

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 397

Revelation 21-22, Part 2

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Episode Summary

Revelation 21-22 is John's climactic vision of the new Jerusalem and new earth. In Part 1 we looked at how Israelites thought about the concept of "temple" and how that concept led John to conflate the expectation of a new temple and see fulfillment of that expectation in a city (the new Jerusalem) and restoration of the cosmos in a new Eden. In this episode we walk through Rev 21-22 with an eye toward discerning specific Old Testament contexts behind the content of a range of items in these chapters.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 397: Revelation 21-22, Part 2. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Well, I feel pretty good today, Trey. And you sound a little bit better. So I'm guessing you're going to say the same thing.

TS: Yeah, yeah. I feel good. Yeah, I mean, I just can't get my voice. I don't know, I guess oxygen is important, because... [MH laughs]

MH: Key observation of the day. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, you've got to have it. So at least I'm getting...

MH: "Deep Thoughts with Trey Stricklin." There you go.

TS: There you go, yeah. [MH laughs] Perfect. But yeah, other than that, everything's good, man. I can't believe this is... Mike, we made it! We're here.

MH: I know.

TS: This is Revelation. I mean, this is it! This is the last part. I can't believe it's here! It's been a long journey. It's crazy that it's already here.

MH: Believe it or not, it is here. And yeah, no pun intended, it almost takes your breath away that we actually made it. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, I'm so glad! I mean, this is a huge deal, Mike. I mean, it's been a long journey to get here to the end of Revelation. And we said it'd take you about a year, and it basically did.

MH: Yeah, I wasn't, like, timing it out, but okay. I was right. So occasionally that happens, you know?

TS: We're just glad you decided to tackle Revelation. Because I mean, there's such great content throughout this series. And it's just invaluable. So I want to say thank you on behalf of everybody. Thanks for... First and foremost, thanks for everybody voting on it. I forgot that people voted on it. So it kind of forced your hand to do it. But at least you put it up for a vote to tackle. And it's good stuff. It's invaluable material.

MH: Yeah. And we both know it's generated a lot of questions. So we're not *done* done with all that we want to say about Revelation. We will be having follow-up Q&As. But yeah, it's a big deal to get through the whole book. This was a substantial book, to say the least.

TS: Well, Mike, I'm ready. I'm ready to find out how this all ends. So please.

MH: Yeah. So let's just get into our Part 2 here of Revelation 21-22. This is the final part—the final installment. And again, we're looking at these two chapters and asking ourselves, "What parts of the Old Testament are important to John as he explains a vision or as he describes something that he's told (the content, of course, of what he's told and shown)? How does that dip into the Old Testament? And how does the Old Testament provide a framework and really a place to start thinking interpretively? Last time we shot for the broader context, just the general notion in the Prophets. We looked at Ezekiel. We looked at Isaiah. We looked at Jeremiah. We looked at Zechariah—that what the book of Revelation does with the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem answers the expectation of a new temple with those things. And the Old Testament does that. The Old Testament overlaps these ideas.

And so what we see in the book of Revelation isn't an anomaly or somehow John missing the mark. We shouldn't be reading the end of the book of Revelation and asking, "Well, what happened to the temple?" The Lord is the temple. God is the temple, as John explicitly says in these last two chapters. So this time, we're going to go through the chapters again and be a little more granular and look at some specific parts of both these chapters and what their Old Testament orientation is.

So to begin, I'm just going to read quickly through Revelation 21. And then we will jump in and pick our spots as we are accustomed to doing in this series. So Revelation 21, I'm reading from ESV, John writes:

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Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its

width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷ He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸ The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

That's Revelation 21. And even as you read through that, you get a few interesting little tidbits that we may or may not say much about. But it just popped into my head here, this whole thing about “nothing unclean will ever enter it.” That pretty much covers a question like, “Will there be sin in the new earth? Will there be rebellion?” No. The text is pretty clear. There are other reasons, of course, to doubt the utter implausibility of that. But there are a lot of things in this chapter like that that answer some of these nagging questions. And just give it a close reading and some of these things become apparent.

But what becomes *less* apparent is where we're going to live today, and that is, “What are the Old Testament counterparts or antecedents to this?” Now we already noted in the first five verses (really Revelation 21, verse 1 and verse 5) the description about the new heaven and new earth. The former things won't be remembered. The new earth will remain forever in contrast to the old. And so on and so forth. We already talked about how Isaiah 65 and 66 were really influential in that whole description. So I'm not going to repeat that.

I'm going to go on to the phrase “no more sea.” And I've alluded to this in a number of podcast episodes. This is sort of a favorite verse of mine because the sea is a very well-known chaos metaphor from the Old Testament. Because the sea is to be feared. It was untamable. It was unpredictable. It was hostile to life.

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Humans can't live in the sea. All these things. The Leviathan—the dragon. All these symbols and metaphors that are operative in relation to the sea come to a climax here when John says, “Well, in the new creation, the sea is no more.” And it doesn't mean an overly literalistic “well, I guess there's no salt water.” No, that's just ridiculous. I think even the most literalistic bent in interpretation (I would hope) would recognize the absurdity of that approach when it comes to this one line. But there's so much else in the content of these verses that defy a literalistic interpretation. And you miss the things that transcend this sort of out-of-the-box, literalistic approach.

So “no more sea...” I'm going to read a little bit from DBI, which is a resource I highly recommend, one of my most frequently recommended: *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. This is essential. It's just a one-volume reference work. But it's essential for Bible study, in my view. DBI has this as part of its entry on the sea:

There are two aspects to this reversal—the defeat of evil, and the triumph of the good [MH: you know, it's being described in the Apocalypse and here in Revelation]. Jeremiah 4:23–28 portrays the “un-creation” of the world that reverses the creation story of Genesis 1.

So when the sea is unleashed... The sea is sort of... At the end of Genesis 1, there's this tension about how everything is good, but it's not optimal. The whole world isn't Eden and chaos is being restrained. Well, eventually that's going to give way and we get this chaotic de-creation sort of language elsewhere in the Bible. And DBI goes on to say:

2 Peter gives us a vision of complete dissolution followed by the assertion, “But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13 RSV). Revelation 21 uses similarly imagery, drawing explicit attention to the absence of death, mourning, crying and pain [MH: those things are no more, because], “for the former things have passed away” [MH: we get that line in Revelation 21:4 and back in Isaiah in the Old Testament] (Rev 21:4; cf. Is 33:24; 65:20) [MH: and everything is made new]. In the new universe there will be no more sea (Rev 21:1), a reference to the final triumph over evil and chaos, which is often pictured in the Bible as a sea monster: the dragon (Job 7:12; Ps 74:13), Leviathan (Job 40:15–24; Ps 74:13–14; 104:26; Is 27:1), Rahab (Job 9:13; Ps 89:10; Is 51:9–11) and the serpent (Job 26:13; Is 27:1).

