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**The New
Jerusalem Isn't
Empty, You Have
Already Come To It**



By Dan Maines

The New Jerusalem Isn't Empty, You Have Already Come To It

Introduction

† One of the most powerful statements in the New Testament is found in Hebrews 12:22. The writer doesn't tell believers that someday they'll come to Mount Zion. He tells them that they have already come.

† This changes the entire way we understand Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, and the New Jerusalem of Revelation. The destination wasn't presented to

those believers merely as something thousands of years in their future. They were already being brought into the heavenly reality promised through Christ.

† Hebrews doesn't tell believers they would someday come to Mount Zion. It says they had already come. That's the incredible truth at the center of this study. The old covenant world centered on earthly Jerusalem and Mount Sinai was passing away, while God's people were entering the heavenly Jerusalem that couldn't be shaken (Hebrews 12:26-28).

† Revelation later shows that same holy city coming down from God, with God dwelling with His people (Revelation 21:2-3).

Galatians identifies the Jerusalem above as our mother (Galatians 4:26). These passages aren't describing three unrelated cities. They point us toward the heavenly covenant reality established in Christ.

Hebrews 12:18-21

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not cope with the command, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling."

† Before telling them where they had come, Hebrews first tells them where they hadn't come. They hadn't come to the terrifying mountain associated with the giving of the old covenant.

† The contrast is covenantal. Sinai represents the old covenant order, while Zion represents the heavenly kingdom established through Christ (Galatians 4:24-26).

† This is essential because Hebrews isn't contrasting planet earth with a future planet. It's contrasting two covenantal mountains, Sinai and Zion, and telling believers which one belonged to them.

Hebrews 12:22-24

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† Here is the WOW statement: they had already come. The inspired writer speaks of Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem as a present covenantal reality for those believers.

† They hadn't physically climbed a mountain into heaven. They had come to Zion through their relationship with Jesus and their entrance into the new covenant.

† Notice everything connected together in this passage: Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly, God, Jesus, and the new covenant. The heavenly Jerusalem can't be separated from the new covenant because Hebrews places them together.

† Jesus is the mediator of that new covenant. Therefore, coming to Jesus meant coming to the covenantal city over which He reigns (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15).

† This means Christianity isn't a religion standing outside the gates waiting for God's city to arrive. In Christ, God's people belong to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Galatians 4:24-26

This is speaking allegorically, for these women are two covenants: one coming from Mount Sinai giving birth to children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

† Paul makes the covenantal contrast unmistakable. He identifies two women with two covenants and contrasts earthly Jerusalem with the Jerusalem above.

† The Jerusalem that existed in Paul's day was associated with

bondage because the old covenant system was still operating around its temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and law.

† But Paul says, "the Jerusalem that is above is free." He doesn't describe this Jerusalem as nonexistent or as waiting to be created thousands of years later. It was already the heavenly identity of God's new covenant people.

† Paul calls this Jerusalem "our mother." That's family language. Believers belonged to the Jerusalem above even while earthly Jerusalem was still standing.

† This also explains why the destruction of earthly Jerusalem in AD 70 didn't destroy God's true city. The heavenly Jerusalem wasn't dependent upon the survival of the earthly city (Hebrews 13:14).

Hebrews 12:26-28

And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

† The same chapter that says they had come to heavenly Jerusalem also speaks about receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken.

† The shaking removes what can be shaken so that what can't be shaken remains. This fits the transition from the temporary old covenant order to the permanent kingdom established in Christ (Hebrews 8:13).

† The earthly temple could be shaken and removed. The earthly city could fall. The old priesthood could disappear. But the kingdom centered in Christ couldn't be destroyed.

† That's why the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 wasn't the destruction of Christ's kingdom. It publicly demonstrated that the old covenant order had reached its end while the

unshakable kingdom remained.

Hebrews 13:14

For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.

† Hebrews was written during the transition between the covenants. The believers had already come to heavenly Zion covenantally, while they still anticipated the complete removal of the old covenant order.

† There's no contradiction between Hebrews 12 saying, "ye are come," and Hebrews 13 saying they sought the city to come. They had entered the new covenant reality, but the old covenant world hadn't yet been completely removed (Hebrews 8:13).

† This already-but-not-yet transition reached its covenantal conclusion when the earthly temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and Jerusalem-centered system were removed in AD 70.

Revelation 21:2-3

And I 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 the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

† Revelation identifies the holy city as New Jerusalem and describes her as a bride. That immediately tells us we're dealing with people and covenant relationship, not merely architecture.

† The city comes from God because its origin is heavenly. This agrees perfectly with Paul's "Jerusalem that is above" and Hebrews "heavenly Jerusalem" (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22).

† The great promise of New Jerusalem is God's presence with His people. The emphasis isn't on escaping the earth. It's on God dwelling with His redeemed people.

† The bride imagery also connects New Jerusalem with Christ's covenant people (Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 21:9-10).

† The New Jerusalem isn't an empty city waiting for inhabitants. God's redeemed people are the community in which He dwells.

Revelation 21:9-10

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,

† John is told that he'll be shown "the bride, the wife of the Lamb," and what he's shown is "the holy city Jerusalem." The bride and the city are directly connected.

† This is why New Jerusalem shouldn't be reduced to a gigantic physical structure descending through the atmosphere.

