The imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-22:5)

J A du Rand

ABSTRACT
Are we to understand the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rv 21:9-11:5) literally or symbolically, historically or imaginatively? Is it to be interpreted as the counterpart of the earthly Jerusalem or of Rome (Babylon) or of both? Different hermeneutical models and exegetical methods have come up with valuable information on this imagery. How are we to look again at this information given by the History of Religions, the contemporary-historical and Jewish-apocalyptic approaches? Current research on the possible influence of the socio-cultural context (real or perceived) and the linguistic function of the Apocalypse as apocalyptic writing have also opened up the possibility of a psychotherapeutic reading. Such a reading can perhaps contribute to a better understanding of the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Beasley-Murray once stated (1974:315): Revelation as a whole may be characterised as A tale of two cities, with the sub-title, The harlot and the bride. The heavenly Jerusalem can also be described as the floodlit picture of the presence of God among men (Rissi 1972:39). This imagery has been the source of inspiration for famous works of art, poetry, writing, theology and history. But the question may be asked whether these visualisations have done justice to the meaning of the imagery in the Book of Revelation.

1.2 Anyone who ventures to interpret imagery like the heavenly Jerusalem in the Apocalypse of John is obliged to base his exegetical choices on a hermeneutical standpoint. One’s presuppositions and methodological decisions regarding genre, situation and the structural framework of the Apocalypse are also crucial in the understanding of this imagery. Stimulating academic impulses have come lately from Adela Collins (1984) and Barr (1986) concerning the functional catharsis that takes place in a performative reading of the Apocalypse. The catharsis obtained from reading Revelation does not only lie in the alleviating of historical, political or theological stress, but functions also on the psychological level. When the people of God discover who they are and what they are to do in reading the Apocalypse (A Collins 1986b:229) the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem takes a pivotal place in their existential experience as Christians at the end of the first millennium.
century. It is not the intention of this article to give a detailed exegesis of Revelation 21:9-22:5 but to propose a functional meaning for the mentioned imagery by applying different readings to the text.

2 UNDERSTANDING THE IMAGERY OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

It is still important in Biblical scholarship to page back and evaluate some of the approaches to understand the imagery in Revelation.

2.1 Some of the approaches

2.1.1 The History of Religions school of thought focuses primarily on the religious milieu of the Bible taking into account comparative religious studies (cf Melton 1987:2-69).

According to Zimmern the features of a pre-existent Babylonian city match those of the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 21 (1903:630). He focuses on the Babylonian influence on the city imagery in Revelation and points to the metaphor of the mountain. The Babylonians had a concept of a "world mountain" (Zimmern 1903:355). The earth was seen as a mountain rising at one end and descending at the other end. It was placed over the untamed Apsu, the subterranean sea. The peak of the mountain reached into the heavens where the gods dwelt. This world mountain was the dwelling place of Bel (Zimmern 1903:355). According to Zimmern this view is reflected in such Old Testament texts as Isaiah 2:2, Mica 4:1 and Zachariah 14:10. Revelation 21:10, where we read about the "high mountain" from which the prophet sees the holy city of Jerusalem, should then be understood against this view of the Babylonian world mountain. And in Judaism it is the belief that in the end mount Zion will be the highest mountain in the world (Melton 1978:13).

Zimmern, as an Old Testament scholar, provides us with interesting material on the city imagery but suffers from methodological "parallelomania" (Sandmel 1962:1ff) in establishing the chronological priority of one religious concept over another with the assumption that the second derived from the first.

Lohmeyer, another well-known exponent of the History of Religions approach to Revelation, sees the description of the new Jerusalem as reflecting three basic images: a pre-existent heavenly city stemming from the ancient Babylonian view of a heavenly Babylon which had an earthly counterpart (1953:170). The correspondence lies between the heavenly temple and the earthly temple in Babylon (cf Melton 1978:57). The twelve gates of the new Jerusalem, the twelve angels and the twelve precious stones reflect the twelve signs of the Zodiac. This astrological concept had penetrated Judaism...
(cf Philo VitMos 2,133; Jos Ant 3,179-187; 1En 72:2ff; Tob 13:16-18; SibOr 5:245f; cf Melton 1978:57).

The History of Religions approach has done very valuable work in the process of evaluating sources and apocalyptic parallels, but it prevents the reader from fully grasping the functional meaning of the city imagery. Although Lohmeyer is correct in his view that the Jerusalem imagery symbolises spiritual realities he goes too far in his denial of contemporary-historical allusions (cf Melton 1978:68). One is not forced to choose between a spiritual or a historical interpretation. The uniqueness of the city imagery in the Apocalypse lies in John's creative use of tradition to convey meaning.

2.1.2 It is generally agreed that the content of the Apocalypse of John, mainly imparts an Old Testament and Jewish-apocalyptic atmosphere (cf Melton 1978:72; Trudinger 1972:277ff).

The well-known representative of this direction of thought is Charles (1920). He interestingly distinguishes between the heavenly and the new Jerusalem. He mentions the Jewish expectation of a heavenly Jerusalem which was to exist before the new heaven and earth. Chapters 20-22 present the two cities (Charles 1920:153-154). The heavenly Jerusalem (cf 14:20; 20:9-22:2,14-15,17) is the centre for the temporary reign of the martyrs, for the evangelisation of the heathen nations and it is to be contrasted with the harlot city (Charles 1920:155). According to Charles, the concept of the city of the gods in ancient pagan religions had made inroads into Judaism. John's description does not only go back to Ezekiel 48:31ff, but also has ancient pagan connotations. The mountain in 21:10 recalls Jewish traditions about Mount Zion (cf Ezk 17:22; Is 2:2) and the measuring in 21:15 reflects the measuring of the ideal city in Ezekiel 40:3f (Charles 1920:163-64,179). The conversion of the heathens in 21:24-27 calls to mind some of the Jewish aspirations (cf Zch 2:11; 8:23; Is 65:66; Dn 7:124).

