

Socio Rhetorical Analysis The 'New Heaven And New Earth In The Book Of Revelation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Revelation is the most difficult of the NT books to interpret, owing to the elaborate and extensive use of symbolism. History proves that many struggled to interpret this book. Calvin, the great exegete, decided that this was the one NT book on which he would not do Commentary. How are these strange symbols to be understood? What are the rhetorical aims and results of John's assembling this document? About what is John seeking to persuade his audiences? Does the 'new heaven and new earth' terminology imply the annihilation of the present world and the introduction of a completely new creation in its place? How does he understand the meaning of 'new heaven and new earth'? In what sense are they now? When John here speaks of 'new heaven and new earth' is he intimating that a new physical universe of stars and a new world are to be created, or is he declaring that age is to down?

The book of Revelation is known as the apocalypse. The term *apocalypticism* is a transliterated form of the Greek term *ἀποκάλυψις*, which means "disclosure" or "revelation." The revelation of John was the first Jewish or Christian author to use the term *ἀποκάλυψις* to describe the content of his book, which is essentially a narrative of a series of revelatory visions that disclose the events surrounding the imminent end of the present age (Rev 1:1). The term *apocalypticism* is a modern designation widely used to refer to a worldview which characterized segments of early Judaism from c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, and which centered on the expectation of God's imminent intervention into human history in a decisive manner to save his people and punish their enemies by destroying the existing fallen cosmic order and by restoring or recreating the cosmos in its original pristine perfection.¹

In the mid-nineteenth century, Luecke viewed apocalypticism favorably as a development of OT prophecy, perhaps due to the disillusionment of the postexilic period, which included subjection to foreign nations and tension within the Jewish community. However, other scholars who discerned a sharp break between OT prophecy and later apocalypticism proposed that many of the basic features of apocalypticism originated in ancient Iran and had penetrated Jewish thought during the Hellenistic period (c. 400-200 B.C.) or, more generally, from the syncretistic tendencies during the Hellenistic period when there was a blending of religious ideas from both West and East.²

II. A SOCIO-RHETORICAL LOOK AT THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Reid shows that apocalyptic literature relies upon contrasting metaphors, particularly animalistic metaphors (e.g., Jesus as Lamb, Satan as a serpent) and light and darkness metaphors (good and evil). Such literature is persuasive with people who are deeply dissatisfied with their present and whose future is uncertain. It explains their present distress as part of God's plan and reassures them that they are God's instruments in working out that plan, which is near fulfillment. In its argumentation, apocalyptic identifies a specific object of hatred and arouses fear while giving the oppressed divine authority and purpose in working in God's Service.³

S. D. O'Leary views the rhetoric of Revelation as an epochal discourse in which the systematic and symbolic division of historical time accords weight to historical events and mediates the relationship of past, present, and future. Using dramatic theory, he proposes that the argument of Revelation is surprising because it is placed within the cosmic drama portrayed by the myth and symbolic universe it creates. Within the plot, the fate of the wicked is a tragic downward movement, while the faithful's future is an upward comic movement.

¹Aune D. Geddert T. J. and C. A. Evans Various, eds. "Apocalypticism" *DNTB*:45-46.

² Geddert and Various, "Apocalypticism," 46.

³ D. F. Watson . "Rhetoric, Rhetorical," *DLNTD*1:1047

This drama helps the Community deal with the apparent contradiction of salvation and suffering and, ultimately, death.⁴

J. T. Kirby classifies Revelation as deliberative rhetoric. It is a prophecy intended to persuade the seven churches to take a particular course of action in light of future events (Rev 1:1, 3) for its advantage (Rev 22:11-12). Revelation 1:1-8 acts like a proem, while the vision of Revelation 1:9-20 establishes the ethos of John as a prophet and elicits pathos (awe) from the churches. Each of the seven letters of Revelation 2—3 falls into four parts roughly corresponding to the proem, narration, proposition, and epilogue. In the proem, Jesus identifies himself and establishes his ethos for the following pronouncements. The narration is tailored to the nature of the individual churches addressed and forms the basis of the pronouncements and warnings of the proposition. Metaphors and paradoxes are the stylistic hallmarks of the narration and proposition. Finally, the epilogue is a promise promoting pathos in terms of appealing to Christians undergoing persecution.⁵

