

The “New Jerusalem”, the “Body of Christ” and the “Bride”

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The "Body of Christ", is the name given to the Biblical church which is composed of all of the saints, from Adam onwards. It spans all of the ages or dispensations. It is both heavenly and earthly.

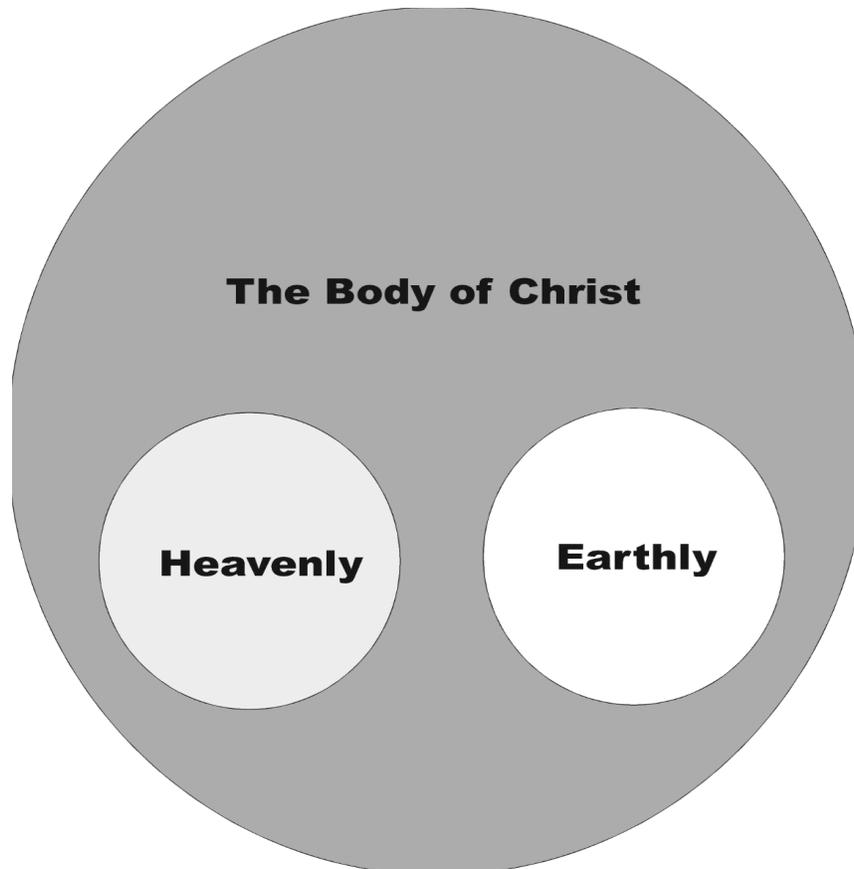
The "bride", when it refers to a church, is composed of elected Jews and proselytes. It exists on earth. It began with a called-out group of Jews exiting Egypt following Moses. [It includes, at the individual level, all pre-Mosaic saints]. It ends abruptly in circa A.D. 70 when the Roman armies destroyed the Israelite kingdom and destroyed its temple. This "bride" and its construction will again come into existence with the institution of the Millennial reign of the King Jesus Christ. It is that great church which fills the earth during the Millennium, (hence the name Messianic/Millennial church) it is serviced by the entire nation of regathered and resurrected Israelites, a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6 and Revelation 20:6). This church exists in three different phases as revealed in the Bible, we shall soon display each phase. At present, its construction is postponed.

So, this "bride" church is a subset of the great "body of Christ" church. Another subset of the "body of Christ" church is that group which is heavenly—that is, their "home" is heaven, they inherit in heaven, they have special bodies designed to live in heaven, they are a part of the very person of Jesus Christ Himself, spiritually. It knows not the earthly Lord Jesus Christ [II Corinthians 5:16]. Somewhat like the Jewish tribe of Levi, they have distinctions which set them apart from other members of the "body of Christ" church (recall that the Levites did not have possession of any of the land grants in Palestine, *et cetera*).

Some confusion has been generated when expositors examine passages concerned with the "bride" in the final chapters of Revelation. The book of Revelation itself can be challenging. Care must be taken to sort out its sequence of events and its chronological order. Some scenes occur in heaven, some on earth, at times the text switches without warning between scenes; a reader will be reading about something occurring on the earth, and suddenly moved to a heavenly vision. Thus some caution and patience is required when studying this great book. In Revelation chapter 19, John is shown the betrothal of the Lamb and His "bride". The scene is apparently in heaven. Shortly after the scene, Jesus Christ as King, advances upon the earth from heaven with a large army from heaven, the King conquers the evil kingdom of the Antichrist, binds Satan and the Millennial kingdom is established on earth.

After the Millennial Kingdom comes to its end, Satan is released, and the final battle occurs with Jesus Christ again conquering. Satan and all of his followers are cast into the lake of fire (Gehenna) wherein the beast and false prophet await him. (Revelation 20:7-10). Next, the great white throne judgment occurs, after which John sees the new heaven and earth. The old is destroyed, it "passed away" (Revelation 21:1). Here some common sense must intervene. While the old earth is destroyed, God must have taken the earthly saints to a safe place. He temporarily moved the saints most likely to heaven, destroyed the old earth, created a new heaven and earth, and then placed them into their new city.