The imagery of the new Jerusalem forms the natural climax and the fitting close to all that has gone before, and the nature of the blessedness of the new heaven and the new earth and the new city is in keeping with all that is foreshadowed in the earlier visions of the seer (Charles 1920:200).

The image of the new Jerusalem is composed of Jewish hopes for the eternal life of the righteous in the new creation. According to Charles, John uses his symbols in keeping with Jewish apocalyptists.

There is consensus that John's imagery cannot be understood without knowing the Old Testament and the Jewish-apocalyptic background. But the question remains as to what degree John borrowed or radically reinterpreted the imagery. The distinction between the heavenly and the new Jerusalem is based on the influence of a theological reading of chapter 20. It should be kept in mind that John's use of the Old Testament is not by way of direct quotation, but according to the intentions of his symbolism. The meaning of the heavenly Jerusalem in chapter 21 cannot be deduced merely from the Old
Testament, although a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament helps to fill in the framework of author and reader.

2.1.3 The contemporary-historical approach provides us with a useful methodological principle because the historical situation of the first readers (as far as it can be reconstructed) is very important.

Swete (1911) as an exponent of this approach maintains that the new Jerusalem should be seen in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem and to Rome. The bride of 21:9 is to be contrasted with the harlot (1911:283). Different contrasts come to the fore in a comparison between chapters 11 and 21: in Revelation 11:1 the seer measures the city and in 21:15 only an angel can measure the heavenly city (1911:287); the earthly Jerusalem never brought the expectations of 21:24 to fulfillment; the new city will receive the best of human life just as Rome attracted to herself the merchandise of all the world according to 18:11ff. Swete says that the new city is the church with its heavenly origin (cf 21:2) and divine mission, and that the twelve tribes in 21:12 reflect the church's continuity with Israel (1911:286).

A meaningful application of the contemporary-historical approach would be to assume that John is writing within a certain historical situation but that he is also uncovering the ultimate issues and the spiritual principles behind the "city" imagery. The Apocalypse is not an antiquated archaeological tract but a theological message with a specific purpose - that God is in control of history through the victory of his Son.

From the contemporary-historical perspective the city symbolism exposes, in pictorial form, the nature of the enemies of the Christian church at the end of the first century; it also corrects pagan views on immortality by showing that real communion with the deity will be fulfilled in God's heavenly Jerusalem. The reference to the cities in Revelation indicates more than that they are just historical entities, functioning in a political and theological allegory. The heavenly Jerusalem is more than just the counterpart of the earthly Jerusalem.

2.1.4 According to Caird the millennial city in 20:9 is not the result of John's imitation of Jewish eschatology (1966:250f). The millennial Jerusalem shows to the conquerors (cf 1:6; 2:27; 5:10) that the present political power, founded on idolatrous religion and materialism, will be broken (1966:252f; cf Melton 1978:193). Therefore the city imagery in 20:9 and chapters 21:22 is not intended to convey a definite place in the future, according to Caird. The essential character of the city that descends from heaven is polarised against the monster that ascends from the abyss. God's people are assured that their suffering will end in the city of God (1966:257).

Caird asserts that, for John, the imminent event is not the Παρουσία, but the persecution of the church by Rome. But the Old Testament prophet and
the Jewish apocalyptists sometimes use language that relates to the end of the world when describing historical events, although the historical events are not necessarily identified with the eschatological end (Melton 1978:199).

And in his commentary on the heavenly Jerusalem, Beasley-Murray says that this imagery should be understood functionally (1974:305). It describes the ultimate goal, namely communion with God, and 21:1-4 and 21:9ff stand in contrast to the harlot city in chapters 17-18. John probably has alluded to contemporary pagan traditions and events to show that the city of the gods has reached fulfillment in the new Jerusalem (cf the high mountain 21:10), the twelve gates and the twelve angels, the precious stones (21:11, 19-20), the river and the milky way (1974:310,320-326).

Beasley-Murray combines the contemporary-historical approach with the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic, as well as the History of Religions perspectives. In his view, John's images also become clearer if one uncovers the mythical themes of their background, especially the ancient myth of the chaos monster. Such a combination of methodological approaches is the current trend among researchers concerning the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf Mounce 1977:377ff; Ford 1978:221ff; Kraft 1974:267ff; Böcher 1983:157ff; Roloff 1984).

2.1.5 The evaluation of different approaches to the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem has brought the following provisional methodological conclusions:

1. The historical situation is taken as the point of departure, keeping in mind that the symbolism represents spiritual principles that are not restricted to the first century or to any other century (cf Melton 1978:233).

2. It should further be kept in mind that John is not a mere compiler of apocalyptic or Judaistic traditions. He is also a pastoral theologian, well aware of God's redemptive purposes in Christ for the history of mankind.

3. Comparative religious studies still shed light on the understanding of the Jerusalem imagery.

4. John uses the Old Testament within the framework of contemporary understanding of that imagery. That does not mean that John's use of the Jerusalem imagery is limited to its so-called original meaning.