E. Schiessler Fiorenza proposes that Revelation is at once deliberative (call for decision), judicial (indictments and warnings), and epideictic (liturgical and hymnic) rhetoric. Regarding style, it uses sacred language and images from Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions to create the narrative, symbolic universe in which the audience is to participate. Socioeconomic language and political-mythological imagery predominate; therefore, political and social issues dominate in the audience addressed. Regarding arrangement, the composition of Revelation is dramatic. It is unified by the appearance of critical symbols and images throughout (e.g., Babylon), pre-announcements and cross-references, contrasts, and numerical patterns. An interlude in which eschatological promises are clarified shows the audience that the future gives meaning to their present and vice versa.⁶

Schiessler Fiorenza also describes how invention in Revelation functions; as a poetic work with symbolic language and images, Revelation evokes rather than defines meanings not just as a symbolic-poetical work but also as a work of visionary rhetoric. While prophetic works seek to create an imaginative experience, the rhetorical seeks to "persuade" or "motivate" people "to act right" poetry works by representation and is fulfilled in creation, while rhetoric aims to search and instigate; poetry invites imaginative participation while rhetoric initiates a change of attitude and motivation.⁷

In these terms, Revelation is a poetic, rhetorical work. It seeks to persuade and motivate by constructing a symbolic universe that invites imaginative participation. The strength of its persuasion for action lies not in the theological reasoning or historical arguments of Revelation but in the "evocative" power of its symbols as well as in its hortatory, imaginative, emotional language and dramatic movement, which engaged the hearer by eliciting a reaction, emotions, conviction, and identification.⁸

It creates or organizes imaginative experiences. The structure and strategy of Revelation and its function within a particular historical-rhetorical situation help the symbols and images make sense within a symbolic universe that invites participation. The rhetoric channels audience perceptions and emotions to persuade it to change attitudes and motivations. Revelation seeks to fit a rhetorical situation to clarify audience allegiances in a time of emperor worship, social and economic ostracism, and even death. The audience is struggling with the seeming contradiction of participating in Christ's kingship and power yet being persecuted by an empire challenging Christ as Lord. It also works with the temptation of adaptation and acquiescence to political forces. Revelation encourages the audience to align with God's heavenly world and dissociate themselves from the idolatry of the emperor cult backed by Satan. Using Jewish symbolic language, it creates an alternative extended universe that gives meaning to the community's suffering and individual death. It provides the audience with a dramatic-cathartic journey that moves the audience to control its fear and sustain its vision.⁹

Witherington III says one of the keys to understanding this matter is that John has deliberately begun his document with three things: 1) an introduction indicating that this is visionary and prophetic material, 2) a prophetic commissioning visioning report, and 3) brief letter to the churches. The letters are generated out of visionary encounters (Rev; 2:1,8,12). The epistolary form is used because the author is at a distance from his

⁴ S. D. O Leary, "A Dramatistic Theory of Apocalyptic Rhetoric," QJS 79 (1993): 18-23.

⁵ D. F. Watson . "Rhetoric, Rhetorical," 1:1047.

⁶ ESchiessler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 20-37.

⁷ ESchiessler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just Word*, 20-37.

⁸ ESchiessler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just Word*, 287.

