet Ezekiel was carried in prophetic vision. It is plainly stated in Ezk. 40:2 that this mountain was in the land of Israel, and it is evident from the following chapters that it incorporates Mount Zion.

The fact that the city is called “new Jerusalem” indicates that it replaces the old Jerusalem, and that the high mountain is where the old Jerusalem was situated. In Heb. 12:22 “Mount Zion” is inseparably linked with “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

Although Ezekiel and John saw the same high mountain, they did not however, see the same structure in relation to that mountain. Two different structures are involved! The structure seen by Ezekiel was not on the top of the mountain, but on the southward side of the mountain. Due to its size (1,600 metres square) it looked like a city but it was not a city. The following chapters reveal that it was a temple for mortal worshippers. Because it is situated on the side of the mountain, those who go there to worship the Lord are described in Scripture as going up to the mountain of the house of the Lord. The mountain will be seen from afar due to its height, and for those who are heading for the temple and cannot see the temple at a certain distance but who can see the mountain, it will seem like they are going to the mountain.

Although Ezekiel did not see the holy city of Jerusalem descending to Mount Zion, he did however later see another city, but it was nowhere near Mount Zion. It was about 24 kilometres (15 miles) further south in the area of Hebron and was therefore not the holy city of Jerusalem. It is therefore not called Jerusalem but “Yahweh Shammah” (Ezk. 48:35). Instead of being a “holy city” built on a holy mountain, it is described as being in “a profane place” (48:15). “Profane place” means a place for the general or common use of mortals. This city measures about 2,250 metres (1½ miles) square and will provide accommodation for the mortal worshippers who come to worship the Lord at the temple. The fact that the temple is 1,600 metres square indicates that large numbers of mortals will come to worship the Lord. It is not surprising therefore that the city which will accommodate these worshippers is 2,250 metres square.

## A REVELATION

**S**o then, the question that naturally arises is this: If the mortal worshippers will worship in the temple on the southward side of Mount Zion, and will be accommodated in the city south of Zion, where will the multitudes of immortal saints be based and where will the holy city of the new Jerusalem be? The answer is provided in Revelation chapter 21 and it truly is a revelation!

John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, in prophetic vision, coming down from heaven. It is evident from this that the city will not be built upon earth by man. Heb. 11:10 plainly states that the “builder and maker is God,” and Heb. 13:14 confirms that the city is “one to come.” It is referred to as “Jerusalem above” in Gal. 4:26; “heavenly Jerusalem” in Heb. 12:22 and “the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from my God” in Rev. 3:12.

This is the city that Abraham (and his seed) looked for as we read in Heb. 11:10. Because Abraham looked for a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God, he refused to take up residence in a heathen city built by the Canaanites. Instead, he preferred to live in tents as a stranger and foreigner while he waited for the city of God to come (Heb. 11:9-10).

The wonderful prospect of the blessed Christian hope is described in Heb. 12:22-23 in terms of us looking forward to: “Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels in high festival, and to a church of firstborns which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all ...”

In this passage we learn that access to the city will be gained from Mount Zion, and that the angels, the church and God Himself will all be in the city. Rev. 7:9-12 actually refers to both the angels and saints joined together in worship before the throne of God.

Because there are at least 100 million angels (Rev. 5:11) and possibly a similar number of saints, the city would have to be huge to accommodate them all. It certainly is! Rev. 21:16 reveals that it is of mind-boggling proportions. The total circumference of the city is 12,000 furlongs or stadia, which is 2,400 kilometres or 1,500 miles. The length, breadth and height are equal, which means the city is a perfect geometrical shape - a cube - a cubical city 600 kilometres (375 miles) square. This is surely significant in view of the fact that the most holy place in both the tabernacle and temple was a cube and represented heaven.

Reference in Rev. 22 to the throne of God being in the city teaches

that the city is indeed heaven, and it is coming to earth. From this we learn that heaven is not some ethereal or spectral or nebulous state, neither is it another planet in a fixed orbit somewhere in space like planet earth. No! It is a city - a mobile city that can traverse space and settle wherever God wills. The throne of God is also mobile as we read in Ezk. 1. It is not fixed to the city and can be transported outside the city.