5. John also uses, by form and content, apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, rabbinical and Qumran material in the city imagery. Some imagery in the Apocalypse does have mythical associations which came down through the centuries (cf Melton 1978:239). This does not mean that the Apocalypse is a collection of diverse mythological fragments. The mythical fragments fit into the purpose of the whole story (cf Collins 1976:380-381).

6. It is obvious that John uses tradition in a dual way. His imagery is loaded with meaning for both Jews and pagans. He radically interprets images which would be meaningful to both groups.
7 The verbal correspondences are not sufficient to indicate a close literary dependence but do suggest a relationship of ideas.

2.2 Genre, situation and functional interpretation
To understand the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem the reader must have some perspectives on the genre, the interpretation and the socio-historical context in which the Apocalypse was composed.

The apocalyptic-eschatological perspective from which the Apocalypse of John was written (cf Vorster 1986:159) provides the symbolic frame of reference from which it should be read. Revelation is an apocalyptic writing in narrative form with a prophetic eschatological aim and a pastoral touch presented in the framework of a letter (cf Collins 1986b:235; Aune 1986:67f; Fiorenza 1985:169; Boring 1986:261; Hellholm 1986:13ff).

The socio-historical context of the first readers provides a definite relief for the reading of the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem. For the Apocalypse of John could have been written around the end of the first century during the reign of Domitian along the coast of Asia Minor (cf A Collins 1984:54f) and according to information the Christians probably found themselves in a political, sociological and theological crisis (cf Fiorenza 1985:8f).

Some form of persecution prevailed (cf Iren Haer 5,30,3). The socially disadvantaged group of Christians suffered a feeling of deprivation which could have developed into an experience of fear and resentment at the power of Rome. And that could have lead to envy and the feeling of vengeance (cf A Collins 1984:106,152ff; Gager 1975:50f).

Conflict with the Jews and an ambivalence towards Jerusalem were part of the socio-historical crisis. Jerusalem is symbolically named "Sodom" and "Egypt" (11:8). One gets the impression that the destruction of Jerusalem is linked up with the crucifixion of Jesus.

Another dominant factor in the socio-historical context was the influence of syncretism. Foreign religions from Greece and the Orient infiltrated the cults of Asia Minor. Social and economic associations brought about assimilation, for example in the trade guilds.

The Christians were socially disorientated because of the breach with the synagogue as well as the antipathy towards the Graeco-Roman world. Not even to name the unequal distribution of wealth which opened up disparity in the Roman provinces.

The functional interpretation of Revelation in the light of the situation of the first historical readers is to provide consolation and to suppress the distinction between the flawed present and the ideal future (cf Barr 1986a:245). The imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem is in that sense a persuasive expression for the readers to identify with. The language of the Apocalypse brings about catharsis and the perspective of a symbolic universe.
2.3 Reading the imagery in a structural framework
Although there exist a variety of possible structural analyses of Revelation (cf Hahn 1979) I would like to emphasise a narratological possibility: the whole narrative takes place under the one vision in the Spirit (1:10) (Cf Barr 1984:40). The risen Christ appears to dictate the messages to the seven churches. And in 4:1 we note a shift of location with the marker in the Spirit when John is to observe a heavenly liturgy. This is interrupted at 5:2 with the opening of the scroll and followed by the seals and trumpets as illustration of judgment. The signs of the woman (12-14) and the seven plagues (15-16) are observed from the heavenly temple. And in 17:3 John is back on earth in the Spirit to describe the contrasting visions of the whore and the bride in the desert and city respectively.

To summarise: in chapters 1-3 the risen Christ gives messages to the seven churches; in chapters 4-11 the Lamb opens a sealed scroll and in chapters 12-22 the dragon's war is described against the elect. Christ's work is displayed in the church (1-3), the cosmos (4-11) and in history (12-22). The readers of the Apocalypse is taken on a journey to put the reality of the crisis in which they live into perspective. The imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem portrays the security of salvation. The reader can already live in the transformed reality of the heavenly Jerusalem, despite the threatening persecution and deprivation.

2.4 Another approach

2.4.1 Lurvey
In the light of the integrated function of the suggested situation, as well as the possible structural arrangement, we can proceed to look deeper into the meaning of the imagery of the heavenly city. A stimulating and thought-provoking interpretation of the images in Revelation by Lurvey (1983) urges us to pay special attention to his experimental psychotherapeutic exegetic model.

This hermeneutical model derives mainly from Jung and Assagioli's therapeutic model of the ego, the self and the unconscious. The symbolic data from the unconscious regions of the personality correlate with historical and cultural parallels, and interpret one another (cf Lurvey 1983:102). This can be applied to sacred symbols such as those found in Revelation. It is both a personal creation and a collectively held set of sacred symbols in the form of an apocalypse. Lurvey calls his model the hermeneut of displacement which is applied in a three-stage operation. Stage one operates with the text of Revelation, in the sense of conventional exegesis, using historical-critical methods in an attempt to amplify these data with historical and biographical antecedents and parallels. The basic purpose is to find the focus of the text as the preliminary function (Lurvey 1983:103). But the text possesses levels of meaning that are obscured and require further interpretation. Stage two
amplifies the text further by the act of displacement, in which the depths of meaning in the text are uncovered by treating the subject matter as unconscious psychological processes within the personality. This means that the apocalyptic context of Revelation is momentarily displaced with an anthropological and psychological frame of reference. After making a literary and historical analysis of a broad range of apocalyptic writings, Lurvey demonstrates parallel homological structures between literary apocalypses and the psychosynthesis process. He argues that it is reasonable to treat an apocalyptic writing "as if" it were also a reflection of a psychotherapeutic process, because its origins might reasonably be in the psychic processes of the seer and its structure is demonstrably parallel to that of psychotherapy (Lurvey 1983:105). This does not mean that apocalypses and psychosynthesis necessarily function in the same way, but the socially therapeutic effect of the apocalyptic movement, and its self-expression in narrative, can be shown. Both the apocalypse and psychosynthesis share the assumption that another world transcends and informs the world of everyday consciousness. The parallel to this world/other world aspect of an apocalypse is the conscious/unconscious or conscious self/higher self relationship in psychosynthesis (1983:105). In the apocalyptic as well as the psychosynthetic structure of the unconscious, the higher realm is positive and supreme over the lower realm. Both provide a text for revelation (the apocalypse and the dreams, imagery, meditations respectively). Stage three of the hermeneutic of displacement is to identify particular integrative symbols. The symbol has an integrative function to resolve conscious and unconscious polar conflicts and it has a prospective message which stimulates growth and offers an ideal model for future development. And in this sense the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem fits into these aspects of the symbol.