Below is a simple graphic representation of the two components of the one —"body of Christ", which includes all saints from all dispensations.



[As an aside, the phrase "bride of Christ" is not in the Bible].

So again; the "earthly church" is that one which began in Exodus. [recall that a church is a group, whereas the patriarchs are individuals]. It ceased circa 586 B.C. (even "divorced"), then it began again with some important variations under the ministry of Jesus Christ—with the little flock of Luke 12:31,32, and with Peter's admission of Matthew 16. It further developed after the murder of Jesus Christ, in Acts two, and flourished in Jerusalem in early Acts. It later

declined, received contributions from Paul's ministry (from the "Grace Churches", Acts 20:22, II Cor. 9), and then in A.D. 70 it again ceased to exist, historically. God had set it aside, (note Romans 11) but it and Israel will again spring to life as that Church which fills the earth during the future Millennium—it has three primary phases.

Phase One: From Adam to Moses, it was composed of believers, Israelites and some proselytes. God was with the people in the tabernacle, and in the cloud. The post-Mosaic peoples were bound by a covenant incorporating a complex system of Laws. It had earthly hopes and looked for a coming Messiah to earth.

Phase Two: Under Jesus Christ of Nazareth, it began to grow into a group which was to be a "light unto the whole world", [Isaiah 60:2] centered in Jerusalem. It too had earthly hopes, looked for the return of their Messiah, and was bound to God via a system of Kingdom Laws, enumerated in Matthew chapters v – vii. Looked forward to an earthly Millennial Kingdom

Phase Three: During the Millennium, under the resurrected King Jesus Christ, resurrected saints live in New Jerusalem [a.k.a. the "wife" or "Bride"], and have bodies likened unto Adam and Eve's. Sin is under control, to live on a new earth, to live lives separate from other nations.

The church today has its citizenship in heaven, (Philippians 3:20) we also are the only group to experience the rapture to our home in heaven. We also are the only church to be given special bodies designed for living in heaven. During the millennium, we apparently remain in our home, heaven.

Sources suggesting who the "Bride" of Revelation 19:7 and 21:9 is, are usually in agreement when they claim that the "Bride" represents the church of this present age. Most agree that—between the mentioning of the "Bride" in 19:7, and then again in 21:2,—the 1,000 year "Millennium" occurs. Most commentators would also agree that the "marriage supper" of 19:9 is in fact the Millennial Kingdom, and that this period of festivities lasts throughout the Millennium.

The "New Jerusalem" of Revelation 21:2, is referred to "as a bride"; in verse 9 this "bride" is also referred to as "the wife of the Lamb"; and in verse 10—as in verse two—it is again referred to as a "city". In this scenario we see the fulfillment's of a number of prophecies. Prophecies which can add much information to the bit of data exposed in John's Revelation. Incidentally, I propose that this "Bride" is **not** the church of this present dispensation, *i.e.* that it is not the present Grace-Age church which Paul founded. Thusly, I proceed.

New Jerusalem consists of:

- a people
- a land
- a city
- a bride
- a church

Let us discuss several of these in order; first, "a people".

The People

"Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you

will forget the shame of your youth, And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. "For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the Lord of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth. "For the Lord has called you, Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," Says your God. "For a brief moment I forsook you, But with great compassion I will gather you. "In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," Says the Lord your Redeemer. Isaiah 54:4 – 8 (NASB)

The text of Isaiah 54, is also to the nation, the people of Israel. Though divorced, Israel is reunited with her Maker, permanently in Revelation 21. The passage bears some contemplation, it says a lot. Hosea 2: 16 -20 also says a lot:

"And it will come about in that day," declares the Lord, "That you will call Me Ishi And will no longer call Me Baali. "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more. "In that day I will also make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky, And the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety. "And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the Lord. (NASB)

A "betrothal", "forever" and "peace". Again we are dealing with a nation, and a people. Israel. It is a time in which they "will know the Lord", which immediately reminds one of Jeremiah 31:34,

"And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (NASB)

Interestingly, it follows the famous verse 33!

"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (NASB)

Again the people are the Israelites, this covenant is with the house of Israel. Jerusalem is, was, and will be the capital of the nation of Israel. When we read of a "New Jerusalem" we automatically think of Israel, not Pakistan, or Australia, but of Israel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Matthew and Revelation clearly illustrate the promises coming to the nation, the people of Israel. Revelation 21 verse 3 makes it clear that a people is connected with the city:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, (NASB, 2nd ed.)

God, dwelling amongst "men" (a plural, neuter gender), God is in the city (and His throne), He is with (μετα) them. The city is populated, and it is populated with resurrected, redeemed Israelites and proselytes from all of the preceding ages. Humans, humans who have long awaited the fulfillment of the promises spoken to them for thousands of years. Resurrected Israelites, the dry bones of Ezekiel chapter 37, are seen alive in the Millennium, and later here in Revelation 21, walking streets of gold. Ezekiel 37:1-14, describes the famous "first resurrection", most of the inhabitants were earlier resurrected in this resurrection at the beginning of the Millennium; Revelation 20:4,

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (NASB)

In verse 5 we are told that the "rest of the dead" did not come to life until after the 1,000 year Millennium—which resurrection would be the "second" resurrection; and that second resurrection is a resurrection to judgment, to stand

before the Great White Throne (20:12). In verse 6, we also learn that at the beginning of the 1,000 year Millennium, at this first resurrection, these resurrected souls will be "priests of God and of Christ", and that they would rule with Christ for the duration of the Millennium. Imagine that, an entire Kingdom of Priests!