⁹ D. F. Watson . "Rhetoric, Rhetorical," 1:1047.

audience and perhaps because these congregations are pretty used to receiving letters from Christian authorities- in some cases, perhaps from both beloved disciples and from Paul. The Judicial or Forensic tone of Revelation has often been noted, pre-occupied as it is with issues of justice and vindication for saints. Unsurprisingly, the schematized brief letters in Rev.2-3 have this tone. They consist of a brief exordium establishing the ethos and authority of the one who is ultimately speaking, followed by a litany of complains about past sins and praises of some good deeds which make up, in each case, the narration. This is followed by a series of appeals varying from church to church and a schematized comment to listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches: 7,11,17; 3:6,13,22. This last exhortation refers not to what is told within each letter rest of the works beginning with Rev.4.¹⁰

If the letters are particularized preamble, Rev 4-22 make up apocalyptic prophecies the spirit addresses to all the churches. These prophecies, including the visionary material constituting the logos or arguments presented by the seer, are meant to persuade the audience to heed the appeal in the letters. John offers an eschatological and other wordily sanction for those appeals, showing the rewards for faithfulness and for "conquering" and the punishments for failing to do so. John reveals what is happening above and what will happen beyond the present (Rev4: 1), not merely a preview of the coming attraction to comfort the faithful but also serves that purpose. The "rhetorical function of these assertions is to change the audience's mind in the present."¹¹

This entire schema fits well within the parameters of forensic rhetoric, even though there are also deliberative and epideictic rhetoric elements in the document. The dominant form of rhetoric in this document is forensic rhetoric. The author is not just trying to comfort his audience with the truth that God is in heaven and that all will one day be rift with the world; he is calling them to repent, believe and behave in the light of the coming redemptive judgments. He is also trying to revise the world, taking into account the divine action above, within, and the beneath the surface of history's tapestry. The regular topics of the forensic rhetoric center, of course, on the issue of justice

Witherington III also quotes R. Royalty, who stresses the performative character of the work meant to be hearted by the audience, by those who have ears to hear. He reminds us that in forensic rhetoric, external proofs, such as the testimony of witnesses or court documents, are crucial. In John's context, where there is a fundamental trust in sacred scripture in the living prophetic word, John chose to draw both the OT and the live voice of Jesus, perhaps the two highest authorities he could appeal to persuade his audience to heed his exhortations. Christ is the most compelling living witness, but notice how John also appeals to other witnesses, including prophetic figures in Rev.11.¹² Rev 4-21, which is only appropriate in a forensic setting, and it is in court that they are unleashed and read. The audience is comforted because the divine verdict draws the Conclusion-the faithful will one day conquer, and the wicked will one day be judged, but in the meantime, the audience must remain faithful and repent of their sin.¹³

Revelation celery follows the basic rhetorical pattern for persuasion. The Speaker's authority is first established with the audience, then the source of his argument in the form of vision is confirmed by making clear that they come from ultimate sources -the living word and written word. Finally, there is the authority of the emotional appeal at the end, where pathos comes into play, Redemption is finally unveiled to the audience, which is under duress and crisis, and a promise of the end of the disease, decay, and earth, suffering, and sorrow is made (Rev20-22). Ethos, logos, and pathos are all found in a rhetorically appropriate place in Revelation.¹⁴

Peter Abir gives theological rhetoric in how God and Christ the lamb ate presented by Revelation to arouse in its audience a convincing loyalty to God and consequently a dedicated Christian life. It persuades the struggling Christians to reject the draconic powers and believe in God the almighty.¹⁵

¹⁰ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 14-15.

¹¹ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 15.

¹²R Royalty, *Streets of Heaven*, 127, Cited by Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16.

¹³ WitheringtonIII, *Revelation*, 16.

¹⁴ B.W. Longencker, "Linked a chain : Rev22.6-9 . Light of Ancient Technique," *NTS 47*(Cambridge: Harward University Press), 55.

¹⁵ Abir, *Conflict and Conquest*, 223.