So the line that there's no more sea... A Jewish reader... Someone acquainted with the Old Testament, whether they were Jew or Gentile, whether they're reading Hebrew or Aramaic or the Septuagint, they're going to know what the sea means (what the sea is) in Old Testament thought. And when John says the sea is no more, they understand that completely. Again, in this place (the new restored global Eden) and everything else that has preceded, the fallenness of it all has passed away. “No more sea” means there's no more chaos. There's no

more enemy. There's no more sin. There's no more death, suffering, all these things. It's over. It's over. So with one line, just a few words, and of course focused on the sea, the Old Testament context makes it crystal clear what John is suggesting here.

So here we have in Isaiah a reference to the city, the new Jerusalem, as "the holy city." I mean, think about that. We're reading in Isaiah... As we saw in the previous episode, a lot of the language about temple consciousness... there were two sides of that coin. Jerusalem and the temple were going to get destroyed because of idolatry and they're going to be replaced. Okay? Well, a lot of that was from Isaiah, really Isaiah 40-66, and specifically 65-66. Well, here we are in Isaiah 52 and the prophet is calling Jerusalem "the holy city." Now in real time that didn't make much sense because Jerusalem's going to be judged. But nevertheless, it hints at Israel's future, specifically Jerusalem's future. Everything is going to be restored. And we get this categorical language: "There shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. You're going to be a holy city."

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So the language here John uses comes from right out of the Old Testament. We have a reference in Isaiah 61:10 we could look at. Isaiah 62. Again, the Old Testament is John's source book. If you go through and you keep reading in Revelation 21 (once you hit verse 9, in fact—Revelation 21:9-22:5), all of that is going to be in some way related to what we talked about in the last episode—this expectation of the restoration of a temple and how that works out in fulfillment terms in a new city and a new creation. And all of that, in turn, gets a lot of its imagery from Ezekiel 40-48, which is Ezekiel's big temple vision. And one of the key verses in that (I'm just going to mention this because this is going to be a touchpoint for a lot in Revelation 21, believe it or not) is Ezekiel 43:7. So this is in the section of Ezekiel, the famous temple vision. And in the middle of that we've got sort of an obscure verse. So I wanted to mention Ezekiel 43:7 because this is the part of the big temple vision where the glory of the Lord comes back. So there's this big reversal theme going on. So I'm just going to start at the very first verse and we'll hit verse 7, because that actually pops up in a number of places in Revelation 21.

Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east.

So the prophet is led by this man in linen—this guide.

² And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. ³ And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. ⁴ As the glory of

the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵ the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

⁶ While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, ⁷ and he said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places,

Now I bring this up because if you look at that verse, it's part of the temple vision of Ezekiel. Yes, we talked about this last time—the expectation of a new temple. But this verse that's talking about a temple is going to get cited in Revelation 21-22 a few times (not in relationship to a temple, because there is no temple, according to Revelation 21-22). It's going to get cited in relationship to the new city and the new creation. And if you look at the content, God says to Ezekiel, “*This* is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet.” Now that's language... The throne—remember the ark of the covenant (the cherubim throne) at one point is also called the footstool of the Lord... We expect that to be in a temple. But in Revelation it's not. It's the city itself. There is no temple. The Lord is the temple. Christ is the temple. So this verse takes a temple expectation, and the way John uses it is not of a temple but of a city, and again, really of Zion, just generally, and a new earth. So this is going to come up in a number of places and I just want to fix it in your head as we go through here. Ezekiel 43:7 gets fulfilled in Revelation 21. And the fulfillment is not a new temple. The fulfillment is a new city and a new earth.

Now Beale and McDonough, in the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old* (and they did the Revelation portion), write this in response to this little section of Revelation 21:

In the light of the following references to the Ezek. 40–48 temple (cf. 21:9–22:5) [MH: this is when we get all of that jewelry, the gemstone imagery, this temple imagery], the promise in Ezek. 43:7 is echoed and fulfilled in 21:3: the end-time temple would be “where” God “will dwell [MH: the Greek term is *kataskēnōsei*] among the sons of Israel forever.” [MH: that is also a citation of] Leviticus 26:11–12 and Ezek. 37:26–28...

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Why is that important? Because if we went back and read Leviticus 26:11-12, this is a statement uttered to Israelites about dwelling in the land of Israel and the land of Canaan. But in Revelation, it's not just uttered to Israelites. It's uttered to all those who have overcome. This is after the second coming. This is after the

Day of the Lord. This is after the Great White Throne judgment. I mean, every believer (Jew or Gentile) is going to be in the place where the Lord dwells. So we have again this circumcision-neutral body (one people of God) that all of this applies to. And God says, “I’m going to dwell with them and they’re going to be my people.”

So we have this promise given to Old Testament Israel transferred over to every believer in the book of Revelation. It’s explicit. It’s very clear. So we don’t want to lose sight of that. The term here is interesting, though (*kataskēnōsei*). There’s a verbal root form here (*skēnoō*), which means... It sounds like “skin,” but it means to tabernacle or to dwell, the idea of tabernacling among men—tabernacling among people. Now we can see that clearly from the tabernacle because God was present with the ark of the covenant and it would be transported. You had the pillar of the cloud, the pillar of fire. We have all this Old Testament imagery that telegraphs the fact that God was with Israel. He’s with the camp. He’s leading them to the Promised Land. Again, this is all familiar stuff. But the notion of tabernacling with people is a very Old Testament, Israelite-ish, time-of-Moses sort of statement. You know where else we see this? Not only just in Revelation 21. But we see this language in John 1 where it says, “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” In Greek it’s this verb. “The word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (*skēnoō*). Again—to tabernacle. It’s a way of telegraphing the body of Christ is the dwelling place of God. We see that in the incarnation with Jesus and we also see it with the Church, because the Church *is* the body of Christ. And here we go again getting the same language in Revelation 21. It’s inescapable, is what I’m trying to telegraph here. It’s just... This is how the text wants us to think about these Old Testament promises, and one people of God.