To apply this to the exegetical process: Feelings of deprivation, dissonance and fundamental disorientation among the Christians at the end of the first century (as shown above) typify the early phases of psychosynthesis as well as the apocalyptic situation. This world is devalued because the other world provides transcendent knowledge and salvation for this world. That means that the unconscious world of the higher self provides personally transcendent knowledge and therapeutic healing to the conscious self (Lurvey 1983:138). As a result revelatory literature reflects the transcendence of the other world over this world. Psychosynthesis also deals in a narrative framework such as this, one in which the other world's features are presented. The Jerusalem imagery is the content of the techniques of visualisation and symbol utilisation. It is the other-world being (angel, etc) that guides the human recipient into the transcendent mystery. In that sense, psychosynthesis is a form of partially realised eschatology. It does not mean that the apocalypse is the product of the seer's unconscious psyche. The formal comparability, the
similarity of structure, alone creates the possibility of a hermeneutic working hypothesis.

John and the Christian communities are caught in a conflict between Christianity and the syncretising, dominant culture of the Roman Hellenistic world. The figures of the Lamb, the horseman and the judgement depict Christianity as able to sublimate and highly differentiate itself from the socio-cultural world outside, and the instinctive and pathological imagery inside, the psyche (Lurvey 1983:286ff). As a result, a new model of the transformed Christian self emerges from the two poles. The bridegroom-lamb symbolises awareness of evil forces by the new self and the bride-heavenly Jerusalem represents the feminine pole of Christian existence, with a sharp sense of moral differentiation. And from the marriage of the Lamb and the heavenly Jerusalem we have two poles of Christian self-knowledge that must unite through transformation.

In the psychodrama of chapters 4-22 we pick up patterns and elements which reflect processes and images in the human psyche (cf Lurvey 1983:223ff).

The heavenly court scene (4-5) sketches the dead, yet alive, Lamb (5:6). He represents sublimation, or the bringing of power from below and the putting of it at the service of a higher level of consciousness. Chapters 6-9 sketch the power now transferred by the dead, but risen, Lamb to the celestial court and they set in motion the opening of the second scroll and the first conflict sequence between the upper and lower realms of heaven and earth (Lurvey 1983:267). The conflict climaxes in the sixth seal which emphasises the separation between heaven and earth. The people of the earth, corresponding to the conscious self, are overwhelmed by the unfolding of the invasion by the upper realm, or higher unconscious (cf Lurvey 1983:268).

The ideal model in Revelation is that of the martyr (cf 6:9-11; 7:9-17) who seeks retributive action against his adversaries upon earth (cf 6:10).

In the narrative of the two witnesses (11:1-14) we have a classic psychotherapeutic pattern of bipolar conflict. The witnesses share the seer’s vocation of being a prophet and they have power to suppress and direct the people of earth, that is the conscious self, but they do not have the power to resist the primitive instincts of the lower unconscious, represented by the beast (11:7). The conscious self has identified too closely with the ideal model of the witnesses and causes dissociation from the lower unconscious (Lurvey 1983:272). Even the triumph of the two witnesses (11:11-14) and the announcement of the arrival of the Kingdom to bring wrath and reign (11:15-19) cannot bring the earth, or conscious self, to rest. There must be a retreat to the celestial region. A new "centre of self" must appear, which can take control over the instinctive (the forces from the lower unconscious). This will be embodied in the child to be born (12:5) who will rule with the rod of iron. It seems that the sweet coming of the kingdom foretold by the scroll (10:9-10) turns bitter because it is not realised at this stage. The angels are prepar-
ing for the future battle (14:6-15:1) while the martyrs recall the exodus as they sing the song of Moses (15:1-2ff). Interestingly, the harlot, sitting upon the beast, represents the synthesis of earthly power and culture, aligned against the faithful (17:6,18). And in 17:17 it is explained that the whole conflict between the faithful and the beast-kings is part of God's plan.

So, on the one hand we see a highly sublimed Christian ascetic ideal represented by the martyrs who in turn represent a setting apart from instinct and life itself, and on the other hand the harlot, beast and kings who play a role in the conflict. Lurvey sees a Kulturkampf going on within the seer and the early community. That is why the lament over the cultural and economic loss in Babylon's destruction is so important.