Revelation itself identifies the city with the bride.

† God's people aren't merely visitors walking around inside God's city. In Revelation's symbolism, the redeemed covenant community is identified with the city itself.

† Hebrews says believers had come to heavenly Jerusalem. Revelation shows heavenly Jerusalem as the Lamb's bride. Together they present a powerful picture of God's people united with Christ in the new covenant.

Ephesians 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

† Paul tells believers that they're already fellow citizens and members of God's household.

† He doesn't describe God's ultimate dwelling as a future stone temple. God's people themselves are being built together as His dwelling in the Spirit.

† This matches Revelation 21 beautifully. God dwells with His people because His people have become His covenant dwelling place (2 Corinthians 6:16).

† The movement of Scripture is from a physical sanctuary toward God's presence among His redeemed people in Christ.

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

† Paul says their citizenship was already in heaven. Their bodies were physically living on earth, but their covenantal citizenship belonged to God's heavenly kingdom.

† This is another reason heavenly Jerusalem doesn't require believers to physically leave earth before they can belong to it.

† If our citizenship is heavenly, and Hebrews says believers have come to heavenly Jerusalem, then God's people can live physically on earth while belonging spiritually and covenantally to the heavenly city.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in AD 70 in *The Wars of the Jews*, especially Books 5-7. His account provides historical background for the end of the Jerusalem-centered temple system.

† Josephus describes the burning and destruction of the temple during the Roman siege. The earthly sanctuary that had dominated Jewish covenant life was physically removed.

† Eusebius later recorded the early Christian tradition that believers in Jerusalem departed before the city's destruction and went to Pella. His account appears in *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 5.

† Eusebius connected Jerusalem's catastrophe with judgment upon that generation. While historical writers don't establish biblical doctrine, their testimony helps us understand the first-century historical setting in which these passages were fulfilled.

† The historical destruction of earthly Jerusalem provides a

striking background to the New Testament contrast between the Jerusalem then existing and the heavenly Jerusalem that belongs to Christ's people (Galatians 4:25-26).

How It Applies To Us Today

† We're not waiting outside New Jerusalem hoping that someday God will let us enter. Through Christ, we belong to the heavenly Jerusalem and the kingdom that can't be shaken (Hebrews 12:22-28).

† We don't need an earthly temple to approach God. Jesus is our mediator, and through Him we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).

† We don't need an earthly Jerusalem to establish our spiritual citizenship. Our citizenship is heavenly because our life and identity are in Christ (Philippians 3:20).

† We don't need another covenant. Jesus already mediates the better covenant established upon better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

† We don't need to live as though God's kingdom is empty, absent, or postponed. Christ reigns, His people are His dwelling place, and we belong to His kingdom now (Colossians 1:13).

† Think about how incredible this is. Hebrews doesn't leave God's people standing at the bottom of Mount Zion waiting for permission to enter. They had already come to Mount Zion through Christ.

† You've come to the city of the living God. You've come to the heavenly Jerusalem. You've come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

† That's why fulfilled prophecy should produce joy, confidence, worship, and gratitude. We're not waiting for God's promises to begin. We're living in the covenant reality Christ established.

† The New Jerusalem isn't empty. The King is reigning, God dwells with His people, and everyone who belongs to Christ belongs to His heavenly kingdom.

† The question isn't, "When will New Jerusalem finally become our home?" The better question is, "Are we living like people

who understand where we've already come?"

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does Hebrews 12 say Christians will someday come to Mount Zion?

A: No. Hebrews says its original readers had already come to Mount Zion. The statement describes a reality they had already entered through Christ and the new covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Q: Is the heavenly Jerusalem the same as earthly Jerusalem?

A: No. Paul directly contrasts "the Jerusalem that now is" with "the Jerusalem that is above" (Galatians 4:25-26). One represented bondage under the old covenant, while the other represented freedom.

Q: Why does Revelation call New Jerusalem a bride?

A: Because the city represents God's covenant people in relationship with Christ. John is told that he'll be shown the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and he's then shown the holy city Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-10).

Q: Does New Jerusalem have to be a literal physical city descending from outer space?

A: Revelation's own explanation points us toward covenant symbolism. The city is identified with the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and its central promise is God's dwelling with His people (Revelation 21:2-3, 9-10).

Q: If believers had already come to heavenly Jerusalem, why does Hebrews 13:14 speak of a city to come?

A: They had already entered the new covenant reality through Christ, but they were living during the transition while the old covenant system was becoming obsolete and was ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13; 12:22-28). The earthly Jerusalem and temple system were finally removed in AD 70.

Q: Where is God's dwelling place today?

A: God's people are built together into His dwelling in the Spirit. The New Testament moves the focus away from a physical temple and toward God's presence among His people in Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Q: What should this truth mean for Christians today?

A: It means we shouldn't live as though Christ's kingdom and God's city are still absent. Through Christ we have access to God, heavenly citizenship, and membership in the kingdom that can't be shaken (Hebrews 12:22-28; Philippians 3:20).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Hebrews 12:18-21; Hebrews 12:22-24; Galatians 4:24-26; Hebrews 12:26-28; Hebrews 13:14; Revelation 21:2-3;

Revelation 21:9-10; Ephesians 2:19-22; Philippians 3:20

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 5

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