You go to Revelation 21:4 and again, we’re just going to pick our way through the chapters here and just take notice of this or that thing that’s kind of interesting in light of its Old Testament context. But if we go to Revelation 21:4:

⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

That line is also a specific fulfillment of prophecy from Isaiah 25:8, which says, “The Lord GOD has taken away every tear from every face.” It was also echoed earlier in Revelation 7 about those who are... Revelation 7 is one of the passages about the 144,000. And we talked about, “Are these just Jews? Are they Jewish Christians? Is it every Christian?” You could argue a number of different ways. But you can’t *exclude* (if we look at it that way) certain believers from this picture. So here again we have language from Revelation 7 brought back into Revelation 21 about taking away every tear from every face. And it’s a fulfillment of a prophecy given in Isaiah to Israelites, but here it’s given to everybody—every believer. Isaiah 35:10 and Isaiah 51:11 predict “pain and grief

and groaning” will have “fled away,” at this time of the new earth, the future creation, the re-creation. Again, there’s a whole list of promises.

Here’s the point given in the Old Testament to Israelites (because that’s the focus of the picture in the Old Testament: those in covenant with God through Abraham, and the Mosaic law)... They’re Israelites. Okay? But the way these promises work out are not just to the Jew only. They are to all believers in the book of Revelation. Everything comes full circle.

25:00 You keep reading in the book of Revelation, you hit this list of gems, which is kind of long and tedious. But the temple description starts in verse 9 in Revelation 21. We have the angel who had the seven bowls, and he says, “Come, I’ll show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” Let’s just hit that one first. “The Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” Again, that’s an interesting phrase. It has an Old Testament context. Even the description that follows it in verse 10:

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

This notion of portraying the new city—the new Jerusalem—on a very high mountain. Did you catch that? Why are mountains significant? I mean, Mount Zion isn’t that high. If you’ve ever been to Israel, you know this. I mean, it’s certainly higher than Megiddo, which doesn’t have a mountain. You know, we argued that when we talked about Armageddon, that this is not about Megiddo. It’s about Jerusalem, and at least you get Mount Zion there. But it’s not very high. Why the language? Because it’s the cosmic mountain. It’s the place where God dwells. He’s just told you earlier in the chapter (Revelation 21). “I’m going to tabernacle with them. They’re going to be my people. I’m their God; they’re my people.” Wherever God is, this is his home, his throne. And John is using this great high mountain language to remind us of the theology that’s packed into mountains, the theology that’s packed into the cosmic mountain of the Old Testament. The first cosmic mountain was what? Eden.

You say, “Well, Eden’s just a garden.” No, it’s also called a mountain in Ezekiel 28. Again, this is well-worn territory for those of you who have read *Unseen Realm*. But it’s Eden. That should be no surprise because the new Jerusalem—the new creation—is going to be described in Edenic terms. This is all intention on John’s part. He wants us to be thinking in light of Old Testament theology about these things. He’s well beyond literal geography. He’s well beyond a building project. He’s doing Old Testament theology to telegraph important messages—namely that in the end, every way that humanity is cursed and has cursed itself and has been cursed by supernatural powers on the outside is going to be reversed. There is no estrangement from God. There is no divided family of God. There are no Jews and Gentiles. There’s one people of God. This is what God wants. It’s the way things were in Eden to begin with, and that’s the way it’s

going to wind up. That's the way it's going to end. There's no more fragmentation. There's no depravity.

So all these other rebellions (we've got Genesis 3, Genesis 6, and then the Babel episode) are all reversed. And the way you telegraph a complete reversal is to go back to the original cosmic mountain—the original Eden—and start talking about it in those terms. And this is what John's doing as he goes into this description. Again, if you're aware of the Old Testament images and what they mean, these things are just going to jump out at you. Now Beale and McDonough write this of verses 9-10:

In 21:10 is a combination of Ezek. 43:5 LXX (“And the Spirit took me up”) and 40:1–2 LXX (“the hand of the LORD was upon me and brought me ... and set me on a very high mountain)...

Ezekiel 40:1-2 is what? It's the beginning of the temple section of Ezekiel. But when you get to Revelation 21, is he talking about a temple? *No*. He's talking about a city and a new creation. And that's okay because all those things are where God tabernacles—where God lives. And where God lives is the cosmic mountain. Everything comes full circle. Everything is tightly related to everything else. It's just we can't see it because we're not used to Old Testament thinking mode when it comes to these metaphors. We miss what's being telegraphed if we don't know that. So Beale and McDonough say it comes from these two passages.

This combination indicates beyond doubt that the following vision in Rev. 21:10–22:5 is to be identified with the prophetic culmination of the blissful vision of the future temple in Ezek. 40–48, which was located “on a very high mountain.”

30:00 Again, the language is the same. When John is writing Revelation 21:9-10, which doesn't include a temple [laughs], he wants you to think about Ezekiel 40-48, which is about a temple. You say, “How in the world does this work?” It works if you think of the cosmic mountain instead of a literal building project. Then it works. Then you can understand it. Back to Beale and McDonough, they say:

The angel transports John to a “great and high mountain,” where also the new city-temple is likely located, since OT prophecy [MH: in other passages] understood the coming Jerusalem to be situated on a high mountain (Isa. 2:2–3; 4:1–5; 25:6–26:2; Mic. 4:1–2; cf. Ps. 48:2; *Jub.* 4:26).

When you get into the description, the gemstones... This is verses 11-21 of Revelation 21. Again, this ought to be familiar to those of you who have read *Unseen Realm*. But the gemstones here that are used to describe the new city (the Edenic creation, the Edenic new city here)—all those gemstones are present in Ezekiel 28, where they do *not* refer to gems on the high priest's ephod. I mean,

practically everybody says that, but if you compare the list of Ezekiel 28 (which I do in *Unseen Realm*) with the list of the high priest's garment, guess what? The lists do not match. There's a better match. Rather the stones are ways of describing the splendor of the *place* (not a person, the high priest) in view, which is God's cosmic abode. It has nothing to do with a specific man. So I'm going to read a little bit from *Unseen Realm*, where we got into this a little bit, just so that you get the flavor for where I'm going here. I wrote:

All the stones in Ezek 28:13 except one are used elsewhere to describe the supernatural Jerusalem (Rev 21), which is obviously the divine abode and throne room. This is entirely consistent with the portrayal of divinity in terms of luminescence [MH: things that shine]. The lone exception is the Septuagint's *anthrax* [MH: which is the Greek rendering for the term *tarshish* (תַּרְשִׁישִׁי) in Ezekiel 28:13]. That word [MH: *anthrax*] is used elsewhere in Ezekiel to describe the divine throne (Ezek 10:9) as well as in Isaiah to describe the new Jerusalem (Isa 54:11). Readers who check the Greek closely may presume a point of incongruence with one other item in the Septuagint rendering of Ezek 28:13—*onuchion* (for Hebrew [MH: *bareqat*] בְּרִיקָת) is not found in Rev 21. The supposed discrepancy is a misperception. The word *onuchion* is “a kind of *onyx* [MH: which is a gem; we get that from Liddell Scott in his lexicon, a very well-known Greek lexicon]... Instead of *onuchion* [MH: in Revelation 21] we see *sardonux* in Rev 21:19. Both terms describe [MH: the same gem in the ancient world] the gem onyx...