Exodus 19:5, 6

'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (NASB)

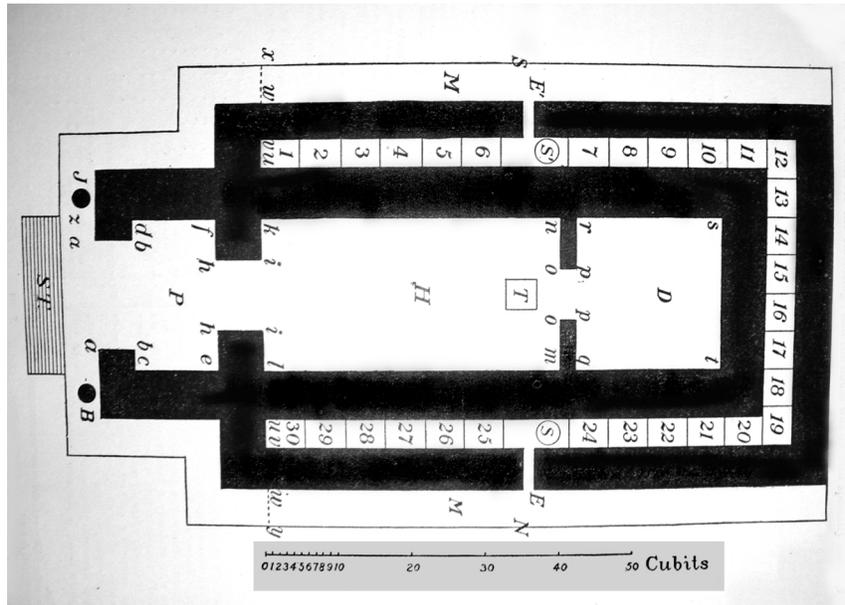
Not spoken by Moses to me, or you, or the Japanese, or the Peruvians, but to Israel. Not spoken to the church of today, the church in the world in this present age, but rather to the house of Israel. A promise, yet to be fulfilled. We can connect this to Revelation chapter 20, verse 6:

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (NASB)

The connection is clear.

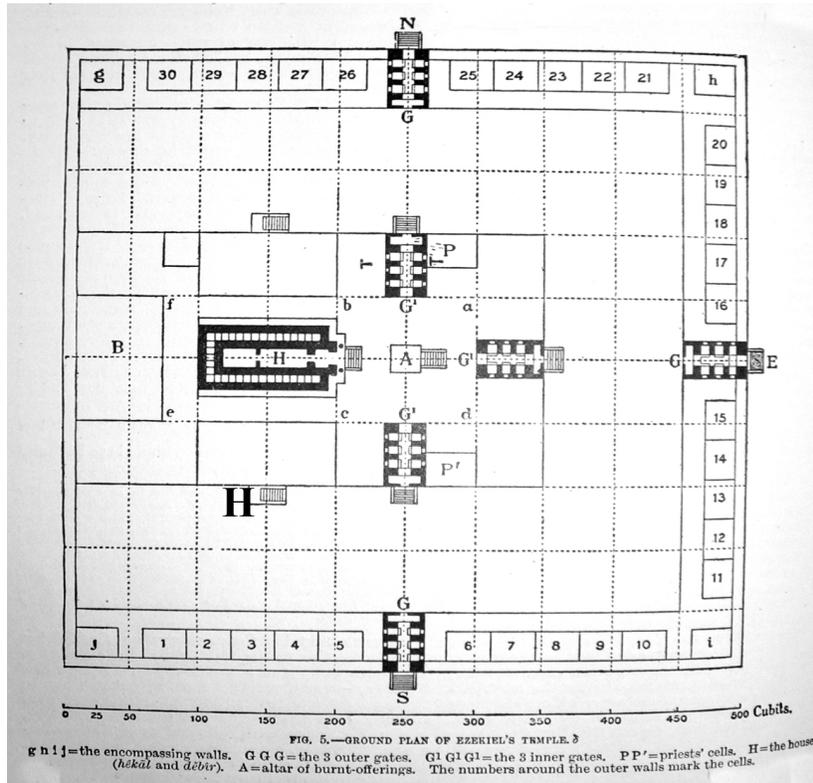
So before the arrival of the New Jerusalem, in the "old" Jerusalem during the Millennium, we shall have a

kingdom of priests. We must have a temple as well. And we shall, in Israel there is yet to be built a temple. In fact we already have the blueprints, or construction plans, given in some detail in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48. Below is the temple itself, which is in the temple grounds:



The drawing is courtesy of Dr. T. W. Davies, and published in volume IV, of *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible*. A cubit is about 20 inches, so the Holy Place (per Davies) being about 100 cubits long (from the front steps to the back wall), is about 160 feet long. Not very big, as Davies was using "cubits"-but see below. Below is the whole court, the temple itself is marked "H".