Although Babylon/Rome plays a prominent role in the church's conflict, the theological priority and religious motives, rather than political justice, concern the author of Revelation, the central theological question that has come up because of the conflict of the early church with the Roman Empire is: who is the absolute master of the universe? John has to answer to his readers/hearers that it is God and not the Dragon who is the supreme authority of the cosmos. Therefore he constructed an alternative power base starting from the authority of God, which is spelled out at the beginning of the victory hymn: "now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of God" (12:10) as it has been noted earlier; the phrase *σοφεια και δυναμις* indicates God's victorious power that leads to his kingdom. In Contrast to the Dragon's imperial power, John presents God's rule in the same political language as his omnipotence.¹⁶

SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT INTER-TEXTURE

Witherington says about a closer look – bridal and city imagery and John's intertextuality. One of the great mysteries about John's work is whether it is a work of careful scribal activity as a result of laboring over numerous texts and composing a rich tapestry of material that is indebted to many sources or whether it is just that John's mind is saturated with early Jewish ideas and images. So the combinations and changes come spontaneously without profound reflection or careful literary art. Whereas Fekkes has shown that John is indebted to various theories and sources in his portrayal of the New Jerusalem as both city and bride, with probably Isaiah, in particular Isa. 54 and 61, being the predominant influences or sources. Rev 19:7 "and his bride has prepared herself" Rev 21:2b "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" Of all the various motifs that Revelation has in common with Isa 61:10, it is the simile of the bride "adorned" in Rev 21:2b¹⁷.

Rev 21-1 gives several parallels, such as Isa 65:17-19. In v.17 For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. v. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. v.19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. Isa 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the LORD; so shall your descendants and your name remain. 2 Peter 3:13 But, following his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. And Rom.8:21 that the creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Isa 61:10 also offers several parallels. 19:7. The eschatological "wedding" in which the Messiah is "bridegroom": Matt 22:1-13; 25:1-13 (Mark 2:19-20 par; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33; John 3:29). 19:7b. The people of God as the "bride": Isa 61:10 (21:2, 9; 62:4-5; Hosea 2; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-33). 22:17) 19:7. The bride "prepared" (and "adorned": Isa (21:2) 61:10 (49:18). 19:8. The bride divinely granted a wedding garment: Isa 61:10. 19:9. The wedding meal: Matt 22:1-13 (. Matt 26:9; 4 Ezra 9:47). 19:9. The guests: Matt 22:1-13. Elsewhere in Revelation, where John has transmitted early Christian¹⁸

One of the fascinating aspects of using bridal imagery is how John develops the imagery throughout three chapters, 19.7–9, 21.2, and 21.18–21. The first of these texts depends on Christian tradition (2 Cor. 11.2; Eph.5.22–33), the latter two more strictly Jewish texts. The choice of items to include in the description of the bride's apparel suggests this is a royal wedding or the wedding of an affluent person (white linen, precious stones, gold, pearls). One may compare the description in Jos. and Asen. 18.5–6: "And Aseneth ... brought out her first robe, (the one) of the wedding, like lightning in appearance, and dressed in it. And she girded a golden girdle around (herself) made of precious stones. And she put bracelets on her fingers and precious ornaments she put around her neck in which innumerable costly and precious stones were fastened, and a golden crown she put on her head, and on that crown was a big sapphire stone, and around the big stone were six costly stones." This reference, coupled with the indebtedness of the city imagery to a text or source like Tob. 13.16–18, indicates that John is familiar with not just the OT but also other early Jewish sources. But he combines them and edits them in a way that makes clear he is not simply trying to represent or exegete these texts but rather to use them to describe a somewhat different matter.¹⁹

Fekkes is also correct to note that while John may have held out hope for an eschatological restoration of the city of Jerusalem in the eschatological era, his main concern is with the people of God being a city/temple

¹⁶Abir, *Conflict and Conquest*, 224.

¹⁷ Fekkes, " 'His Bride Has Prepared Herself': Revelation 12–21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery," JBL 109 (1990), pp. 270

¹⁸ Fekkes, " 'His Bride Has Prepared Herself': Revelation 12–21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery," 271-72.