What I'm trying to say here is that the list in Revelation 21 of the gems is entirely consistent (not partly, but *entirely* consistent) with the description in Ezekiel 28, where what is being described is not a person (the high priest); it's a place. And the place is Eden. Remember, Ezekiel 28's the chapter that describes Eden as the garden of God and the mountain of God. It's describing Eden. So we would, of course, expect John to talk about the new Jerusalem and the new earth in Edenic terms. He knows what he's doing. It fits. It's coherent. It's congruent. Unfortunately, you just don't hear it that much because everybody's stuck on the high priest in Ezekiel 28. And he's not the point. Now Beale in his Revelation commentary has this to say about this section:

OT prophecy asserted that the end-time city of God and its temple would be set on a high mountain [MH: so he gives a few passages] (Isa. 2:2–3; 4:1–5; 25:6–26:2; Mic. 4:1–2; cf. Ps. 48:2; *Jub.* 4:26; cf. Isa. 40:9... [MH: and specifically with Enoch, I found this one interesting] *1 En.* 24–25 asserts that the “high mountain,” which “excelled” all others, is God's latter-day “throne,” [MH: so Enoch's tracking on the same thing, too] on which a tree with “fruit ... for food to the elect” grows [MH: we're getting into the “garden” description now of Eden]. Both tree and throne are located in the temple. [MH: and if you go back and listen to these

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passages and if you look at Revelation 21] Ezek. 28:14, 16 says that the first “garden” of “Eden” was also on a “mountain” that contained precious stones...

So it isn't just Mike saying this. Other scholars have noticed this very transparently.

That “the city, the holy Jerusalem” is described as “having the glory of God” and “her luminary like a precious stone, as a jasper stone shining like crystal” continues the allusion to Ezekiel 43. There also the prophet says that he saw “the glory of God” coming into the new temple, “and the earth shone like radiant light from the glory round about”...

All of this imagery is repetitive. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Revelation (21). It's all using this gemstone, this luminous description of the same place, wherever God is. And in Ezekiel's reference it's Eden. And of course, it's going to be the same reference for John. The new city and the new earth get described in Edenic terms.

What about the walls? That's the other thing that sort of sticks out with the description of the new city. So you have the gemstones that point back to Eden. Keener, in his commentary, I think has some interesting things here to say about the walls. He says:

Some Jewish traditions spoke of twelve gates of heaven (1 En. 33–36, 72–82) [MH: so Enoch is full of this kind of language that we get in the book of Revelation]; the gates here in Revelation represent the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Ezek. 48:31–34).

So again, we have another element of the big famous temple prophecy. But here in Revelation, they're not used of a temple. They're used to describe a city.

John's new Jerusalem resembles some other Jews' vision of the new temple (Qumran's Temple Scroll commemorates the twelve tribes' names on twelve gates of the temple), except that earlier in his book he incorporated all believers in Jesus into the heritage of these tribes (Rev. 7:4–9)... In biblical tradition twelve stones pointed to the twelve tribes (Josh. 4:3–9); in the high priest's breastplate in Exodus 28:17–21 they are specifically inscribed with the names of the tribes. Here [MH: there's another connection, but also a disconnection], however, the foundation stones refer to the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Again, you see how easily something assigned to Israel—something assigned to the tribes—gets applied to the apostles. This relationship between Israel and the Church comes out again.

Here, however, the foundation stones refer to the twelve apostles of the Lamb, in keeping with the Christian image of the new temple's true foundations (Eph. 2:20; Heb. 11:10; 1 Peter 2:5). Although Jesus is our ultimate foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), early Christian tradition already emphasized that the church was built on the foundation of apostles and prophets who revealed Jesus' message.

So again, we get the same kind of beginning with Israel and winding up with the Church (the circumcision-neutral one people of God) as we did before. How about the shape and the dimensions? Because there are some really spectacular... I don't know what the best way to describe these things would be, other than sort of defying literalism. We'll get into a little bit here why. But as far as the shape and descriptions, Keener has some interesting thoughts there, too. So I'm going to read what he says in his commentary.

The measuring rod (21:15) is an important stage device that allows John to recognize the supernatural enormity of the city (21:16). It recalls the measuring of Jerusalem (Zech. 2:1–2) or the temple (Ezek. 40–41) in the Hebrew Bible and reminds John's oppressed audience that the persecuted remnant whose measuring began in Revelation 11:1–2 is the prototype for the glorious future city. Ezekiel's new Jerusalem was 18,000 cubits all around; John's is nearly two thousand times larger.

Did you catch that? The temple that Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 40-48 is 18,000 cubits all around. The one that you get here in the book of Revelation is two thousand times that size.

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The symbolic numbers portray this city as the dwelling of God's people [MH: look at the numbers]: 12,000 (stadia) and 144 (cubits; 21:16–17) both recall the number of God's servants [MH: earlier in the book] (7:4–8)...

You know, the 144,000. 12,000 x 12,000. You know, just do the math. The numbers are being reused to speak what? To speak of a literal building? No, it's to speak of the people of God. Because the temple... There is no temple. The temple is the body of Christ. And the body of Christ is believers. Again, all of these ideas come together. They converge. Keener writes:

The square shape of the city (21:16) fits some ancient building plans. Walls in Syria-Palestine were generally irregular because of "the uneven topography," in contrast to more level land in Egypt and Babylonia; the new Jerusalem differs in this way from the old Jerusalem...

But while this background plays an important part, the new Jerusalem is not merely square; it is cubic, despite the utter incongruity with all human imagination of a city 1,500 miles high!

Okay, what's being described in the book of Revelation would be a city that's 1,500 miles high. This defies literalism, to be blunt about it.

Thus, most of all the shape recalls the Most Holy Place (1 Kings 6:20)...

If you actually look at the cubic size and the way it's referred to, the city gets referred to as "temple," well, guess what you have in proportion—in ratio proportion? You have the Most Holy Place of the old temple.

[N]ot only will God live with his people in Jerusalem (Rev. 21:3), not only will the entire city be like a temple, but it will be like the Most Holy Place [MH: in its shape].

That's not an accident; it's deliberate.