Ezekiel's Temple and Courtyard



In Ezekiel 42:15-20, we are told that the unit of measurement there is the reed. The reed is about 10.5 feet in length. Thus the "court" is about 5,250 feet by 5,250 feet, and the temple itself would be 1,050 feet long. Now this is a good sized building. (this corrective to Davies is illuminated in John W. Schmitt, *Messiah's Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple*, Kregel Publications, 1997). Observe; there are numerous "cells", both in the temple proper, and around the courtyard. These are for the "on duty" priests. In the very center, is the altar for burnt offerings. It is not there

for looks. During the Millennium, all nations of the earth will bring memorial sacrifices to this temple [note: "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40 – 48", by Jerry M. Hullinger. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 152. July-September 1995. Pages 279-289]. It will be a busy place!

That it is the temple in the Millennium, is so because of these suggestions, enumerated also by Hullinger in his dissertation to Dallas Theological Seminary ("A Proposed Solution to The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40 – 48", 1993). Briefly Hullinger states that this is the Millennial temple because:

- because of the supernatural elements in this text
- the nonexistence of this temple in history
- the land promises presented by Ezekiel
- the temple is the immediate dwelling place of God
- differences between this temple's scheme and those of Moses, Solomon and Zerubbabel's schemes
- the provenance of Ezekiel as a salvation oracle
- parallel ideas found in other prophets

Jesus states in John 14:2, "...in My Father's house, are many rooms...". These "rooms" (ῥομῆ) are for the priests, and the Father's House in John, is the temple in Jerusalem (note John 2:16).

All of these priests, all of these resurrected Israelites (and proselytes) will be saved, or kept safe by God when He destroys the old earth, and the old atmospheres and creates a new earth and heaven. Gone is the temple, gone are the oceans, but the people remain. They populate this New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven, and is apparently suspended just above the new earth. The city is not empty.

It is important to keep in mind several aspects about these resurrected "people". They do not have special eternal spirit/bodies. They must somehow be rejuvenated, refreshed to live for eternity. They have bodies exactly like that of Adam before his corruption. We are reminded that during the Millennium, folks lived longer lives, similar to those of patriarchal times. At least this is the view taken by Herbert M. Wolf (*Interpreting Isaiah*, 250f.), he views Isaiah 65 verses 17 through 25 as reflecting the Messianic era, though he does state:

The description of the messianic age in verses 17-25 in many respects could find its fulfillment during the Millennium, but some of the features of Isaiah's description of the messianic age seem to look ahead to the eternal state. (page 251)

For years I have taught and believed that this section of Isaiah 65 was concerned with Israel during its Millennial blessings. However, the statement in verse 17,

For behold, I create [a Qal participle] new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

would certainly create a context in which the future "eternal" state is envisioned, not the 1,000 year Millennium. But, one must keep in mind that when God mentions a new earth and heavens, some of the concepts presented could therefore apply to heavenly states, and some to earthly states. In the new heavens death does not exist, and people do not live lives measured in years, they are eternal. The members of that church which Paul instructs, are to be raptured, and to receive special spirit/bodies fit for life in heaven.

No such bodies are mentioned in any of the descriptions of the earthly citizens of the Millennium, nor of the future coming New Jerusalem. Thus I suspect that in Isaiah, chapter 65:17-25, two states are juxtaposed under the one rubric "new heavens and a new earth". On earth, during the Millennium the "chosen ones" (verse 22) are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord. They will live long lives. Outside of the Holy mountain (verse 25) outside the city, live those who may not be so blessed. In this Jerusalem no more weeping will be heard (verse 19). Is Isaiah herein referring to the New Jerusalem of Revelation 22, or is he referring to the Jerusalem existing during the Millennium? Certainly Kingdom elements (i.e. Millennial elements) carry on over into the eternal state: Jesus rules forever, Jerusalem is the leading city of the world, Satan is either imprisoned (during Millennium) or absolutely removed (during eternity). God's chosen ones live separate lives and lives different from those nations living outside the New Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, it seems that the folks of the New Jerusalem will have bodies which age or decay, and could expire—thus we see in the "eternal" state, in the era of the New Jerusalem of Revelation 22—the tree of life, providing life/healing to all who eat of its fruit.

in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:2, NASB)

What is the "tree of life" doing in the "eternal" state, near the New Jerusalem? There is no more sin. Yet as John Walvoord reminds us, the tree of life was in the garden before

Adam and Eve sinned. It appears to have a permanent place in Paradise, in "eternity". Its leaves (and fruit?) are for health, or healing purposes; for peoples or "nations", which may or may not include the inhabitants of the city. (*The Millennial Kingdom*, John F. Walvoord, pages 324ff.). One needs to recall that for all intents and purposes, this New Jerusalem and its river, and associated tree(s) are basically connected to the physical earth, the overall aspects are consequently earthly. The New Jerusalem, though *from* heaven, is not heaven, there are distinctions.

I realize that I spent a fair amount of time on the "people" of this New Jerusalem, and I have not answered all questions implied. However, I suspect that we can conclude that the people inhabiting the New Jerusalem, are resurrected Israelites and proselytes. Peoples who are chosen, and peoples who seem to have bodies which need rejuvenation or healing, in order to live forever. They are subjects of numerous Old Testament promises, are and were subjects of various covenants between them and Jehovah God, and they—via the Scriptures—looked forward to this state referenced in their prophetic books. A state similar to that one which Adam and Eve had forfeited.