In passing, it should be pointed out that the throne in heaven is referred to in the book of Revelation as “the throne of God and the Lamb” (22:1-3). The throne is unmistakably the Father’s, for Jesus referred to it as “His throne” (Rev. 3:21). However, because Jesus has been invited to sit at the right hand of his Father (Ps. 110:1), the throne is referred to as “the throne of God and the Lamb.” However, the restored throne of David will be in the inner court of the temple on the southern slope of Mount Zion, referred to in Ezekiel’s prophecy (43:5-7). “The Prince” (Jesus) visits this temple once a week on the Sabbath day and departs on the same day (Ezk. 44:1-2. 46:1-2). He clearly does not live there. He lives in the city of God.

We read in Ps. 132:13-14 these words: “For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.” In the past, David’s throne, which represented the throne of the Lord on earth, was situated upon Mount Zion, and the temple consisting of the most holy place which represented heaven, was situated on Mount Moriah. Well, both Mount Zion and the temple mount are going to be heaved up by the end time earthquake at Christ’s return, and the city of God which descends at the same time, will “rest” upon the mountain. The city will therefore be suspended over and above the holy land like a canopy. Reference is made to this in Isa. 4:5-6: “The Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion. It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.”

Seeing that heaven, the holy city, is coming down to rest on Mount Zion, it is not surprising that it is stated in Ezk. 43:12 that the top of the mountain “shall be most holy.” The expression “most holy” is used elsewhere to describe the most holy place in the tabernacle and temple which represented heaven. Because the holy city is heaven and is coming to rest upon Mount Zion, it is appropriate that the top of the mount should be referred to as being “most holy.”

When Mount Zion is heaved up, it will not be a narrow peaked

mountain. It will be more like a table mountain for we read in Rev. 14:1 about 144,000 standing on it.

Many believe that the city of God came down to Sinai when God gathered His people there to speak to them and give them His law. This is believed on the basis of a statement in Ps. 68:17 that Yahweh was at Sinai with His angels. If so, the city was concealed by clouds from Israel, but Moses may have seen it when he ascended the mount. The same could be true of the city in the future when it descends and is suspended over the holy land i.e. it could be concealed from mortal gaze.

As already pointed out: access will be gained to the city by ascending Mount Zion. (Ps. 15 and 24 can be related to this). However, there are 12 gates around the city; three on each side. This suggests that access to, or departure from the city will also be possible at these gates. If so, there may be a stairway from each gate, as in the case of Gen. 28:12 where reference is made to angels ascending and descending upon a stairway that extended from the land of promise to heaven. The city of God must have been hovering above, probably out of sight above the clouds.

### **A LITERAL CITY NOT SYMBOLICAL**

**S**ome of course, have spiritualized away the city of God and claim that it is not a literal city but symbolical of the church. One of the reasons for doing this is because Rev. 21:2 says the city is “as a bride adorned for her husband.” Because the church is elsewhere referred to as Christ’s bride, it is concluded that the city is the church. But Rev. 21:2 does not say that the city is the bride, but is “prepared as (i.e. like) a bride adorned for her husband.” The beautiful adornment of the city, which the following verses describe, is compared to the beautiful adornment of an Eastern bride. Such brides were decked out with gold and precious stones, and so also is the city of God, as was Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem (1 Chr. 29:2-8. 2 Chr. 3:6).

Because Rev. 21:9 refers to John being told to “come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” and then in v10 it says he was shown the holy city Jerusalem descending out of heaven; some have concluded that the city must be the bride. But this is only an assumption. It could just as easily be assumed that the bride was in the city as a result of having been caught up into the air to meet the Lord as he descends from heaven, and therefore to see her, John had to firstly see the city and give a description of it.

If the city is not literal, why is the particular physical measurement of

12,000 furlongs given to describe its size, not to mention the 144 cubit high wall and 12 gates with 12 angels standing at the gates? Those who spiritualize the city away cannot give a convincing answer to these questions. They accept that reference to 1,000 years reign is literal but won't accept that 12,000 furlongs is literal. Some have even tried to spiritualize away the temple in Ezekiel's prophecy and the attempts that have been made are as unconvincing as the attempts to spiritualize away the city of God. If the city is the church, how can the references to the throne of God being in it, as well as a street, gates, the tree of life and a river be explained?

Rev. 20:9 refers to armies coming up against "the camp of the saints, and the beloved city." A distinction is made here between the church and the city. It is evident that the city is the dwelling place of the church, not the church itself.

Rev. 21:27 and 22:14 say that those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will be permitted to enter through the gates into the city. This clearly teaches that the church is not the city, but enters the city! The same distinction between the city and the church can also be seen in Heb. 12:22 where Mount Zion, the city of God, the angels and the church are all treated as separate entities. To equate the city with the church would be as unjustified as equating the church with the angels or Mount Zion.