It is thus not surprising that the city does not need a temple other than the Lord himself (21:22). Believers will experience God's presence in its full intensity, as never before! If the church is a temple already (Eph. 2:18–22 [MH: says that]), our future experience is like the holiest part of the temple, inviting continual worship and enjoyment of God's presence...

The dimensions of the city are supernatural (21:15–16), contrasting starkly with the pretensions of the doomed "great city," Babylon [MH: earlier in the book] (18:10, 16, 18–21). Technically, a wall seventy-two yards (sixty-five meters) high or even thick (21:16) would prove utterly inadequate to protect a city 1,500 miles high (21:16)...

Now did you catch that? Here's an element that very clearly defies the literalism of it. So if the city is 1,500 miles high, the walls that are supposed to be protecting this city are only 65 meters high. What good are the walls? Again, if there's some literalistic purpose here, you've got, like, 1% of the place protected. [laughs] It just doesn't make any sense. Keener writes:

...but the purpose of the numbers is not literal so much as to emphasize the city's future glory and to suggest that, when history is complete, God's remnant through the ages will not prove as small as it now appears to persecuted churches of John's generation. The height is the most dramatic feature (perhaps even more for modern readers, who recognize that even at less than six miles above sea level, at the top of Mount Everest, it is already difficult to breathe)...

Again, if the point of this is a literal structure and it's going to be our home, well, most of it we can't even visit because we'll die, because we can't get oxygen. Again, it just makes no sense at all. But the numbers (going back to the temple

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dimensions), the dimensions of the Most Holy Place (going back to the people of God), those who are marked (the 144,000), all these indications through the numbers and the measurements and the gemstones and whatnot... The whole point is that this is about a place, and this place is where God has chosen to tabernacle forever. And this place where God tabernacles is where you're going to tabernacle. He will be your God; you will be his people, forever. It's as simple as that. And I say simple because it is simple if you're aware of the imagery. It's not simple if you're not because then you come up with these bizarre, "Well, maybe the new Jerusalem is like a UFO mother ship or something." You know? We invent science fiction-esque ways of reading the book of Revelation when that just is not in view at all. Again, when we're stuck with only one approach, and we have to use that approach, we produce bizarre sorts of things like that. And what I'm suggesting to you is that we shouldn't be doing that. We should be looking at how this passage and its description continually go back to Eden, this perfect paradise, trying to use the imagery of the old temple and the old Eden and the people of God and the priesthood—trying to use all these images to get you to realize that at the end we're all going to be living in God's house where he has chosen to tabernacle and be his people. And that's really the point. That's the point to be gained.

Another interesting thing here. The walls. Why does Jerusalem need a wall in the eternal era of peace anyway? And Keener writes:

Certainly the purpose is not to keep anyone out, since no one will ever close its gates ([MH: Revelation] 21:25).

Again, this literalistic thinking raises this question. And it's actually answered in that verse. Nobody's ever going to close its gates. There's no need to. It doesn't need protection. It doesn't need protection from defilement. Nothing unclean will ever go into it. Again, we read that earlier in the episode, reading through the passage.

Nor is the description of the walls perfectly literal (see comments on 144 cubits, above [21:18]). But ancient cities of substantial size always had walls, so one is needed in the description of the greatest of cities [MH: otherwise it would be perceived as something missing, is his point]. Further, if there were no walls, there would be no description of the splendid gates! Gates provided cities in Asia Minor and elsewhere the best opportunities to flaunt "imperial triumphal architecture"; without these gates, Revelation would miss an opportunity to reapply biblical symbolism in its specifically Christocentric way...

And also looping in the tribes and the apostles.

That angelic measurements are also human [MH: the verse specifically says that] (21:17) must mean normal angels, not those of extraordinary size as in 10:2. The

human measurement here explicitly recalls Ezek. 40:5, but Bauckham argues that it simultaneously offers a vivid contrast to Revelation 13:18 [MH: that's the number of the beast]: the number of a human who is a beast versus the measurements of a human that are also angelic (21:17) [MH: I kind of like that turn of phrase on Keener's part]. The beast's kingdom debases humanity to a beastly level, whereas the new Jerusalem raises it to an angelic level...

Revelation 21:22. Again, just keep going through the passage. This is the verse where, very plainly, "I saw no temple," John says. Beale and McDonough get into this, some of what we've already covered. So I don't want to cover it again. But they offer this, which is kind of interesting. So I'll just add this one little bit.

John says, "I saw no temple" in the new Jerusalem. It is not that John saw no temple at all, but only that he saw no material temple like Israel's old temple [MH: again, it defies the expectation]. The reason that he saw no material temple [MH: or no literal temple] in the city is that "the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple (or 'sanctuary' [MH: the Greek word is *naos*])." Or, more precisely, God and the Lamb have filled the entire new creation with their glorious presence, a glorious presence formerly sequestered in the holy of holies and in the heavenly temple. This is why the new Jerusalem is portrayed as a cube, since that was the shape of the holy of holies in Israel's former temple; and now God's glorious presence, formerly limited to that back room of the temple, has burst forth and filled the entire new cosmos...

50:00 I thought that was well said in that little section there. Now, again, we could go off and talk about the worldwide, encompassing nature of the temple. And there was this inordinately literalistic-defying description of a temple 1,500 miles high and all this kind of stuff. This is known elsewhere in Second Temple Jewish literature, where you get these crazy, enormous dimensions of the temple, because they wanted to compare the dwelling place of God at the end of days as filling the entire cosmos. And this is one of the ways you do it. You do it with something so inordinately large as to be physically impossible to communicate the point that God tabernacles *everywhere*. Okay? He's not picking his spots anymore. He fills everything.

So Josephus had one of these kinds of descriptions. And if you were going through either Beale's commentary or Beale and McDonough in the commentary on the use of the Old Testament in the New, you'd get the references. But Josephus has this sort of description. Josephus writes that the earth was the outer court and the sea was the inner court. He tries to map over parts of the planet to the temple—again, an inordinately large temple just to communicate this idea that the Lord fills everywhere. Philo did it, as well—that the temple was a microcosm of the universe, and all this sort of thing. I mean, this is not unknown. You will get it in books outside of Revelation. Regardless of what the

system is, the point is the same: that the Lord's presence fills everything. There is no place that you could go where he is not there. Now we know that theologically now, but at the end of days with the new earth and the new Jerusalem (if you'll pardon the expression), it's going to be more literalistically true. [laughs] I mean, you're going to witness it. You're going to be able to sense it. You're going to be able to see it with your eyes and sense it with your other senses, that there's no place you can go where the presence of God is not felt, seen, heard, and otherwise. And that's what they're trying to get at here.