The Land

During the beginning of the Millennium, we note probable geographic changes. These are supernatural changes, wrought by God. (And not as a result of man's activities, such as atomic wars et al. If atomic or hydrogen bombs had been dropped earlier—say during the tribulation period—the land of Israel could not bloom and become a fruitful land which it does become in the Millennium. Hence I see future

wars, yes, but not atomic, at least not in or even near Palestine). Amongst the geographical changes will be the splitting of the Mount of Olives, also Luke 3:5 (Isaiah 40:4). One of the changes appears to be the raising up of a very tall mountain, in the northern part of Israel. Upon the top of this mountain will be the Millennial Temple. It will also be connected to many nations via highways of some sort. These observations stem from the text of Isaiah 2:1-3,

The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that In the last days, The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion, (NASB)

We might also mention Micah 4:1,

And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the Lord Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. (NASB)

We also need to mention all of Psalm 48. In Isaiah 2:2, we may note the Hebrew verb for "raised", it is a participle, Niphal stem, the primary verb form in the sentence is "will be (established)" which is a simple Qal, in the imperfect form (יִהְיֶה) being imperfect a future sense can be denoted, as the

context states "in the last days". I suggest that the mountain which becomes the highest mountain in the land, is actually physically raised. (*i.e.* "chief" is probably better as "highest"). In the Micah passage, we have the same participle, it will be raised up higher than the other hills or mountains. The KJV, has "exalted" for "chief" or "higher", the 1901 ASV follows the KJV, but the 1952 RSV has "highest", and "highest" is that one which I prefer. The word is not rare in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in Ezekiel 1:19, the wheels are physically "lifted up". However, whether it is physically raised or not, the temple is located on the top of this mountain in Israel.

We also know that the lowlands of Israel become irrigated. Israel as it was in 1956 covered a land area of 7,992 square miles [about the size of New Jersey]. Under the rule of King David it was about twice this size. During the Millennium it will most likely again be the larger size of David's realm. In the present land, the highest mountain is Mount Meron at 3,963 feet, it is in upper Galilee.

We know that during the creation of a new heavens and earth, that great changes occur! We are not told how big the new earth will be. It could be larger than Jupiter! It need not keep its present size, as there will be a completely changed solar system. The Bible speaks of no need for the sun as the earth is lit by the presence of God Himself. There will be no night. Whatever plants there may be (other than the tree(s) of life), they are apparently dependent upon the light from God, and not some sun or star. So, the earth could become quite large, we shall just have to be patient and to wait and see.

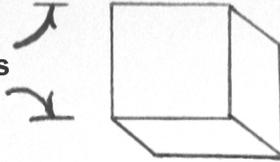
However, suppose that the earth retains its current size, that it remains with a circumference of about 24,874 miles. If so, it would have a cubic mass of 79.5 billion cubic miles. Without the seas, this would produce quite an area for living. We are told the dimensions of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:16), it is about 1,500 miles, each side; length,

width, height being equal. Hence only two geometric shapes can reflect such an object, a cube, and a pyramid.

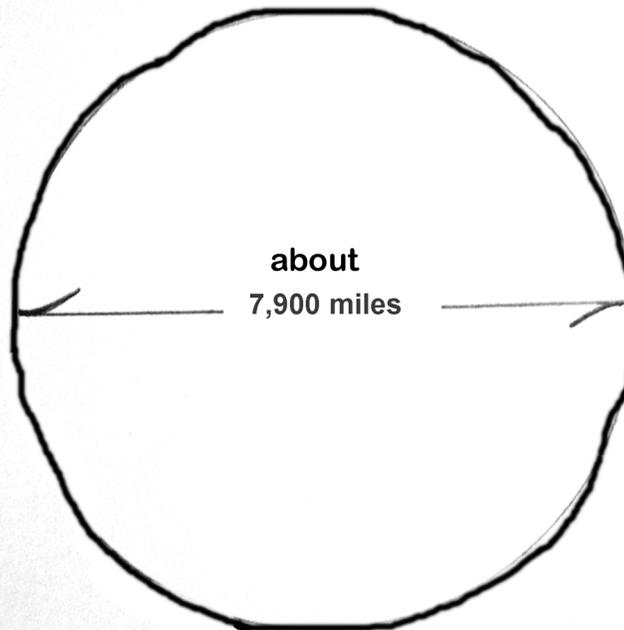
Below is a depiction of the city compared to the earth in its present size. The drawing is to scale. Such a comparison reveals why most Biblical scholars suggest that the giant city is actually suspended above the earth, rather than resting in or on it.

each side

1,500 miles



Drawn per scale; the earth's diameter is just over 5.25x the sides of the city. (If the earth retains its present size).



A few more numbers. The volume, in cubic miles of the cube of the city would be about 3.375 billion cubic miles. If it were actually a pyramid, then its volume would be about 860 million cubic miles. Assuming the New Jerusalem is a cube, at 3.375 billion cubic miles, it would be gigantic, providing a cubic mile of space for each of 3.375 billion inhabitants. Though I do not think that there are that many elect souls since Adam's day! Nevertheless, it would seem to provide plenty of space for this church, for this redeemed company of Israelites and proselytes.