¹⁹ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 266.

where God dwells. The bride's preparation for the bridegroom must happen before the Parousia, so it is no accident that this is mentioned in Rev. 19.7–9 just before the Parousia material. The wedding, however, cannot transpire until the arrival of the bridegroom, hence the further use of nuptial imagery in Rev. 21. Fekkes is also correct that the precious stones and the like are meant to reflect the spiritual purity and beauty of the bride when she finally reaches the eschatological state. In the use of this material, we are not so much dealing with issues simply of inter-textual echo, for it is not so much that John wants his audience to go back and examine the context of allusions to the OT as he wants them to go forward to an understanding of the New Jerusalem that is yet to come. He is not trying to revive hopes of restoring the literal city of Jerusalem but rather for the revival of the people of God as bride/city at the consummation of all things.²⁰

INNER TEXTURE

According to Robbins, "Inner textual analysis focuses on words as tools for communication."²¹ At this stage, the interpreter does not look for the passage's meaning but for an intimate knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text. Inner textural analysis in this study includes repetitive and progressive sub-textures. Repetitive texture occurs when a word or phrase appears more than once in a unit. In ancient Israel, repetition served many diverse functions in the literary composition of a text. It was a valuable and effective mnemonic device.²² Repetitive texture emphasizes and calls attention to repeated words, phrases, or ideas.²³ The reader does not overlook them; the frequency of words in the pericope under consideration and they occur in has been documented in Table 1 below.

Words/ Phrases	Occurrences	Verses in Rev. 20:11-15;21:1-8
I saw	4	20:11,12; 21:1,2
Heaven	5	20:11;21:1,2,3,
Earth	3	20:11;21:1
Books	5	20:12,15
New	3	21:1,5
Death\dead	8	20:12,13.14;21:4,8
Lake fire	3	20:14,15;21:8
God	4	21:2,3,7
I	9	20:11,12;21:1,2,3,5,6,7
Said	3	21:3,5,6
No longer	2	21:1,4

SOCIO-CULTURAL TEXTURE

When we apply socio-cultural analysis of the Mediterranean world to the study of Rev. 21–22, we understand that John's focus was almost exclusively on things of the earth and human history, not celestial events. John mentions some celestial events indeed, such as the falling of the star called Wormwood, for example of the Lamb; John is undoubtedly not drawing on astral speculation about the constellation Aries; instead, his depiction of the heavenly Lamb is grounded in OT Passover rituals and early Christian thought about the death of Jesus. The marriage of the Lamb takes place on earth. It comports with the other Jewish and NT traditions about the eschatological marriage feast transpiring at the end of human history on earth.

According to B. Malina, the Lamb that John is concerned with is a symbolic portrayal of a historical person – Jesus of Nazareth, now resident in heaven. The city John is concerned with is the dwelling place of the saints in heaven that then descends and becomes a part of the new earth. In no case is John simply drawing on Mesopotamian or other sorts of speculations about cities thought to have been seen in the sky. John's book is about visions he saw while on Patmos, not about his being transported into the atmosphere by the Spirit, where

²⁰ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 266.

²¹ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 96.

²² James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18, 10.

²³ E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in The Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 264.

he saw astral events. John's images are not to be equated with those of apocalyptic figures who do tours of heaven or hell; in particular, they are not correlated with Enoch. The biblical story of Enoch included the notion that he was taken up into heaven, never to return. This is a different matter from being given a vision of heaven and the other world while remaining a person on earth. For example, John sees the temple in heaven (11.19) and the city coming down from heaven (Rev. 21–22), but he sees this in a vision from afar. He does not claim to be there. He is on earth envisioning what those things are or will be like ²⁴

The existence of enslaved people as the basis of so much manual labor in the Roman economy should make clear what a different socio-economic situation John's audience lived in from ours. Obviously, sanitation, comfort, and safety were challenging in a pre-modern city like Ephesus or any of the seven towns John addresses. New Jerusalem that John envisions is much more like an ANE rather than a Greco-Roman city, not least because ANE cities had a temple at the heart of them. Therefore John sees a new heaven and a new earth, and the city would be more like an ancient near eastern city rather than the earth under Roman Rule. He sees a new heaven and New Earth where the temple of God will be in the town, and heaven itself comes to the new earth to earth.²⁵

