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How the First-Century, Asia Minor, Jewish Christians Understood the Book of Revelation

3. Outline

Scene 4 – A High Mountain

The Messianic Kingdom (21:9 – 22:21)

Scene 1 – The Island called Patmos (1:9–3:20)
Scene 2 – An Open Door into Heaven (4–16:21)
Scene 3 – The Wilderness (17 – 21:8)
Scene 4 – A high mountain (21:9 – 22:21)

The 4 scenes (or sections) of Revelation are separated by the author's words **I was in the Spirit**.

Scene 4 transitions from the wilderness to a high mountain:

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' **And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain** and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like..." (21:9-11a)

- In Scene 1, John communicated personally to each community in Asia Minor whom he pastored.
- In Scene 2, he drew them through an open door into the flourishing scene of Yahweh's Heavenly Court, described its flourishing life, exposed the evil they faced, and illustrated and inspired them with truth they could experience and remember.
- In Scene 3, John gave visions of God's promise of vindication, final judgment, and the New Creation.
- In **Scene 4**, John summarized the Messianic Kingdom – The New Jerusalem with its characteristics, charges, and comfort. He draws on Isaiah 65:17-25; 54, 60; and Exodus 28. Then, we explore the challenges given to us by the entire book of Revelation. Perhaps you can think of others!

Take a moment to read Revelation 21:9-22:21. (The text is on Page 3 of this document for your convenience). Isaiah 35 is a beautiful picture of our homegoing when we are caught up together with Him in the air! (The text is on Page 4.) Declare it and rejoice in its truth!

The New Jerusalem (His Messianic Kingdom of Shalom, the New Creation, our Home)

Characteristics

- John uses four metaphors – a woman (bride), a city, a temple (God's reign), and a garden (Eden).
- 21:10-21 – It is constructed of people – 12 gates of pearl (the 12 tribes of Israel), 12 foundation stones of varying gems (the 12 apostles). (John echoes the gems of Exodus 28:15-20; see also 1 Peter 2:4-5.) In Chapter 4, we learned that 1,000 is infinity, so the 144,000 (12 x 12 x 1,000) encompassed the entirety of Yahweh's children, symbolic of *"a number too numerous to count and yet all are accounted for."* Every believer is sealed with the Name of the Lamb and His Father (14:1), their names are written in the Lamb's book of life! They are fully known and loved.
- 21:22 – The Almighty and the Lamb are its inner sanctuary – Yahweh's presence among His people.
- 21:23-24; 22:5 – The Lamb is the lamp, the Light of the World, so there is no need for the sun.
- 21:24 – The doors are open. Everyone is safe, equal, and welcome in every part; no hierarchies or divisions exist. Kings bring their tribute! It is a place of thriving economy and governance.
- 21:27 – Total purity with no trace of uncleanness permeates every part, echoing Isaiah 35:8-9.

- 22:1-2 – A clear, crystal river of healing life flows from the Throne in the middle of its street lined with trees bearing 12 kinds of fruit that yield in their season with a continuous presence of healing.

Charges

- 22:7, 10 – Keep, guard, and share the words of this prophecy.
- 22:14, 17 – Receive Yeshua and be washed in His blood so you can eat of the tree of life and enter the gates. Come, all who are thirsty, and take the free water of life!
- 22:7, 20 – Anticipate the return of Yahweh’s kingdom with joy!

Comfort

- 22:1-5 – Ezekiel’s vision of healing was for Israel alone; John’s vision is for the entire world!
- Revelation 21 is the reinstatement of Yahweh among His people from Genesis 2.
- Revelation 22 is the return of the good Garden from Genesis 1 – the presence of the Lamb with His people in the fullness of fellowship. There is no fear or striving. We are covered by His blood!
- The Kingdom of Shalom is the old made new, created for joy, absent of pain and war, flourishing with ownership, success, building (creating), wholeness, and beautiful restful dwelling places. It includes creative, meaningful, satisfying, collaborative work that contributes to the new society, and is the culmination of intimacy with Yahweh, Yeshua, Ruach (Spirit), and His people.

