

Jerusalem, in the history of the world, is by far the most important site on earth. In 1 Kings 14:21 the Chronicler refers to Jerusalem as “the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there.” It was the royal city; the capital of the only kingdom God has established on earth. It is the city where the temple was erected and where sacrifices were legitimately offered. It is the place where the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus occurred. It is here that the Church was born when the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:12). Much more can be said about the city of Jerusalem, but what we have mentioned is sufficient to prove the importance of this earthly city.

Though the city of Jerusalem played a significant role in God’s redemptive plan, it is depicted in Scriptures as the place of greatest resistance to the Jehovah. To be more precise, when the Bible speaks of the city of Jerusalem in its opposition to the LORD, it is referring specifically to its religious and political leaders. David was the only king of which it can be said that he was a man after God’s own heart. With the death of King David’s son, Solomon, the glory of Jerusalem, began to dim. Centuries later, Jesus poured out His heart for the city: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it” (Lk. 13:34; 19:41-42). Hence the need for New Jerusalem.

The name *New Jerusalem*, is found twice in the Bible, Revelation 3:12 and Revelation 21:2. In both references the New Jerusalem is described as “coming down out of heaven from God.” In Revelation 21:2 it is also called the “holy city” and in Revelation 21:10, “the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.” Revelation 21:11-21 describes the city in its outer glory, a wedding dress fit for a bride (see Rev. 21:2).

In Revelation 3:12, the glorified Christ promised that He would “write the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem” upon the one who perseveres through tribulation. This signifies that God’s presence will dwell permanently in the New Jerusalem (see also Ezek. 48:35; Matt. 28:19; Heb. 13:5). That is why John the Revelator says that “the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev. 22:23). This city is the “Jerusalem above” whose inhabitants were “born from above” (Gal. 4:26; Jn. 3:3). This is the city whose inhabitants have been set free from sin by the Lamb of God, to serve the true and living God. It is the “sweet and blessed country, the home of God’s elect.” May this glorious city be our eternal home when we depart from this present world.

HYMN: JERUSALEM THE GOLDEN (Bernard of Cluny, 12th Century, translated by J. M. Neale)

Jerusalem: The City of the Living God

By Pastor Francis Williams

From Helen Salem Rizk, *Stories of the Christian Hymns*

J. M. Neale translated "Jerusalem the Golden" from a poem by Bernard of Cluny, a 12th century mystic. Seven hundred years separated the writing of the poem and its translation, but the truth and beauty are not altered by the passing of the years. The original poem, written in 1145, was 2,996 lines long, a bitter satire on the corruption and degeneration of his age in comparison to the glories of heaven which were to come. Neale, in his translation, shortened (and many critics say improved) the original to achieve the hymn in its present form.

Jerusalem the golden,
with milk and honey blest,
beneath thy contemplation
sink heart and voice oppressed:
I know not, oh, I know not,
what joys await us there;
what radiancy of glory,
what bliss beyond compare!

They stand, those halls of Zion,
all jubilant with song,
and bright with many an angel,
and all the martyr throng:
the Prince is ever in them,
the daylight is serene;
the pastures of the blessèd
are decked in glorious sheen.

There is the throne of David;
and there, from care released,
the shout of them that triumph,
the song of them that feast;
and they who with their Leader
have conquered in the fight,
for ever and for ever
are clad in robes of white.

Oh, sweet and blessèd country,
the home of God's elect!
Oh, sweet and blessèd country,
that eager hearts expect!
Jesus, in mercy bring us
to that dear land of rest,
who art, with God the Father,
and the Spirit, ever blest.