

Some Questions on the Book of Revelation

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1. - Why does the Bible say there will not be a temple in the New Jerusalem?

LW: John wrote, "**I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.**" (Revelation 21:22) A temple became necessary in Heaven when the plan of salvation was put into operation. Before sin existed, there was no need for a temple, altars, or atonement.

When the work of the Two Witnesses is completed on Earth, the temple in Heaven will be vacated (Revelation 15:5-8) because salvation will never again be offered. At the close of the 1,260 days allotted to the Two Witnesses, everyone on Earth will either have the seal of God or the mark of the beast, and the intercession of Jesus will no longer be needed.

This is important to remember: People will not be in the valley of decision when mercy comes to an end. The door closes after all people have made their final decision and they are sealed or marked. That is how it was in Noah's day. John says the Father and the Lamb are the temple on the new earth because worship will occur wherever they may be!

2. - The Bible says that New Jerusalem is 12,000 furlongs in length, width, and height and the city wall is 144 cubits thick. (Revelation 21:16,17) Does this really mean the holy city is 12,000 furlongs (1,420 miles) tall?

LW: Even though we have to accept the measurements given at face value, I do not have a good answer. If we accept the idea that God observes the natural laws of physics (which He created), the physical dimensions of New Jerusalem are puzzling for the finite mind because it is hard to imagine a city that is 1,420 miles square and 1,420 miles high.

If the holy city were on Earth today, it would tower 1,420 miles into space! For the sake of comparison, Earth's atmosphere reaches about 62 miles high, and the International Space Station orbits Earth about 200 miles above Earth. Some artists have rendered the holy city as though it were shaped like a pyramid – having a four-sided base with a very tall spire in the center. Still, it is hard to conceive a physical structure reaching 1,420 miles into space.

History reveals that a Roman furlong was 625 feet in John's day and a cubit was 18 inches. Therefore, 12,000 furlongs amounts to approximately 1,420 miles and a wall 144 cubits thick amounts to 216 feet. If we align these dimensions with Earth's gravity and its orbital mechanics, the size and mass of a 1,420 mile cube would severely impact our weather, our rotational period and the orbit of Earth around the Sun as we now know it. One would have to wonder if there would be any gravity on the top floors of the holy city. Interesting issues.

Since the laws of physics that we live under do not seem to accommodate a 1,420 mile cube sitting on Earth, here are a couple speculative ideas that I offer in fun. Suppose the new earth is

expanded to the size of the planet Saturn. If so, a 1,420 mile cube sitting on its surface would not be such a great problem. The diameter of Saturn is about ten times the size of Earth. To put this in perspective, 764 planets the size of Earth can fit within Saturn. (For that matter, 1,321 planets the size of Earth can fit within Jupiter!)

Here is another speculative idea and one that I favor. I hope that from now on, every time you eat a doughnut you will be reminded of this idea. (Smile) Maybe the shape of the new earth will be changed from that of a sphere to that of a toroid. (A toroid looks like a doughnut.) Don't laugh yet!

Suppose that when the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven, the Mount of Olives splits from East to West as the Scripture says, and a great valley (actually, a large hole) opens up through the middle of the earth to accommodate the city of God. (See Zechariah 14:4.) In this scenario, Earth would flatten out to look something like a huge doughnut revolving around its hub, the celestial City of God.

We know that the holy city will not need the Sun or the Moon for light, for the glory of God gives it light. (Revelation 21:23) The Bible also says that God will live among men. (Revelation 21:3) Since I'm this far out, consider one more thing: Perhaps God will take the new earth out of its orbit around the Sun and transport it on a travel itinerary to see an infinite number of galaxies which the Lamb has created. If so, New Jerusalem would be something like a big diesel pusher "RV" where happiness and joy, homes and gardens, animals, and victorious humans will forever live.

I know these thoughts are outrageous, but we know that God has an exciting future planned for the redeemed, and I really like the idea of God's children being known throughout the universe as "happy campers." In this scenario, the holy city (God's throne) would literally be the center of the earth. I cannot think of a sweeter idea or a better companion for a 1,420 mile cube than a revolving doughnut! (Contrary to what many people say, I am not full of gloom and doom! Smiling...)

3. - Revelation 22:18,19 says that if anyone adds anything or takes words away from this book of prophecy that God will punish that person. Do you think that people who are teaching an incorrect understanding of Revelation right now will be punished?