The beasts from the sea and from the land (13) seem to be symbols of compensation. They represent the forces from the lower unconscious, compensating for the initial suppression and invasion of the conscious by the higher unconscious (Lurvey 1983:278). The ascetic models of celibacy and martyrdom are paired, together with the preparation for conquest (14:19-20), a justification of the conflict and the judgement of God (15:3) (Lurvey 1983:280). The virgin (cf 14:4) symbolises the separation of the conscious self from inner erotic instincts and the martyr represents a divorcing of the conscious self from the self-preservation instinct. The virgins and martyrs do not identify with emotion, body or world, but have their eyes on the final conflict (15-19) and the heavenly Jerusalem. Against this ideal of highest spirituality stands the harlot (17). Her sex, garments and participation in the killing of martyrs makes her a polar opposite for the celibates and martyrs (cf 14-15). She represents the heights and splendour of Babylon and late first-century Hellenistic culture.

The author's ascetic ideal model of spiritual existence (sublimation) is in conflict with all the instinctive powers of the lower unconscious symbolised in the sexual and violent splendours of Babylon's culture. And this tension climaxes in the descent of the new "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (19:11-12) who defeats the beasts and their allies (Lurvey 1983:283). The powerful figure who can bring the lower unconscious under control becomes a new ideal model for the conscious self. The anticipation of the sacred marriage (9:7-9) brings a new order, the conjunction of the heavenly Lamb and his earthly bride (19:6-8).

If this would be the end of Revelation it could have followed the pattern of the hero-type psychodrama in which a new "centre of self" is re-established in the ego. The sacred marriage and the uniting symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem change the hero psychodrama into a transformation psychodrama. The climax is not a new and stronger ego, with greater powers of moral differentiation, but a yet undescribed sacred marriage. The bride city, the heavenly Jerusalem is prepared for the sacred marriage. Evil is clearly separated from good as the judgment scene (20:11-15).
This approach, briefly discussed so far, awakens many questions because it is not the only or the final hermeneutical possibility. It contains however definite perspectives for a fresh understanding of the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem in 21:9-22:5.

2.4.2 Further exegetical survey
In the process of exploring the meaning of the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem some more relevant, although selective, exegetical comments are required.


2 A formal analysis of the pericope 21:9-22:5 as a working schedule could read as follows:

21:9-10 Vision of heavenly Jerusalem as bride and wife of the lamb
The role of the angel with the bowl, the ascent of the seer in the Spirit and the descent of the city of Jerusalem as bride and wife.

21:11-14 Description of the city
Radiance (21:11); walls and gates (21:12-14).

21:15-21 Measuring episode
The angel who measures (21:15), shape and dimensions (21:16), wall measurement (12:17).

21:18-23 Description of the city
The building materials (21:18-20), and special features within the city (21:22-23).

21:24-26 Future of the city
The nations walk by its light (21:24), kings bring their glory (21:24), the gates are not shut by day (21:25), there is no night (21:25b), the glory and honour of the nations is brought into the city (21:26).

21:27 Those excluded from the city
The unclean practitioners of abominations, deceivers, those not written in the Lamb’s book of life.

22:1-2 Paradise elements in the city
The river (22:1), throne (22:1) middle position (22:2), and tree of life (22b).

22:3-5 Resumé: Further description of the future
No accursed things (22:3), throne of God (22:3), no more night (22:5).
This arrangement concentrates mainly on the description, the future and the meaning of the city.

3 It is clear that the narrative of the heavenly Jerusalem is a combination of traditional material (e.g. Ezk 40-48 and Trito-Isaiah) as well as innovative elements (cf Reader 1971:48-51; Lurvey 1983:191-194). We can speak of a new Jerusalem tradition (cf Ezk 27-48; Zch 12:1-13:6; 14; Tob 14:4-7; TDan 5:4-13; 1En 85-90; SibOr 3:552-731; 5:361-433 and the HebApEl. Cf Reader 1971:34-38; Böcher 1980:118). From these nine possible sources Reader funnels an interesting traditional formula with six parts. They are: a history of Israel up to the contemporary period (cf Tob 14:4-5; TDan 5:4-9); a time of interim peace (Ezk 37:15-18; TDan 9-10); the bringing together of the heathen for a final battle (Ezk 38:1-16; Zch 12:2; 14:1-2); the heathen enemies who are gathered for battle are defeated by God and the Messiah through heavenly wonders (Ezk 38:17-39:20; Zch 12:3-9; TDan 5:10-11); the last judgement (1En 90:20-27), and finally the new Jerusalem scene which includes eternal peace for Jews and all the righteous as well as the presence of God (Ezk 40-48; Zch 13:1-6; Tob 14:5-6; SibOr 3:702-731; HebApEl 10:48. Cf Lurvey 1983:195f).

It is remarkable that 19:11-22:5 follows this formula with six parts; the coming of the Messiah (19:11-21); interim peace (20:1-6); the final attack against Jerusalem (20:7-9); the victory of God (20:9-10); the last judgement (20:10-15) and the coming of the new Jerusalem (21:1-22:5). It should however be noted that the combat in 12-22 is not merely between heaven and earth as in Ezekiel 7-39 and Zechariah 12-14.