As concerns the Millennial temple, in Ezekiel 40:2, we have some localities indicated, in Israel, on a very high mountain, and to its south, appears something which is mentioned as "like a city". In the allotments of land in Ezekiel 48, we note the sacred area, an area of land set aside for the Messiah. This area is 50.7 miles square (each side), and includes places for the priests and others. I suggest that this area most likely corresponds to the area around present day Jerusalem. The discerning student of Ezekiel should herein perceive a problem, we apparently have two temples. One; on top of the mountain, Ezekiel 43:12; the other appears in the northern portion of the sacred allotment, in the area which is "like a city", Ezekiel 48:8. Do both coexist at the same time during the Millennium? Which one is that one referred to as a throne forever? The "forever throne" seems to be that one indicated on the top of the mountain. In Ezekiel 43:7, we are told that it is there that the Lord would have His throne, forever! In Jeremiah 3:16-17, we are reminded that Jerusalem can even be equated with the Temple itself. However a clue for solving our dilemma may be in the Hebrew. The word for the "sanctuary" in 48:21; appears in Jeremiah 51:51 as plural "sanctuaries of the temple", not much help. But only one—on the mountain top—is referred to as the "throne" of God, and it is that one which should be reckoned as the temple proper.

The City

New Jerusalem, the city, was designed in heaven by God. It is that city which Abraham sought, whose foundations are not earthly. Hebrews 11:10. [Note: it descends FROM heaven TO earth].

As concerns the Millennial Temple, recall that Jesus Christ said to His 11 Apostles (John 14), that He was going to prepare a place for them. In my mind, I connect these concepts, that is—I see these preparations being the construction of the Millennial temple—and perhaps other portions of the rearranged allotments of land in Israel during the Millennium. This new Millennial Temple shall be placed on a great (newly raised) mountain in central/northern Israel.

Many Bible scholars and students believe that at the beginning of the seven year tribulation period, the Antichrist enters into the Temple in Jerusalem and defiles it. Refer to Matthew 24:15, II Thessalonians 2:1-5. So they conclude, correctly so, that Israelites build a temple, on the temple mount before the events of the tribulation begin. This temple which became a defiled temple, is temporary, and it is not "re-used" when the King returns at the beginning of the Millennium. It is probably destroyed during the great tribulation. Keep also in mind, that there is also a/the Temple in heaven, Revelation 14:17, and it may remain throughout eternity in heaven!

Before progressing, I might mention that the millennial Jerusalem, seems to lie just south of the raised temple mount, (*i.e.* the entire city is not located on top of this raised sacred mountain) but at its foot, most likely to the south.

A Bride

New Jerusalem, is as mentioned, referred to as a "Bride". Revelation 21:9, 10:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (KJV)

"New Jerusalem", or "holy Jerusalem" is "the Bride", (την νυμφην). Not "a" Bride, but "the Bride". Now J. Dwight Pentecost (*Prophecy for Today*, Zondervan, 1961, pages 163 ff..) does an adequate job in describing Oriental marriage customs and how they relate to a New Testament bride, and how it all relates to John's vision and use of the term "Bride". It is noteworthy to note that in all of Paul's discussions concerning the church, he never once uses the term "bride". He never suggests to his audience that any church or group is likened unto a bride. It is not a part of the vocabulary of his ministry, nor does it in any way describe that church which he is the architect of. But we shall return to this in a moment.

Some time ago (the 1930s?) Mr. Fredrik Homer Robinson wrote an article for the Concordant Publishing Concern, the title of the article was: *Are the Bride and Body Identical?*. He illuminates that the choice of a bride often fell into the hands of someone other than the bridegroom. The Old Testament is full of examples, from Isaac, Judah, Caleb

and so forth. Further, he points out that: "immediately upon betrothal a woman lost all right to her own property". And that "between the engagement and marriage an interval elapsed...during this season all communication between the bride and bridegroom was carried on through the medium of a friend who was called 'the friend of the bridegroom'." And finally, Robinson reminds us that in those days (circa first century) a king was often pictured as the husband and his nation or people his wife. "This idea still persisted even in Europe in the middle ages..." (Robinson). Robinson exploits the many allegorical and typological facets suggested. But no straining is needed to see that redeemed Israel is the Bride. This "new Jerusalem" is allegorically redeemed and resurrected Israelites, those who trusted and loved God. Who actually represent a minority when the number of unbelieving Israelites is compared with the few who absolutely loved God. The number of genuine elected saints is often low, during any period in Israel's history, not only when Elijah lamented that he alone was all there was (there were about 7,000 others in the Hebrew nation of several million). (I Kings 19:14-18).

Jeremiah 3:14

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: (KJV)

[Note; "I am married to you", is accurate, even as Keil and Delitzsch have it, "I have wedded you to me". (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Jeremiah 1-29, translated by David Patrick, volume VIII)]. Some commentators also present Israel as the wife of Jehovah, and the New Testament church as the

Bride. However, the Bride, is not the New Testament church, she is Israel, Israel redeemed. Keep in mind, that the "New Testament Church" is actually two churches, one seen in early Acts, (the earthly church), and the other that one which began under the ministry of Paul, which is separate and distinct from Israel proper. Concerning Israel, God did divorce Himself from faithless Israel, but they will be reunited:

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? (Malachi 3:7, KJV)

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:17, KJV)

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (Revelation 15:2-4, KJV)

Israel, or at least the elect of Israel, do repent. The tribulation encourages them to do so, and a small number stand true. They are joined to the former believers who await in Abraham's bosom, or in Paradise. The first resurrection is the resurrection of the Bride, and the Millennium is the extended wedding ceremony (instead of a week, it lasts 1,000 years).