Can it be seriously believed that the reference in Heb. 11:8-10 to Abraham preferring to live in tents rather than a city, because he looked for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God, means he was looking for the church? The statement relates to the place where Abraham hoped to live, not the people with whom he would live. The contrast is clearly between the temporary, flimsy and foundationless habitation of a tent, and the larger more durable structure of a city. The contrast is not between a small company of people and a larger company, although that can be inferred.

### **WHERE WILL THE SAINTS SIT WITH ABRAHAM?**

**W**hen Abraham and his "seed" - the multitudinous body of Christ, which will involve millions of people, are gathered together to Zion in the promised land to sit down or recline, as we read in Matt. 8:11, where are they going to recline - out in the paddocks? No! Paddocks are for tents and Abraham will not be reverting to that form of habitation. He and his seed will have the city of God. The church will certainly not be

waiting for the nations to come together to build a city or temple before being able to recline with Abraham.

The concept of the city of God being literal may be regarded as bizarre by some, but it is not very long ago that even the concept of man building a city in space was regarded as impossible, and something that should be confined to science fiction. Truth sometimes turns out to be stranger than fiction, and this will prove to be the case in relation to the city of God.

Without the city of God, a huge hole or vacuum is created in one's concept of the kingdom of God, even if it is accepted that the temple and Yahweh Shammah city in Ezekiel's prophecy will literally be built. But both of these structures are clearly for mortal worshippers and would be far too small to accommodate the hundreds of millions of angels and saints. It is an inescapable conclusion that the city of God will have to be of gigantic proportions and the measurements given in Rev. 21 meet that requirement.

From a purely human point of view, the dimensions of the city of God are staggering and unbelievable, defying all human imagination. It is natural to be repelled at the thought of it being literal. A city of such mammoth proportions is so mind boggling that the finite mind immediately has an urge to reject a literal interpretation and regard it as highly symbolic and spiritualize it all away. But if we do this, and spiritualize it all away into aerial nothingness, how unmeaning, yea, even bordering on folly, do the descriptions of size etc become!

To reject such a city by frittering it all away into vague symbolism, would be tantamount to taking the solid reality of it away from Scripture. It is therefore significant that it is in the very context of the prophecy of the city of God that the warning is given that those who take anything away from the prophecy, will be excluded from the city. This of course would be just. It is reasonable to expect that those who don't believe in the city and who mock at the concept of it, will not be granted access to it, much in the same way that it is sometimes argued that those who do not believe in the land promised to Abraham, will not be allowed to inherit it.

As things stand in some circles, there is no city of God in their theology for Abraham and his seed, only the land - land without a home! This is a huge and serious omission. Abraham not only expected to inherit land but also a city.

If, as is the case in some circles, the temple for mortal worshippers in Ezekiel's prophecy is regarded as important enough to write a 300 page book about and have an artist's impressions of it displayed on the walls of

their places of worship, then think what kind of attention should be given to the city of God in which the immortal worshippers will live and worship with the angels and Christ, and bask in the very presence of the eternal God Himself!

It is clearly important to know and understand the true significance of the city of God. So much is at stake. It is a major issue. The importance of the city is surely indicated by the fact that the revelation of it is withheld until the last two chapters of the last book of the Bible. It is the crown and culmination of divine revelation - the grand climax to the prophetic Word! A real revelation in every sense of the word.

If the city of God is literal, imagine the reaction of those who do not believe this when it finally appears in the sky at the return of Christ. How embarrassing, especially for those who have claimed to possess the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, to have not believed in it and therefore not anticipated it. Taken by surprise when they see it they will exclaim: "What is that?" And Jesus may reply: "I told you about this and gave you a detailed description, but it was too big for your little minds and faith to receive, so you symbolized it all away."

Truly, as we read in Ps. 87: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." The whole text from verses one to three reads like this: "On the holy mount stands the city He founded; the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God."

It would truly be an awesome experience to ascend the holy hill of the Lord and enter His city, even heaven itself and behold His glory. But the pertinent question is: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? This question is asked and answered in Ps. 24:3-6: "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not pay homage to worthless things nor swears deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of His salvation. Such are the people who seek Him, that seek thy face O God of Jacob."

"Blessed are they that do His commandments ("who wash their robes" R.V.) that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe

away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he who sat upon the throne said: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:2-5).



A more comprehensive treatment of this subject is available in a 70 page book entitled: “The City of God - Literal not Symbolic” written by the same author.