III. REVELATION .21.1-8

TRANSLATION

V.1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea no longer existed.*

V. 2 *I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven, Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

V. 3 *I heard a loud voice from out of heaven saying, "Behold the dwelling of God is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God,*

V. 4 *and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will no longer exist, nor will grief, crying, or pain live any longer, for the first things have passed away."*

V. 5. *And He sitting on the throne said, "Behold, I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, for this message is trustworthy and true."*

V. 6. *He also said, "It is finished. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him thirsty, I will freely give of the fountain of the water of life.*

V. 7 *The one conquer will inherit these things, for I will be their God, and they will be my children.*

V. 8. *But as for the cowards and unbelievers and the abominable and murderers and the immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all who lie, they will experience the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*

The ancient cities of the east with which the writer was familiar were quite different from ours. Instead of spreading over vast acreage, including open residential suburbs and a business district with wide streets and spacious parks, they were crowned with high walls. The narrow streets were walled on both sides, and behind doors that opened directly on the road were courtyards, around which ranged apartments usually belonged to the members of one family or clan. Frequently each building has several streets, communicating with the courtyard by a steep stairway. Because of political and social unrest and the lack of an adequate police force, the outer gates of the city were shut by night to keep out murders, and the secret doors to the courtyard were also barred.²⁶ Viewed from a distance, such a city would appear as a solid mass of masonry or brick, with its towers and domes gleaming in the sun. The white stucco, still used in the Near East as a covering for stone and brick buildings, would reflect the light and make it visible from a greater distance. This description of the NT was doubtlessly related to the actual appearance of the literal Jerusalem as it was before its destruction in AD 70. Situated on a high Mountain, its high-colored building stands out the sharp relief against the surrounding desert. To the Christian believer who founded his faith in the promise of the OT, it was the Chri precursor and the type of the eternal city of God.²⁷

²⁴ Bruce J Malina. *The New Jerusalem in the Revelation of John: The City as Symbol of Life with God* (Liturgical Press, 2020),88.

²⁵ WitheringtonIII, *Revelation*, 275.

²⁶ Tenny, *Proclaiming the New Testament, The Book of Revelation*, 107.

²⁷ Tenny, *Proclaiming the New Testament, The Book of Revelation*, 107.

FORM / STRUCTURE / SETTING

The first subunit of 21:1—8, vv 1-4, is framed by the verbal parallels in v 1, ‘the first *πρῶτος* heaven and the first [*πρώτη*] earth had passed away [*ἀπῆλθαν*],’ and in v 4, “the former things had passed away (*τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν*).” Rev 21:5a, however, serves as a transition, for it both concludes vv 1—4 and introduces vv 5b-8. Rev 21:14 consists of two main elements. (1) Vv 1-2 consist of a brief introductory description of John's vision, which succinctly portrays the two foci of his vision (a) the new heaven and the new earth (v 1a), (b) the first heaven and the first earth have passed away (v 1b), (c) the sea no longer exists (v 1b), and (d) the holy city Jerusalem descends from heaven adorned like a bridegroom (v 2). (2) Vv 3-4 contain an audition (not a vision) from an unidentified voice from the throne (v 3a), which provides a Commentary on the three foci of John's vision, in reverse order, forming a chiasmus: (a) the dwelling of God is with people (v 3b), so that (b) death and all human troubles no longer exist (vv 3b—4a), (c) because the former things, heaven, earth, and the sea have passed away (v 4b), and (d) God then announces, “Behold, I have made everything new” (v 5a). These elements fall into a Chiasmic schema in which the four terms or phrases *καινός*, “new” (v 1a), *πρῶτος*, “first” (v 1b), *ἀπῆλθαν*, “passed away” (v 1b), and *οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι*, “no longer exists” (v 1b), occur in reverse order in vv 4b and 5a.²⁸