Further, if God is married (or about to be reunited to His wife), then proposing that the Pauline church of the New Testament, be His bride, we would have serious charges of bigamy occurring, even potential adultery! Those who propose such things need to consider the consequences.

In Hosea and in Jeremiah we have displayed the divorce between God and Israel. We know per Malachi 3:7 that God will forgive Israel and nullify the divorce if Israel repents. Other relevant texts would be Zechariah 1:3, most poignant is Hosea 2:14-23,

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I

will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God. (Hosea 2:14-23, KJV)

Significant too, are the meanings of some of the names in Hebrew in the above quote. For example "Ishi" means "my husband", "Baali" means "my lord", no longer a servant status, but now and forever a wife (that is on "that day"). Hosea 3:5 adds the capstone as it were:

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days. (KJV)

Certainly, in each of the above quotes, Israel is the audience, Israel is being addressed. Israel will be reunited to her Husband.

Since God hates divorce, why would He divorce Israel? Because His nature demanded a separation, divorce is often

needed, and is regulated under Mosaic Law—Deuteronomy 24:1-4 for example. He does permit a divorce when required. As concerns Christians, He permits a remarriage as shown in I Corinthians 7:28.

Commencing the marriage celebration—the Millennium—we have the betrothal, and immediately following the Millennium we have the actual consummation of the marriage. The union. A new union, with a new earth, a new heavens, a new city, all things become new. Israel has a new heart, this the climax of all of the prophetic promises made by God to His people. A. E. Knoch writes:

The New Jerusalem is permanently dressed and adorned with the supreme symbols of youth and happiness. She shall never grow old! Her marriage festivities are prolonged for the thousand years. Now her wedding day is lengthened for the eons of the eons. Literally, there will be no night. Figuratively, the joy and exultation of her union with the Lambkin will continue to the consummation. (A. E. Knoch. *The Unveiling of Jesus Christ*. Concordant Publishing Concern. 1935, page 551).

What a sight, just trying to picture the New Jerusalem in all of its glory is challenging. Such is the fulfillment of the promises made by God to Israel. Paradise regained.

The Church

New Jerusalem also is the name given to this portion of the church, this portion of the Body of Christ. This

portion, is a subset of the earthly portion shown in the illustration earlier displayed. The "church in the wilderness" is also a subset of the earthly portion. Due to the fact that during the latter period of Acts two churches were co-existing simultaneously, many scholars fail to distinguish between the two. One church is that one Jesus began building in Jerusalem (part of the earthly portion) the other church is that one Paul began, the heavenly portion [which began in Acts 9].

As concerns the "New Jerusalem" of the book of Revelation, John does not refer to this group as a church. "Overcomers" in the church which is to be established in Sardis, will have the name of "New Jerusalem" written upon them (Revelation 3:12), but they themselves are not the "New Jerusalem" seen coming down from heaven later in Revelation. The "New Jerusalem" fits most definitions of a church, a chosen group, having God with or amongst them.

As prior mentioned, there are some Bible scholars who declare that the "New Jerusalem" is Israel, (Jehovah's wife) and that the "Bride" is the "New Testament church". As indicated, I do not subscribe to this. For one, it suggests that God is or would have several wives, which would be contrary to the Law as well as the integrity of God as portrayed in the Bible. Additionally, one must recognize differences between redeemed Israelites, and unredeemed, (*i.e.* those God-hating Israelites). I suspect that the whole truth is much deeper than this, more sublime.

Israel itself requires clarification, and I have posted a paper (written in the 1980s) about who or what the precise meaning of the Hebrew noun is:

www.Biblical-data.org/Israel_meaning.pdf

In *putamen nucis*, Israel is "the people whom God takes care of", God's people. Some are chosen, which explains why God can say "not all Israel is of Israel" (Romans 9:6) as only

the elect are actually those whom God cares for, are those who actually love God. In a broad sense, all elected saints are of Israel, as all peoples for whom God loves would fit within this definition. Each use of the name must be scrutinized, the contexts prescribing specific semantics.

The church today—that portion of the Body of Christ being built—is a heavenly portion, and Paul is the "wise master-builder" (I Corinthians 3:10) or the architect. There is a heavenly portion, and an earthly portion. A heavenly Israel and an earthly Israel. In Ephesians 1:10 we read:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: (KJV) [NOTE: "all things" is neuter plural, and can refer to all humans, male and female.]

The "fullness of times" is the completion of the known ages or dispensations, the commencement of the "eternal" state, or perhaps of even a "final" dispensation. Under the Headship of the Lord/King Jesus Christ both the earthly and heavenly will be gathered, joined. However, it would be an error to think that all of heaven or everything heavenly is now welded to the earth. We have a picture of this union in the consummation of the marriage in Revelation 21:10ff.. We also know that the church portion which Paul began building, has special bodies equipped for living in heaven, and that this portion will be removed from earth at the "snatching" Greek *ἁρπαζω*, often translated as "rapture"; (note I Thessalonians chapter four). After the heavenly portion is removed, God begins working again with earthly Israel and their hopes and promises, which begins with the tribulation (the time of Jacob's trouble). I have often displayed these theological observations on my website, and need not to go over them again.