4 The bride as the heavenly Jerusalem (21:9-10) is described just as functionally as the harlot Babylon (17:1,3). By contrast, the bride-city is seen from the mountain and the harlot-city is in the desert. The designation of the city as both νύμφη (bride) and γυνή (wife) is also found in Joseph and Asenath (Reader 1971:68-69). Asenath is also called "a city of refuge". In Is 50:1; 54:6 and Mica 4:9 the people of God is referred to as a bride, but no mention is made of the marriage of the Messiah bridegroom to the covenant community. Even in the New Testament, although Jesus is designated a bridegroom, his bride is never explicitly identified except in this verse which reflects the hieros gamos - that is, a myth pattern which includes the birth of the divine child, the war with the underworld, the miraculous rescue of the divine boy, the final battle and the mother transformed into the bride after her release from captivity by the underworld powers (Lurvey 1983:200; cf Reader 1971:72,75-76).

Unlike 21:2 the vision of 21:10 is not introduced by the familiar καὶ ... ἔδεικνυ (and I saw) but by ἐδειξεν (he showed). The adjective καυτή (21:2) is also omitted to emphasise that we are dealing with the heavenly Jerusalem (Reader 1971:40).
The holiness and glory of the eschatological Jerusalem (21:11f) reflect God's presence in its fullness (cf Is 40:5; 60:1; 62:2; Baruch 6:12; 1Q5 11:5). The twelve gates motif (21:12f) is found in Ezekiel 48:30-35 and repeated in Qumran's New Jerusalem Apocalypse 5Q15. The use of the number of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates (21:14) is probably borrowed from Ezekiel 48:30-35 and identify the patriarchs with the entrances. Interesting, in ancient Jerusalem only two tribes had gates named after them, Benjamin and Ephraim (Lurvey 1983:203).

The wall motif was used by Ezekiel (Ezk 40:5; 41:5 and 43:30-35). We should keep in mind that Ezekiel's work lies prominently behind the imagery of Revelation 12-22. The wall is a sign of security (Is 49:16) or of separation between sacred and common territory. This wall signifies the separation of the life and light inside from the fiery lake outside (Reader 1971:80). The apostles, as the foundation stones, represent the roots of the eschatological city.

In the measuring of the city (Rv 21:15-17; cf Ezk 40-48; 4Ez 10:55) the text shows an interesting progression of the city's shape from four-sided to a square to a cube (cf Reader 1971:91,93-94). The dimensions of the city are to be understood symbolically to emphasise the incredible spectacle. The cubic shape of the heavenly Jerusalem is unusual. Behind this is probably not a cube but the description of Babylon by Herodotus, in spite of the anti-Babylon cast of Revelation as a whole (cf Kraft 1974:271). Reader has shown convincingly that the holy of holies in the temple (2Chr 3:80) could be the model for the heavenly Jerusalem to express the intimate presence of God (1971:208).

The emphasis once again on the gold and jewels (cf 21:18-23) accentuates the inconceivable dramatic greatness. Reader has not found a clear correlation between tribal names, gemstones on the breastplate, and the zodiac, even after examining fourteen lists of gemstones (1971:100-117; cf 1981:433ff).

A departure from Jewish apocalyptic hopes is focused upon with the statement that the seer sees no temple in the city (cf 21:22). This should be read against previous references to the temple as the source of lightning, thunder, earthquakes, hail, commanding voices, the harvest angel, the plagues in bowls and the place of God's throne (cf 7:15; 11:2-3,19; 14:15,17; 15:5-8; 16:1,17). The meaning has so shifted that the whole city becomes a sacred precinct, or holy of holies, filled with God's presence (cf Lurvey 1983:213).

In 21:24-26 where the aorist tense has changed to the future tense we find a conflict between the assumption that unclean outsiders are still present in spite of the previous relegation of all unclean life in the last judgement to the lake of fire (cf 20:11-15; cf Lurvey 1983:214).

If chapter 21:24 is seen as a possible reflection of Isaiah 60:1-11 (Reader 1971:133; Kraft 1974:273) the word could mean "amidst" instead of "by". The
new city is the centre of the earth. It stems from the tradition that the enlightenment of the nations' world comes from Jerusalem (cf OdesSol 17:34-35; TLevi 18:9-10; 1En 48,50). The kings of the earth, who have previously been enemies of God and allies of the harlot and the beast because they did not accept the reign of the Messiah, will at last come to God (cf Is 45:20,22; 60:3; Zch 2:11; 8:20-24). The emphasis falls on the universal scope of the influence of the new city. The kings are probably not bringing tribute but worship after conversion (cf Ps 2:8; 86:9; Is 60:5-13; Tob 13:11; TJud 25:5. Cf Caird 1966:279-280).

The tension between "in" and "out" is emphasised by the statement that the unclean are excluded from the heavenly city (cf Dt 23:1-9; Is 35:8; 52:1; Ezk 44:9 and Mt 5:21). The bdēlūgma (abomination) can be connected to the list in Leviticus 18 and the pseūdos (false) with Jr 6:13; 8:8; Hs 7:1, in the sense of dealing falsely. It could indicate the false prophet.


The river of the water of life in Revelation 22:1-2 comes from the paradise river that flowed east and west, flanked by the trees of life (Ezk 47:1-12). "Water of life" could be a metaphor for righteousness (cf Pr 10:1; 1En 48:1) or for wisdom and knowledge (cf Pr 18:4; Jr 2:13; 17:13; TJud 24:4). The tree of life (singular in Gn 2:9 and plural in Ezk 47:7-12) could stand in the midst of a street or plaza (cf Es 4:1) but be difficult to locate because of the position of the street and the river. The goal of this description could probably be to obtain a symmetrical visual picture. And the monthly harvest of fruit symbolises the adequacy of the food supply.

The leaves that heal the nations (cf 22:2) are probably to be read in connection with spiritual and ethical healing in the sense of universal evangelisation and conversion (cf Kraft 1974:275).