Let's jump into Revelation 22 for a few minutes, as we wrap up the book. In Revelation 22:1, we read the following. I'm just going to pick a few passages here.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

That was actually the first two verses. But again, you get the idea. When we get into 22, Beale and McDonough write this:

The opening verse of chapter 22 combines the prophetic pictures of a spring or river of "living water" flowing out of latter-day Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8) and its temple (Ezek. 47:1-9) [MH: so we're back in Ezekiel 47 again].

The introductory verse of chapter 22 reaches farther back even than the OT prophecies of Ezekiel, Joel, and Zechariah to the description of the primeval garden in Gen. 2:10: "a river was going forth from Eden."

Living water going forth; a river was going forth. So he's saying, the Genesis Eden description is part of the backdrop here.

In association with the first Eden's river, the "gold... the bdellium and the onyx stone" were features around one of the river's tributaries, which compares to the precious stones surrounding the river of Rev. 22:1 [MH: we just read about those gems and others in] (cf. 21:18-21). The point is that God "will make the end like the beginning" (*Barn.* 6:13), though the consummated garden will exist on an escalated scale in comparison to the first... As in Ezek. 47, the living water flows from the temple, though now God and the Lamb are the temple (21:22). Although the Holy Spirit may be in mind, the water metaphor primarily represents the life of eternal fellowship with God and Christ, which is borne out by the way 22:3-5 develops 22:1-2 [MH: and then they make the side note that water is used in the Old Testament and in broader Judaism and the New Testament as a symbol of the

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Holy Spirit] (for water as symbolic of the Spirit in the OT, Judaism, and the NT, see Ezek. 36:25–27; John 3:5; 4:10–24; cf. 1 John 5:7–8; [MH: and then they cite a Qumran text] 1QS IV, 21.

This notion of living water takes us back to the... You know, living water was water that moved, as opposed to something stagnant, or a pond. That's what "living water" was perceived to be. It had movement, just like living things did elsewhere. They moved. It showed they were alive. So "living water" is the expression. In this instance, we need to think of it more abstractly as "the water that comes from where the source of life is." And the source of life is where God tabernacles—where he is. Because he is the source of all life. And so it goes back to Eden, gets brought into the new creation in Revelation 21-22. Again, they convey the same ideas. Everything has gone full circle back to Eden, where there will be no more want and no more famine. No more drought. No more disease. No more fill-in-the-blank. It's all going to be what Eden was meant to be.

In verses 2-3, Aune draws attention to the line about the middle of the street. The phrase "through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life," that whole jumbled... It's kind of awkward syntactically. But you get a reference to "the middle of the street," and then you get a reference to "either side of the river," and then one Tree of Life. Like what do we do with that? Well, the answer is it's best interpreted as a collective reference; that is, many trees of life (think of the *Garden* of Eden)... Okay? There are many trees that are in view because you can't have *one* tree of life on *both* sides of a river. So Aune grammatically shows other examples of how the word for tree is used as a collective to denote a forest or more than one tree. We're not going to worry about that level of detail. But just so that you're aware, this is how these few verses need to be approached so that they make sense. Now Aune writes this. Ultimately...

This is an allusion to Ezek 47:12 [MH: and here we go back to Ezekiel 47 again] (continued in vv 2b and 2c)...

So Ezekiel 47:12 is a source text...

...which the author has subtly modified by changing "all kinds of trees" [MH: that's what you'd read in the Septuagint] on both sides of the river flowing from the sanctuary mentioned in Ezek 47:7, 12 to the collective term *xulov zōēs*, [MH: which is Tree of Life, but could also be translated trees of life] "tree(s) of life." The term *xulov*, "tree," is a collective referring to numerous trees found along both banks of the river.

And again, he has his own grocery list of where this occurs elsewhere. What about the fruit? So we've got more than just one tree of life. We've got an abundant garden. And think of the Garden of Eden, back at Ezekiel 31—the thing

with the trees in the Garden of Eden, as well. That could be part of this whole complex of ideas. The twelve kinds of fruit are considered “an allusion to the trees of Ezekiel 47:12...” Let me just go back and read 47:12, just so we don’t lose that. So Ezekiel 47:12 says:

12 And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

Which, of course, is a line that’s going to come up in Revelation as well. So this is Ezekiel 47. It’s this eschatological—this end times vision—of the restoration back in the land, so on and so forth. So it’s an Edenic vision. And we get this reference to all these different kinds of trees for food, and they bear fruit every month. Well, that’s where the number 12 comes in. So in Ezekiel 47:12, we don’t have 12 kinds of fruit, but we do have fruit every month. And of course, there’s 12 months. There the trees miraculously bear 12 different kinds of fruit, one each month, while, again, you get the counterpart with Revelation 21. Again, it’s the same idea just expressed in a different way.

Ezekiel 47:12 mentions the “healing of the nations.” And Keener notes:

To Ezekiel’s “healing” Revelation adds, “of the nations”...

So Ezekiel 47:12 just mentions “healing.” And John interprets that “of the nations.” Let me go back and just read that to you again. Just look what John does with this.

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12 And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. (Ezekiel 47:12)

Okay? And at the end:

Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.

This is Ezekiel. He’s writing to the *captives of Judah*. Okay? It’s Israel-centered. It’s Jew-centered, if you will. But when John uses it in Revelation 21, guess what? It’s not. John cites it and adds the phrase “the nations”—“the healing of the nations.” Again, he’s just taken another Jewish prophecy and applied it to the whole Church. He’s applied it to believers everywhere. Again, *one* people of God, one source of life, one place where the Lord’s going to tabernacle. Again, all of these ideas are just coming through once again in this little section.

This is kind of interesting, for the *Unseen Realm* audience here. It's hard not to see Isaiah 66:18-23 in this passage. Remember, in Isaiah, that's where the nations are judged. We have the Day of the Lord; the nations get judged and, of course, their gods with them. We have the destruction of the gods. The Psalm 82 judgment is finally fulfilled. And the nations are judged. But we also have in Isaiah 66 people from the nations who worship the Lord at Jerusalem. We have Gentiles being grafted in even to the priesthood. You get both views. You get both sides of it. You get the judgment and the blessing, Day of the Lord, and then the grafting in. And it's real interesting. Aune makes this comment. He says:

The "healing of the nations" is further explained by 22:3. First, "there will no longer be any curse." The phrase is taken from Zech. 14:11 and applied to the eternal new order in which it finds its final attainment. Although for "curse," the LXX of Zechariah has *anathema* and Revelation has *katathema*, both are legitimate renderings [MH: in the Septuagint] of the Hebrew *herem*.