LW: The short answer is "no." The book of Revelation promises a blessing to those who will read it (Revelation 1:3) and, as you have indicated, it also promises a curse if its words are changed. The blessing is available right now, but the curse pertains to a specific time in Earth's history when the book of Revelation will be presented to the people of Earth as a *testing truth*. God knows that down through the ages, honest and sincere people have tried to understand this book of prophecy. Even today, there is mass confusion about the book of Revelation.

Even though most of what is said about Revelation is wrong, God does not hold people accountable for wrong doing unless (a) we know better and do it anyway, or (b) we reject the clearest evidences of truth or the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the curse pronounced in Revelation 22 is only applicable during the testing time (the Great Tribulation)

when people will knowingly and willingly alter the Word of God to justify rebellion.

During the Great Tribulation, God will enable the 144,000 to present the book of Revelation in the clearest of terms. Every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will hear a pure gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. (The gospel of Jesus given today is highly contaminated with human error.

Step back and just look at the confusion that is called Christianity.) The 144,000 will speak for God – no lie will be found in their mouths. (Revelation 14:5) The 144,000 will present a gospel in direct opposition to the lies (and laws) of Babylon and this opposition will be met with intense persecution.

Babylon will wield great power and to counteract God's 144,000 servants, the devil will empower two million false prophets. (Of course, I do not know the actual number of the devil's false prophets, but I do recall that one true prophet faced down 450 false prophets on Mount Carmel. See Revelation 13:4; 1 Kings 18.)

The important point to remember is that God's servants will present Revelation's story which will be inflammatory and the devil's prophets will alter and distort the words of Revelation to deceive those who want to be deceived.

4. Why is there a half hour of silence in Revelation 8:1?

LW: Revelation 8:1 says, "**When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.**" The brevity of this verse is misleading. The story surrounding the seven seals is a very large topic and I do not have enough space in this report to write much.

In a nutshell, here's the seven seals story. Before any life was created, the Father wrote down a complete history of sin. Because He has perfect foreknowledge, He described in perfect detail the lives and choices of everyone who would be affected by sin. His book included the actions of the angels in Heaven (where sin began), as well as all human beings who would live on Earth. After writing the book, He did a peculiar thing. He blotted out the name of each person who would choose rebellion and forfeit eternal life.

Then, He sealed up the book with seven seals (so that no one could read it) and He named it, "The Book of Life." No one (not even Jesus) knows what is in the book. Only the Father knows. The Father wrote this book to prove several things at the end of sin's drama. When the 1,000 years in Revelation 20 have ended, the Book of Life is opened (Revelation 20:12) and everyone will clearly see three things:

First, everyone will see his or her life accurately recorded in a book that was written perhaps billions of years before life occurred! The Father will prove to everyone that He sees everything and knows every specific detail about every being. Wow! What a thought!

Second, the Father will prove that He knew billions of years ago who would choose eternal life and who would not. The wicked will see that their names were blotted out of the book.

(Remember, The Book of Life remains sealed up until the 1,000 years have ended. Mankind is not judged out of this book. Mankind will be judged from the books of records (deeds) which angels record in real time. Jesus uses the books of record, not The Book of Life during the judgment process.)

The Father will show everyone the contents of His book because He wants everyone to see that even though He knew who would choose to be saved and who would choose to be lost, He loved everyone the same, and most of all He did not and would not manipulate the choices of one soul, even though He foreknew what each one would do. Finally, the Father wants everyone to see what Jesus did to save sinners.

The Father will present the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus to every person. Everyone will see the cruelty that Jesus willingly endured to save mankind. The Father also wants the universe to understand that Jesus is fully God, just like Himself. The Father wants the universe to know that Jesus is a co-eternal member of the Godhead, that Jesus has all of the powers, rights and substance as the Father. This final disclosure will complete "the revelation of Jesus Christ."

So, consider the setting: At the end of the 1,000 years, the Holy City will descend from Heaven with the saints on board. The wicked, from Cain to those who perished at the Second Coming, will be resurrected to see the Holy City! At this moment, Jesus will break open the seventh seal and open The Book of Life.

How does God reveal the three things written above? I believe God will display the book on a giant panoramic screen in the sky (heaven). As each person watches, he or she will be spellbound by God's foreknowledge, enduring love, patience, grace and fairness. This revelation will silence the wicked and humble the righteous – for what can anyone say? The silence will last half an hour.

"By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.' All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame." (Isaiah 45:23,24)

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