As the followers of the beast bear the mark upon their foreheads (13:16) so will the faithful bear the name of God upon theirs (22:4; cf 3:12) to stress God's ownership. This probably alludes to the name of God on the forehead of the high priest (cf Ex 28:36). Now all the righteous are priests in the presence of God in the heavenly Jerusalem.

3 THE MEANING OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

To bring all the above exegetical perspectives and information together into a meaningful exposition of the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem in 21:9-22:5 is a comprehensive and venturesome undertaking. A few conclusive contours may be drawn:
3.1 The historical city, Jerusalem itself, did not mean much to the faith of the Israelite tribes until the days of David (cf Noth 1957:172-187). But after the establishment of the residence of the king, as well as the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to the new capital, it became known as the place of God's presence. And the building of the temple confirmed its religious significance. The promise of God to the Davidides and the concept of God's presence there, made Jerusalem a royal city and a religious symbol, the bearer of expectations for the future; in that sense, it was the sign of God's faithfulness to his chosen people (Rissi 1972:42; cf Böcher 1983:113ff). These hopes were kindled by Isaiah (cf 2:1-4; 54,60,65) and Ezekiel (cf 40-48) in particular. The Old Testament prophecies about salvation (in which Jerusalem forms the centre) boil down to a few essential features: In the glorified city all the paths of God's people come together at the end, and all the promises of God in the course of history are fulfilled (cf Rissi 1972:46); this goal will be reached through an eschatological act, by which God will create for himself a pure people (cf Ezk 36:22); the centre of this hope is the covenant of the presence of God in the midst of his people (cf Ezk 37).

In Judaism, divergent traditions developed about Jerusalem as the centre of salvation. Different ways to look at the Jerusalem of the future developed: at the end of history the earthly Jerusalem will stand at the centre of the world in a glorified form, totally rebuilt (cf Tob 13,16ff; SibOr 5; 1QSal 1; 1QMXII,13ff). Although the ancient synagogue had held fast to the universal hope which also embraced the nations, the shattering experiences of 70 A D and after led to a nationalistic narrowing of the hope of salvation (cf Rissi 1972:50f). In another way the future of Jerusalem was seen as a heavenly reality although the rabbis did not simply transfer their hopes to a city built in heaven (Rissi 1972:50). It was also believed that salvation would be restored by the coming down of the heavenly city. The new city as salvation would thus already exist in heaven and would be revealed to the righteous on the last day (cf 4Ez 10,25-27,40 and 4Ez 7,26). These divergent traditions certainly would have influenced the New Testament thought system, but need not be taken as the real meaning of the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 21.

3.2 By way of contrast, John identifies the harlot in chapter 17-18 with the city of Rome. This image is formed by contemporary historical references, Old Testament examples and probably a form of the ancient combat myth, according to which the powers of chaos would again rise up in rebellion against God before the end, but they would be conquered (cf Collins 1976:247). John identifies Rome as Babylon. Babylon carried with it the connotation of the epitome of ungodly power (cf Kuhn 1964:515). Therefore this identification carries more than a historical meaning. Rome is the contemporary concentration of all the evil of past pagan civilizations.
3.3 In the original apocalyptic fragment the city in 11:1-13 was probably understood to be the earthly Jerusalem but, according to 11:8, John identifies it with Sodom or Egypt (cf Is 1:9-10; Ezk 16:46,55 and Strack & Billerbeck 1926:812). Although the holy city was probably originally identified with Jerusalem, in this context the image of the great city (μεγάλη πόλις) symbolises world rebellion under the beast's evil power. The outer courtyard in 11:2 can be identified with the earthly Jerusalem which has been given over to the Gentiles. And the temple itself, with the altar and the worshippers, represents the heavenly Jerusalem which the Gentiles cannot control or destroy. The symbolic measuring is a source of hope for heavenly vindication (cf Collins 1981a:38). Even this narrative about the two witnesses points progressively to heavenly salvation.

3.4 The expression ἔξωθεν τῆς πόλεως in 14:20 is probably a reflection of the Old Testament expectation that the final judgment would take place in the vicinity of the city of Jerusalem (cf Zch 14:1-4; 1En 53:1).

And the image of the beloved city as a camp (20:9) comes from the Old Testament model of Israel's journey in the wilderness (cf Ex 14:19f; Dt 23:14; Ps 87 and Nm 2:22ff). It symbolises the divine rule in the world (cf Melton 1978:275). Perhaps, in view of the redemptive theology in chapters 4-5 and 21:9-22:5, John is consciously showing that the kingdom in some sense is revealed in history. Although efforts have been made to distinguish between a millennial city in 20:9 and the heavenly Jerusalem in 21-22, it is assumed that the two probably carry the same meaning in the narrative of the apocalypse.

3.5 With regard to the earthly Jerusalem, Rome and the heavenly Jerusalem the comparison is not between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem, but between the heavenly Jerusalem and Vanity Fair (earthly Jerusalem and Rome) - the earthly instruments of the beasts. Even the description of the heavenly Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) is diametrically opposed to the lasciviousness ruling this present world represented by Rome. The contrast lies in the corruption of the profane world and the enduring incorruptibility of divine promise.

3.6 Before we come to a final perspective, it is noteworthy that Böcher denies an exclusive symbolic meaning and prefers to link the heavenly Jerusalem to the future of Israel. He sees it as: "... der von Gott für den Messias Jesus Christus glanzvoll neugeschaffenen Hauptstadt Israels" (1980:120).