Okay, this is the big conquest verb of killing, you know, the giant clans and all that—the *herem*—to put things under the ban. So by virtue of this one word... You go back to Revelation 22:3. Aune picks up on this one word and he says, if you read it, "No longer will there be anything *accursed*." See, in this new Eden, in the new city of Jerusalem, in the new Eden, the new earth, there is no longer anything accursed. And the vocabulary that John picks is one of the terms that is often used to translate *herem* in the Old Testament. The *herem* is over. Okay? Everything that could be put to the ban has been put to the ban. There is no more defilement. It's just that one word ("there is no more *herem*") is a great way to telegraph the idea of a complete, irreversible ending of chaos. Right there. Just that one term. So again, if you're familiar with the *Unseen Realm* content and how important that term is, I thought I would throw that in. It's just... There it is. There it is. And it's right where you'd expect it to be: with the new Eden. Because before the Fall there was no *herem*. There was no chaos to be reversed. There was nothing to be put under the ban.

Now in verse 8... One more note here. John attempts to worship the interpreting angel at the end. So if we go down to verse 8 here.

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

So his attempt to worship the interpreting angel gets rejected. And the same thing happens in Revelation 19:10. We didn't comment on it there, but... I'm

going to read you something Beale has here. He has it at Revelation 19:10, but then he refers here to this verse. He writes:

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The theme of angels refusing worship to highlight the divine source of visions and to tone down the role of mediating angels is found in other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature (see esp. *Asc. Isa.* 7:21; 8:5; *Tob.* 12:16–22; *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 6:11–15; *Gospel of pseudo-Matthew* 3; *Cairo Genizah Hekhlot A/2*, 13–18). The angel commands John not to worship him but to “worship God”; ὄρα μὴ is best rendered literally as “see not,” and is roughly equivalent with our colloquial “Don’t!”

Just the word: “Don’t!”

Another reason for the prohibition is that the angel is but a mere “fellow servant” of John and “of your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus” (for this phrase see on 6:9; 12:17; 19:7–8). This does not mean that the speaker is a glorified believer but that, though an angel, he is also a servant to God like John and his comrades in proclaiming “the testimony of Jesus” (cf. 22:8–9 for clarification). Angels proclaim from heaven and believers from earth [MH: there’s the symbiotic relationship again—heaven and earth]... Perhaps John mistook the angel for the divine figure from heaven in 1:13ff. and 10:1ff., who is worthy of worship. Whatever his motive, the prohibition stands as a warning to Christians, not merely against worship of angels in particular, but against idolatry of any form in general, which was a problem among some in John’s readership [MH: at least according to his comments in] (e.g., see on 2:14–15, 20–21; 9:20). But it is unlikely that this is primarily a polemic against a cult of angel worship existing among some Christian communities in Asia Minor.

Now there are going to be scholars who disagree with Beale there. Because there is good evidence, particularly at Colossae, that this was a problem. But what do we do with this? Well, I think it makes sense that the angel rejects worship because we don’t do that. Only God is worthy of worship. And so I think the idea of a polemic against worshiping angels is likely in view, just generally, because of idolatry. And again, I’m going to say, I think a situation like Colossae could motivate it as well. But the issue for us is a little confusing because we’ve seen a couple of times earlier in the book (in chapter 1 and, more recently, in Revelation 14:14-20 and Revelation 10:1)... We’ve seen that Christ is cast as an angel in a couple of verses. This is what’s known academically... And you can refer to the episodes that we did that cover Revelation 10 and Revelation 14. This is known in academic circles as angelomorphic Christology: the idea that God sometimes takes the form of a man or an angel, like the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament. Again, when you put it that way, it’s very familiar. But this is a whole category of how Christ can be portrayed. It doesn’t mean that Christ is an angel. It means that one particular angel in this or that scene just so happens to

be God in human form from heaven and so it gets interpreted as an angel. So since that's true, we have to ask ourselves, "Well, why does he say, 'Don't worship me. Worship God'?" Because in the very next verse... Or I should say it's very closely following. It seems like this *is* Jesus. You get down to verse 12:

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Now that sounds like Jesus. Alpha and Omega. He says, "Worship God." And who else could take the label "Alpha and Omega" but Christ? But then he has this refusal of worship. So, like, what's going on here? Now I would suggest (just my little take here) I think there's an easy path. But I'll give you the little more difficult (or clunkier) path first.

So in Revelation 22:13, you could read it to say that the angel identifies himself as the Alpha and Omega. You could read the passage that way. And in that case, then we're talking about Jesus. And you'd have to ask yourself, "Well, why refuse the worship?" I would say it could be akin to Jesus' own elevation of the Father in the Gospels. For instance, he gets into a discussion with certain people who call him "good," and he says, "Well, don't call me good. Call God good. Only God is good." Like, he wants to elevate God juxtaposed with himself (only God deserves this kind of language, so on and so forth) to teach the people that he is a servant of the Father. So it could be something like that. Again, the idea wouldn't be a denial of his deity or some affirmation that he was born sinful or something like that. Rather, the idea would be to keep the focus of worship and adoration on the Father. That was part of Jesus' mission.

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But I think there's an easier path here. I think the simplest solution is to assume Christ is the referent of verse 13 (the Alpha and Omega) and that there is an accompanying angel also in the scene or in the vision. That is, verse 8 points to an angelic interpreter and Jesus is also present via earlier portions of the book. Because this is actually just one part of a grand scene. These scenes tend to flow over multiple chapters, and so it's easy to sort of lose the characters. So I think it is quite plausible that we'd have an interpreting angel here *and* Jesus in the same scene, but that only comes out here in verses 8 and 13. And if that's the case, then it's okay for the angel—the angelic interpreter—to say, "Don't worship me; worship God," and Jesus is right there and refers to himself as the Alpha and the Omega. There's no problem. So I think you'd have two figures there instead of just John and one other figure. I think you have John with two. And I think verse 16 supports that. If you read verse 16:

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

So I think that suggests we've got two rather than one. And as far as the morning star (our last note here), I'm going to direct our listeners' attention to *Unseen Realm*. This is a messianic title. It's messianic by its very nature. So in *Unseen Realm*, specifically in pages 312 and 313, I get into this real briefly.

The morning star language in Revelation 2:28 is messianic—it refers to a divine being who would come from Judah. We know this by considering two other passages...

In Numbers 24:17, we read the prophecy that “a star will go out from Jacob, and a scepter will rise from Israel.” Numbers 24:17 was considered messianic in Judaism, completely apart from the New Testament writers. In other words, literate readers of John's writing would have known the morning star reference was not about literal brightness [MH: or something twinkling in the sky].

