

The population in Saudi Arabia is increasing rapidly. This is leading to increased demand for water and power. To help meet this demand, its ruler, King Abdullah, intends to privatise industries such as oil, gas, water and telecoms. Saudi money is flowing back into the country at the prospect of investment in privatised industries and economic liberalisation. This, together with high oil prices, has caused the economy of Saudi Arabia to boom. Saudi Arabia is keen for Britain

to take advantage of the trade opportunities which this presents.

Conclusion

Naval shipbuilding in Britain is "resurgent". Saudi Arabia is offering companies in Britain the prospect of over \$600 billion of trade. These factors show that the two countries, and the relationship between them, are moving in the direction required by prophecy.

An exposition of Revelation 21

2. The tabernacle of God is with men

Mark Allfree

The opening verses of Revelation 21 are a wonderful glimpse of the future blessings of the Kingdom, blessings which this article shows are firmly based on the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament.

IN THE PREVIOUS STUDY it was suggested that the "new heaven and new earth" that John saw (Rev. 21:1) represented the glorious Millennial age for which we hope and pray. The language used by John is based upon Isaiah 65:17: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind".

Isaiah continues to interpret for us what these new heavens and earth represent: "But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create *Jerusalem* a rejoicing, and *her people* a joy" (v. 18). In keeping with this, when John saw the new heaven and new earth, what he actually saw was "the holy city, *new Jerusalem*, coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2).

We also demonstrated that the immediate context in Isaiah 65 is that of the covenants made with the fathers. The fulfilment of the covenants of promise is interlinked with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the vision that John saw in Revelation 21 is also based around the covenants made with the fathers of old.

"New Jerusalem"

In Revelation 21:2 it is recorded that John saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down

from God out of heaven". We shall look at this in more detail in the next study, but in connection with the covenants we should bear in mind the following two scriptures:

1 Galatians 4. This chapter contains that remarkable allegory in which Hagar and Sarah are said to represent "the two covenants"; Hagar, "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children", and Sarah, "Jerusalem which is above [which] is free, which is the mother of us all" (vv. 24-26). This latter is the Jerusalem that John sees. Table 1 will help us to see the allegory more clearly.

Table 1

Hagar	"Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children" (Gal. 4:25)	The Sinai covenant
Sarah	"Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (v. 26)	The new covenant, that is, the promises

2 Hebrews 11. What was Abraham looking for all his life? The writer to the Hebrews tells us: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (vv. 9,10).

The promise and the city for which Abraham looked are interlinked. This is the city that John

was privileged to observe coming down from God out of heaven, which we shall consider in more detail in the next study.

“God Himself shall be with them, and be their God”

Having seen the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, John hears a great voice: “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*” (Rev. 21:3).

This is once again the language of the covenants. This is what God said to Abraham: “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; *and I will be their God*. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations” (Gen. 17:8,9).

In this particular promise God is speaking about Abraham’s natural, fleshly offspring, that is, the nation of Israel. So when that great voice said to John, “the tabernacle of God is with *men* . . . God Himself shall be with *them*, and be *their God*”, it is referring to the nation of Israel restored as the Kingdom of God on earth, with God in their midst.

This conclusion is supported by a number of other Old Testament scriptures:

- 1 **Exodus 6.** Notice the emphasis on the covenant promise in this chapter: “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers . . . And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD” (vv. 2-4,8). In the middle of this narrative on the covenants, God says to Moses, “and I will take you to Me for a people, *and I will be to you a God*: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, Which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (v. 7).
- 2 **Leviticus 26.** This is a chapter we know very well. In many respects it is parallel to Deuteronomy 28, in that it describes how God would

bless His people if they were obedient, but they would be cursed if they disobeyed. In particular, notice one of the blessings: “And I will set *My tabernacle among you*: and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and *will be your God, and ye shall be My people*” (vv. 11,12). This is exactly what Revelation 21 says: “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will . . . be their God”. By now it should come as no surprise to us that in Leviticus 26:9 we have reference to the covenants of promise: “For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish *My covenant with you*”.

3. **Ezekiel 37.** This is a prophecy about Israel’s future restoration. Again, similar language is employed about the tabernacle of God being with men: “*My tabernacle also shall be with them*: yea, *I will be their God, and they shall be My people*. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (vv. 27,28). The previous verse once again leads us to the covenants: “Moreover I will make a *covenant* of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting *covenant* with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore” (v. 26).

The teaching of these scriptures is clear. The time is coming when God will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In that day, the natural, fleshly descendants of Abraham will become God’s people, and He will be their God, and He will be pleased to dwell in the midst of them.

“The tabernacle of God is with men”

The next thing we need to think about is the tabernacle of God. The great voice said to John, “the tabernacle of God is with men” (Rev. 21:3). To what does this refer? Are we to understand it literally, meaning a tent or a house of some kind?

The answer to that is clearly no, because of what King Solomon said at the dedication of the temple that he built: “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built!” (2 Chron. 6:18). Likewise Stephen in his defence said, “the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48).

Isaiah gives us the clue when in chapter 66 he tells us that God dwells, not in buildings, but in men who are of a contrite heart: "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to *this man* will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (vv. 1,2).