On the other hand, Augustine calls the church already the regnum Christi regnumque caelorum (De Civ Dei 20,9).
3.7 In conclusion: the heavenly Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) represents more than a literary or historical product. A symbol such as the heavenly Jerusalem affects our consciousness, through its power (psychological and theological) to conduct and direct psychic energy (cf Lurvey 1983:23). This energy and power gives the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem a life of its own. The Jerusalem imagery in 21:22 as an integrative symbol is "already" in the sense that it has integrative efficacy for the present and it is also "not yet" in the sense that it charts future possible courses for development as an ideal model (cf Lurvey 1983:231).

The description of the heavenly Jerusalem focuses on the edge (walls, gates) and the sacred centre (the throne of God and the Lamb). There is thus movement in the imagery - between centre and circumference, which helps us to put some of the oddities of the text into perspective.

The parallel between the bride-city Jerusalem and the harlot-city Babylon indicates a contrast between two integrative symbols. The descending city (21:10) is seen as an integrative symbol drawing together the polarities of heaven and earth. In this sense the symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem is not "new", because it is already manifested as a living symbol (cf Lurvey 1983:233). The twelve tribes in 21:12 are brought together with the twelve apostles in 21:14 and represent another polarity, the Christians and the Jews, which is reconciled in this symbol. Two traditional motifs are suggested in connection with the understanding of the shape and dimensions of the city: the holy of holies and the description of Babylon by Herodotus (Lurvey 1983:234). Babylon could be described as the antitype of the bride-Jerusalem. Then, we have a very strong polarity between the holy of holies (church) and Babylon (sinful world).

The statement that the kings will bring their glory into the city (21:24) probably suggests a future or prospective meaning. It is odd for kings to bring glory when the kings of the earth were relegated to the lake of fire (cf 19:11-26; 20:1-15). Lurvey suggests that the symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem portends a uniting of church and culture (1983:236). This city turns the activities of history and politics into worship!

3.8 The recognition of the presence of the heavenly Jerusalem as a living symbol offers us a present and future possibility of special importance in the different polarities: Babylon/holy of holies; Babylon/paradise; patriachs/apostles; masculine/feminine in sacred marriage.

Babylon represents the syncretisation. Hellenistic Roman culture is to be rejected by the martyrs (15:2) and male virgins (14:1-4). Yet, the Babylon connection is combined with the cubic shape of the holy of holies. The description of the throne, river, street and trees (cf 21:1-2) gives rise to the possibility of both a "Babylon" and a "paradise" interpretation. This, once again, emphasises the implicit reconciliation of faith and culture, and of the holy sanction of Jerusalem and paradise with the world of the pagans, Babylon.
The association of the jewelled foundation stones (apostles) with the tribal jewelled gates (partriarchal sons of Israel) reconciles Christian and their Hebraic forebearers, by picturing the latter as the gateway. In a sense, Christians must enter the gates identified with the Israelites.

This passage is also a symbol of the feminine *Imago Dei* preparing for a final *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage with the Lamb. The heavenly Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God and the bride of the Lamb, but she also opens her gates for the treasure of the kings and nations brought in worship (cf Lurvey 1983:240!)

### 3.9 Conclusion

According to the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem, *Christianity and culture* (especially Hellenistic) are reconciled. While it seems that the Book of Revelation, on the surface, is against the pagan world and that this Hellenistic culture has no determinant meaning for the Christians, the kings who were once enemies in chapter 16 and 19 become worshippers in chapter 21. The heavenly Jerusalem wants nature (the fruit and leaves) and culture (the kings), paradise and Babylon, to express themselves in worship by way of their own contributions (cf Lurvey 1983:241).

It should be kept in mind that the heavenly Jerusalem is not presented in the Apocalypse as a static end. It is the bride, prepared for the *sacred marriage to the Lamb*. The bride is not the sum of historical Christian congregations like Smyrna, Ephesus and the rest. The bride is the heavenly Jerusalem which comes down from heaven, from God (cf 21:2). The bride is the church at the end from the perspective of the parousia (Bauckham 1980:77). The contrast is not between visible and invisible churches, it is between present and eschatological reality, between the churches as they are and as they must become through the preparatory work of the Spirit. The bride, then, is the corporate personality, the true theocratic community. On the other hand, the Lamb in Revelation portrays the function of victorious judgement and the punishing of evil upon the earth. He is also the bearer of the book of life which distinguishes between the elect and the damned. The Lamb brings differentiation and judgement, according to the Apocalypse, although he is the Johannine symbol of atonement (cf 5:6). On the other hand, the bride-city draws in the treasures of the kings and nations through her twelve gates. The sacred marriage brings together these two psychodynamic elements. Even the integration of Judaism and Christianity is strikingly portrayed in the heavenly Jerusalem imagery. It does not dissolve the distinctions between the patriarchs (gates) and apostles (foundations), but shows that they do not play the same role. The Christian community must see itself in relation to its Israelite heritage (cf Rissi 1972:61-66).

Reading Revelation 21:9-22:5 does not imply repression of our instincts and the world but the removal of the conscious self from domination by them
because of the projection of the sacred marriage. Once this freedom is achieved by self-awareness and disavowal, there is a potential new integration with instinct and the world of history and culture.

The vision of the heavenly Jerusalem may be viewed as the climax of the Apocalypse of John, an imagery to depict the integrated blessedness of the perfected community between God and man!

WORKS CONSULTED
Kuhn, K 1964. s v Βασιλέας ktl. ThWNT.