Challenges

How did John challenge the first-century, Asia Minor Jewish Christians with the Apocalypse/Unveiling, and how are we challenged today? The Book of Revelation:

1. Reorients our understanding of present appearances with a heavenly, cosmic perspective – the Heavenly Court reality.
2. Asks us where our allegiance lies and what matters to us most.
3. Questions claims of prosperity, peace, and security on the terms of the kingdoms of this world.
4. Urges a pure kingdom simplicity and focus in the face of idolatrous, immoral luxury and pleasure.
5. Gives us a glimpse of the resurrected Messiah, allowing us to see His true character as the Lamb.
6. Takes the best of our human experience (the things that make us truly human) and gives us true worth as we live in the service of others and for the redemption of the world.
7. Exposes the nuances of the nature of evil, so we can recognize it and live lives set apart from it.
8. Fosters a global, universal hope for the coming Kingdom of Shalom.
9. Renews our mind as we meditate on the New Jerusalem and its reality, praying with Yeshua, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10)
10. Challenges us to live in the descriptions of a Faithful Witness, which is our part in God’s story.
11. Encourages us to envision the Kingdom of Yahweh in this-world, real, physical terms with the promise of a Voice on the throne that says, “Behold, I make all things new.”
12. Encourages us to make creative, imaginative, kingdom-inspired choices, decisions, and creations that build the Kingdom in the world around us.
13. **Reassures us to rest in His finished work, to fear not nor strive but trust that we are complete in Him!**

Benediction

“HalleluYah! for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns! Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready!” (Revelation 19:6b-7)

Revelation 21:9-22:21 (New American Standard Bible version)

21 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very valuable stone, like a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall with 12 gates, and at the gates 12 angels; and names were written on the gates, which are the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel. There were 3 gates on the east, 3 gates on the north, 3 gates on the south, and 3 gates on the west. And the wall of the city had 12 foundation stones, and on them were the 12 names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb.

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, 12 thousand stadia; its length, width, and height are equal. And he measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurements which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The 1st foundation stone was jasper, 2. Sapphire, 3. Chalcedony, 4. Emerald, 5. Sardonyx, 6. Sardius, 7. Chrysolite, 8. Beryl, 9. Topaz, 10. Chrysoprase, 11. Jacinth, and 12. Amethyst. And the 12 gates were 12 pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

I saw no temple in it for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed, and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22 And he showed me a river of the water of life clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life bearing 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the

tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse, and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illuminate them; and they will reign forever and ever.

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

"And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the one who does wrong still do wrong, and the one who is filthy still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous still practice righteousness, and the one who is holy still keep himself holy."

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to reward each one as his work deserves. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Blessed are those who wash their robes so they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral persons, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

"I, Yeshua, have sent My angel to testify to you of these things for the churches. I am the Root and the descendant of David, the Bright Morning Star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without cost.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Isaiah 35

The wilderness and the desert will be glad,
And the desert will rejoice and blossom;
Like the crocus
It will blossom profusely
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy!
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the glory of Yahweh,
The majesty of our Creator!

Encourage the exhausted and strengthen the feeble.
Say to those with anxious heart,
"Take courage, fear not.
Behold, your Creator will come with vengeance;
The recompense of Elohim will come,
But He will save you!"

Then the eyes the blind will be opened,
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped!
Then the lame will leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy!

For waters will burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert!
The scorched land will become a pool
And the thirsty ground springs of water;
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,
Grass becomes reeds and rushes!

And a highway will be there, a roadway,
And it will be called the Highway of Holiness!
The unclean will not travel on it,
But it will be for the one who walks that way,
And fools will not wander on it.
No lion will be there
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;
They will not be found there.

But the redeemed will walk there,
And the ransomed of Yahweh will return
And come with joyful shouting to Zion
With everlasting joy upon their heads!.
They will find gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away!