It is in this way that God will dwell with men, by means of the glorified saints who will manifest the glory of God to the world. This is the holy temple of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Ephesians 2:19-22. Jesus also spoke of this house of believers in John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many abiding places . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (RV mg.).

"I will be his God, and he shall be My son"

The voice from heaven went on to say: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:7). This is where we need to think of that other great covenant that God made, this time with King David. He promised David that he would have a seed, who would proceed out of his bowels and who would build a house for God's Name: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. *He shall build an house for My name*, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. 7:12,13).

This house that would be built was to be a house of believers, who have all embraced the covenants, and are therefore "heirs according to the promise". The builder is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of David, because God continues, "I will be his father, and he shall be My son" (v. 14). Jesus was God's only begotten Son. He would build the house for God's Name, whereby the tabernacle of God would be with men, and God would dwell among His people. But there would be other sons of God to follow. Through Jesus, many sons will be brought to glory, and so John is told in Revelation 21:7: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; *and I will be his God, and he shall be My son*".

In the grace of God this includes us! Through Christ we shall inherit all things, because if we are in Christ we are Abraham's seed, and we are "heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

"No more death"

Implicit in both the promises to Abraham and the promises to David is the hope of the resurrection from the dead. Abraham clearly believed in the resurrection. He must be raised from the dead to inherit the land promised to him. Likewise David must be raised if his kingdom is to be established for ever before him, as God promised.

This same hope is ours, through Abraham's seed. This is what Revelation 21:4 is really all about: "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". This refers, not to the world as a whole, but to the saints, those who overcome, and who inherit the Kingdom. We do not therefore have to conclude that Revelation 21 is talking about the post-millennial age.

This view is confirmed by the fact that the Spirit is making a quotation here from Isaiah 25:8: "He will swallow up death in victory; *and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces*; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it". The first part of this verse in turn is quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and applied clearly to the time when, at the resurrection from the dead at the beginning of the Millennium, mortality will give way to immortality: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (v. 54).

"Faithfulness and truth"

Isaiah 25 speaks of the time when, in fulfilment of the covenants of promise, those who overcome will inherit all things, and will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. In this context we should not be surprised to find in verse 1 reference to the covenants of promise: "O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are *faithfulness and truth*".

Notice the covenant words (see Table 2). God is a God Who keeps covenant. This will be shown to be the case when the dead in Christ rise to

Table 2

Faithfulness	Heb. <i>emunah</i>	Root word <i>aman</i>
Truth	Heb. <i>omen</i>	Root word <i>aman</i>

newness of life. Amongst those to be raised will be Abraham, whose name will be great, and King David.

Coming back to Revelation 21, it is clearly with reference to this section of Isaiah's prophecy that John says in verse 5: "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are *true* and *faithful*". Because the words spoken by God are true and faithful, the dead in Christ must rise, and the promises of God must come to fruition.

"Him that is athirst"

The tremendous prospect that is held out to those who overcome is emphasised in verses 6 and 7: "And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son".

If we overcome, God says we shall inherit all things. We shall be His sons and daughters, and He will be our God. The connection with the Davidic covenant has already been pointed out. But just consider the extent of the love of God revealed to us in these verses:

- God will give us the water of life
- it is entirely free.

Where else in the Scriptures do we come across similar words to these? It is in Isaiah 55:1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, *come ye to the waters*, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk *without money and without price*". Here is the appeal of God to each one of us. Come to the waters of life, and drink deep. It is free; no money is required. These waters on offer are living waters, and they will truly satisfy.

On what basis is this water of life offered to us? On the basis of the covenant that we have embraced in Christ: "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an *everlasting covenant* with you, even the *sure mercies of David*" (v. 3). The word "sure" in Hebrew is again the word *aman*, the root word from which 'amen' is derived: "all the *promises* of God in him are yea, and in him *Amen*" (2 Cor. 1:20). God's covenant is everlasting. God is a God Who keeps covenant and mercy, and His words are faithfulness and truth. He wants to give us life through the covenants of promise. Let us therefore come to the waters and drink. By so doing we shall be admitted into the holy city, the new Jerusalem, that John describes in the second part of the chapter.

[\(To be continued\)](#)

Understanding Revelation 12

4. Important links with other parts of the Bible

David Green

Many of the details of Revelation 12 are described in terms that echo past Biblical events. This study is brought to a conclusion by examining some of these links between Revelation 12 and other parts of the Bible. First to be dealt with is the comparison between the man child Constantine and Jesus, and, following that, the parallels between the dragon and Egypt.

THE MAN CHILD mentioned in Revelation 12:5 reminds us of Jesus, but cannot refer to him since the events of this chapter take place many years after his birth and ascension. However, the parallels are seen to be even more striking when we consider that it was the collec-

tive 'daughter of Zion'¹ that gave birth to Jesus, and not just the individual Mary.

The vision in Revelation 12 sets out a series of events that are a parody or travesty (false imitation) of those concerning Jesus, because they relate to Rome instead of Zion. The parallels between the two situations are shown in [Table 1](#) overleaf for ease of comparison.

The dragon and Egypt

The details involving the great red dragon (Gk. *drakōn*), representing the power of pagan Rome,

1. 'Daughter of Zion' probably means 'daughter that is Zion'.