The final four verses of Ephesians chapter two, illuminate the fact that the church today is being built, and will be joined with other church constructions to form a temple, or perhaps a sanctuary, a holy place suitable for God to be in. When complete this "temple" would function as the Holy Place with God within. Now we also know that in the New Jerusalem, there shall be no temple, God and the Lamb are its temple. In a sense the entire city is holy, and there is no need to journey to a separate building to worship God, He is present constantly with His people. There is no dividing curtain, no separation (*i.e.* within the city), redeemed man has himself become, holy, sanctified, able to stand in the presence of God. Fellowship is constant and permanent. In many ways the concepts are mind-boggling! Perhaps more incredible is the probability, that we, the church today, exist then within the very Person of Jesus Christ Himself!

God is the Architect of the New Jerusalem: Hebrews 11:10 (KJV).

For he looked for a city which hath foundations,
whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham still is waiting, but not in vain! However, we have a picture of God's throne on earth, in the New Jerusalem. Is there still a throne in heaven? Does God limit His presence to one location? We are not told. Paul does state—as concerns our future (the heavenly portion of the Body of Christ), (I Corinthians 2:9, 10)....

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart of man, the things
which God hath prepared for them that love him. But

God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (KJV)

Could one declare that what John saw in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 is not that which Paul spoke of in the above quote? Is there still an inheritance unseen, unheard of, reserved for the saints who receive bodies which conform to the body of His (Christ's) glory (Philippians 3:21)? Note what/where we today inherit,

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (NASB) Colossians 1:12

The heavenly body portion has a different inheritance. Do we dwell in a very Jewish city located on a new earth? it appears that God has another location, another place designed for us, in the light.

The closing scene of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22, gives me the impression that all is not finished. Why is there a wall around the city? (And yes I am aware of the usual explanations, all unsatisfactory). Why does a tree of life provide fruit and leaves for the health or healing of the nations who dwell outside the city? Why is there a separation between these nations (Gentiles) and the folks of the city? Why are there kings amongst these nations, is not there one Ruler (God)? And finally the geometry of the whole scene bothers me. Picture this: a large round earth with this giant city on or suspended just above it. How can light from this

city (from God) provide light to the other side of the earth (of this globe)? Will we have a new atmosphere which reflects back all of the light? Is there another light source in the new heavens?

What happens if some unfortunate soul forgets to eat some leaves? Would a death result? Can an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem, ever lose that status? (note Revelation 22:19)? And lastly, again, where are the saints who receive spiritual bodies, designed for living in heaven and not on earth? (Are they somehow that part of Christ, which fills all?). I know I have raised questions which cannot be now answered, but with several other Bible students, I suspect that Revelation 22 is not the final chapter, nor the final age!

Not all folks would embrace my views. My interpretation includes certain views derived from Ephesians and Colossians. Not only is my view at odds with many dispensationalists, but certainly at odds with those who do not believe that there shall be a literal 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom. One must also recall that the portion of the church being built today, is not a wife, or bride, it is actually part of Jesus Christ Himself. Hence when He marries, we (the church of this present age) are of the husband. One needs to keep Ephesians 5:28-32 in mind:

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (NASB)

Nowhere is Israel ever spoken of as in the above quote. The concept (being members of the very Body of Christ, an actual union with the Divine) is staggering, yet this is what Paul clearly declares! I am the first to admit that I have not all the answers, but my studies have generated some solutions. Until the Bible and Holy Spirit clearly advise me differently, I shall hold to these views as expressed in this paper. I trust you find this material stimulating at the least.

In Conclusion

The Bride of Revelation 19:7, [NOTE: KJV has "wife"] is redeemed Israel. Though earlier divorced from God, Israel will be reunited with God. This new union concurs with a new earth, a new heavens, and the new relationship between God and His people. "New Jerusalem" is styled as a literal city, and can refer to its inhabitants. New Jerusalem's inhabitants are not just a church of Jew and Gentile (or Jew and proselyte) seen in Acts two; or that church in the wilderness. Rather it includes elected saints from most all of the dispensations, mostly from the days of Moses, of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry and in early Acts. A few are found during the tribulation period. (NOTE: though it is only in the very first decades of this present dispensation of grace, that a few were admitted, as most saints in this present dispensation belong to that heavenly portion, under Paul's ministry). The population of New Jerusalem is resurrected and redeemed saints washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ. Being Holy they can and will dwell with God in the New Jerusalem.

Per my definition, this New Jerusalem is a portion of the earthly Body of Christ, resurrected and gathered together in this "eternal" city. However, I do caution that the heavenly

members of the Body of Christ Church—as that one currently being built today, via Paul's efforts—apparently has a separate future, distinct from the New Jerusalem. The heavenly portion somehow exists within the very Person of Jesus Christ, which in many ways is not very understandable. If Jesus Christ dwells in the New Jerusalem, will we also dwell there?

This New Jerusalem, this Bride, this Wife, is that redeemed *earthly* Israel of God; part of the "all Israel", who will experience the fulfillment of all prophetic blessings which "all Israel" looks forward to. No mystery here.