By the way, Matthew never quotes Numbers 24:17 about the star of Bethlehem, either. So that wasn't what the Numbers passage was about. Rather, it's about royalty. It's about the messiah. It is about a descendant from Judah who will rise up and be divine. Because this is how stars get thought of. Stars were a metaphor for divine beings—divine personages. And in this case, you have a divine ruler. So I wrote in *Unseen Realm*:

The wording of Revelation 2 is especially powerful when read against this backdrop. Not only does Jesus say that he is the messianic morning star in Revelation 22:16, but [MH: earlier in the book] when he says “I will give him [who overcomes] the morning star” (Rev 2:28), he grants us the authority to rule with him [MH: as though we had the morning star].

And we do, because he gives it to us. He gives us that role—that status. So it's really about a status. At the end of the book, we have this wording about “adding to” or “taking away.” This will be the last thing that I mention here. And people often ask about this. And they want to say, “Well, this is why we should only use the King James Version in the book of Revelation. Because those other versions add words or take words out.” That has nothing to do with what's going on here. It's not a statement about the transmission of the Greek New Testament, 1600 years before it ever happened. It has nothing to do with text versions and whatnot. Rather, Beale and McDonough note this:

What is the meaning of “adding to” and “taking away from” the revelatory words? The answer must be sought [MH: believe it or not] in Deuteronomy. In Deut. 4:1–2; 12:32 [MH: and I would also just throw in here Deuteronomy 29:19-20] the language serves as a twofold warning against deceptive teaching that affirmed that idolatry was not inconsistent with faith in the God of Israel...

That was an error. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 reads this [in the Septuagint]:

And now, Israel, hear the ordinances and the judgments that I am teaching you to do today in order that you may live and become numerous and, after entering, take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ² Do not add to the word that I am commanding you and do not subtract from it. Keep the commands of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today.

1:15:00

And then later on in Deuteronomy 29, it's part of that "blessing and cursing" thing that is about the covenant. It talks about your name being wiped from the Lord's sight under heaven. But it's linked to this notion of "don't add or subtract." So what Beale and McDonough are going to suggest is we might want to think about this in terms of Deuteronomy. Because Deuteronomy uses this language. If you go back and you read Deuteronomy 4:1-2, like we just did, you would notice in the very next verse (Deuteronomy 4:3), it's an allusion to the Baal-Peor episode of Numbers 25:1–9, 14–18. *1 Enoch* quotes it the same way.

Those who deceive in this way [MH: in the way of Baal-Peor] are false prophets... Such false teaching amounts to "adding to" God's law; furthermore, it is tantamount to "taking away from" God's law, since it violates the positive laws against idolatry...

Now Beale points out the analogy of *1 Enoch*. (We just mentioned that *Enoch* deals with this, too.) And Beale cites *1 Enoch* 104:11, where there's a warning not "to change or take away from my words." And it means that the reader should not lie, they should not "take account of idols," they should not "alter and pervert the words of righteousness," or "practice great deceits."

So Beale's point in bringing up the *Enoch* passage—the *Enoch* parallel here—is when we get to the end of the book of Revelation, it's not about textual criticism. It's not about favoring one Greek manuscript tradition over another. Adding to and taking away from God's words are to lie. They are to reject and distort what the text says. And you can either do that by putting something in there that shouldn't be in there or taking something out that should be there. And the effect of doing that generally is false teaching, and specifically in Deuteronomy it's related to the sin of what happened at Baal-Peor with Balaam and how he got Israel to sin. So it's actually much clearer. It's much more specific, having to do with false teaching in general, as opposed to "which New Testament text should we use? Should we use the King James or something else?" That has nothing to do with it. It's really about obedience to the text as we have it—not inserting anything in there to get out of obedience, and not taking anything away to excuse ourselves from our own sin—our own idolatry.

So that is Revelation 21-22. These are the Old Testament contexts. As always, we could've thrown more in there and done three or four parts of this. But I hope, now that we're at the end of this series, that you draw the same conclusion that I wanted you to draw at the beginning. And that is, there is really no New Testament book that has as much Old Testament in it as the book of Revelation. And of course, the mystery is (as we said in the very first episode of this series—you can go back and listen to it)... The oddity is that John almost never quotes the Old Testament word for word. What he does is he alludes to things in the Old Testament over and over and over again. He'll do it in cycles. He'll take three or four verses and cram them together and amalgamate them—sort of merge them with each other to make some particular point of teaching or to explain part of the vision that he saw. He will use the Old Testament almost in every line. He'll allude to something in the Old Testament or he'll combine a couple of things that he gets from the Old Testament. He assumes that you know it so well that you'll be able to pick up what's he's putting down. So he is the antidote really... He is the exact reverse of the impulse we see in churches today about getting away from the Old Testament or minimizing its value.

I would suggest that if you're not steeped in the Old Testament, you don't have a prayer of understanding anything in the book of Revelation. Period. So if you're in that kind of church context, in that church situation, I pity you. If you're following somebody who teaches that, I pity you as well. Because when it comes to the book of Revelation, it's inescapable. It's everywhere. And news flash: Revelation's not unique. *All* the New Testament books get into the Old Testament. None of them are quite as heavy or sort of omnipresent. You know, the Old Testament is ubiquitous in Revelation. But a lot of them have a lot to say in regard to the Old Testament. It was the Bible that Jesus had. It was the Bible the early Church had before there were any of these letters and Gospels written. What's the Word of God to Paul before he pens a letter? It's the Old Testament! Okay?

1:20:00

So this is how... We need to work this back into our consciousness, that the things we read in the New Testament have precedent. And that precedent is going to largely come from the Hebrew Bible—the Old Testament.

TS: Good series. Don't forget, we're still taking... You've got a couple of weeks to get your questions to me at TreyStricklin@gmail.com for our Revelation Q&A. And we'll tackle as many as we can. Great series, Mike. Can't believe it's over. It's here. We appreciate all the hard work to get here. So I guess...

MH: You know, it was a lot of work, but you know, I learned a lot, going through it, forcing myself to go through every chapter with an eye toward these things. So it was... You might want to edit this out, but it was well worth it for Mike to go through Revelation. [laughs]

TS: Well, it's good. And for us, too. I mean, we all benefited. It was a good series. We appreciate everybody that voted for it. And we've got some new series hopefully in the beginning of the year.

MH: Oh, yeah. We have plans. We have plans for opening 2022. Just trust us; we do. [laughs]

TS: Absolutely. There you go, Mike. Alright, well, hey, congratulations on ending Revelation. And it was great. It was a good ride. We appreciate it. And I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.