This chiasmic structure indicates that a new unity is imposed on this passage following the insertion of 21:5-22:2 between 21:1-4 and 22:3-5. The passage's design is intended for the reader to descend holy city because the most extended description in this text unit is devoted to the significance of that event (vv 3-4a). In 21:1, the new heaven and the new earth are the objects of *εἶδον*, “then I saw,” commonly used to introduce a vision narrative or to focus on one aspect of a vision narrative in progress. This verse, however, provides no narration and remains an abbreviated description of a vision that is not narrated.²⁹

The second subunit, vv 5-8, is also an audition but an exceptional one because it is attributed to God, who is seated on his throne. Therefore, 21:5-8 it is appropriate here to list them:(1) Then the One sitting on the throne said, “Behold, I am making everything new” (v 5a). (2) He also said, “Write, for this message is trustworthy and true” (v 5b). (3) He also said to me, “It is finished” (v 6a). (4) “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (v 6b). (5) “I will freely give some water to the one who is thirsty from the well of living water” (v 6c). (6) “Those who conquer will inherit these things, for I will be their God, and they will be my children” (v 7). (7) “But as for the cowards and unbelievers and the abominable and murderers and the immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all who lie, they will experience the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (v 8).³⁰

EXEGESIS

The climax of the dynamic rhetoric presented by John to his troubled Church is the new Jerusalem Motif (21:9-22,5) which is, in fact, the development of 'new heaven and new earth' imagery (21:1-8). The Author has employed a variety of this wordily picture, handled metaphorically, to depict and to conquer the "venture" of God and his allies, Christ, angels, and the heavenly multitude. Thus we have seen the return of the victorious Rider (19:11-16), the last battle (19:17-21), the binding of Satan (20:3), the thousand year interim-reign of Christ (20:4-6), and the last Judgment, which culminated in the decisive destruction of the Satanic dragon, and the elimination of the death and heads (20:14-15). Then the scene moves entirely to a new milieu where the earth becomes heaven and heaven is on earth. Heaven and earth become one. It is not easy to imagine what this new city will look like.

V.1 The vision of the new heaven and earth, which succeeds the first heaven and the first earth that has “passed away,” is introduced abruptly. This allusion to Isa 65:17 appears to be more closely related to the LXX than to the MT for three reasons: (1) the LXX has no equivalent for the Hebrew term *בָּרָא* (*bara*), “create” (2) the term *οὐρανὸν*, “heaven,” is singular here and in the LXX, while the plural form *שָׁמַיִם* (*shamayim*) “heavens,” occurs in the MT; and (3) the LXX phrase *τῶν προτέρων*, “the former things,” is reflected in the choice of the terms *ὁ πρῶτος* and *ἡ πρώτη*, “the first,” in Rev 21:1. But the critical question is posed here is whether 'new heaven and new earth' is the replacement of old heaven and old earth?³¹

Charles points out that when John here speaks of 'new heaven and the new earth,' he is not intimating a new physical universe of stars and a new world are. to be created. On the contrary, however, he is declaring that

²⁸Aune, *Revelation*, 1123.

²⁹Aune, *Revelation*, 1124.

³⁰Aune, *Revelation*, 1127.

³¹ Aune, *Revelation*, 1129.

age is too down, so much better and more glorious than this present age that it well may be described in the words of Isaiah as "a new heaven and new earth."³²

John P New Port argues that the present universe will not be annihilated so that the new universe will be utterly other than the present cosmos. He also quotes Rom 8:20-21 the present creation will be liberated from the corruption in the end time, not totally a different creation.³³ Hughs Endgame Philip also supports this view.³⁴ Henry M. Morris further argues in both OT and NT passages that the words "new" mean "new in respect of freshness rather than new concerning existence. "New heaven and new earth" could probably also be translated as fresh heaven and fresh earth." The new cosmos is not a novel cosmos; it is renewed cosmos. It is just like the first.³⁵ Leon Morris says he is not looking for a new edition of the same thing. We can understand first earth passed away, but curiously, the first heaven is also marked for dissolution.³⁶

According to John F Walvoord, the new heaven and earth presented here are not simply renovated old heaven and earth but an act of new creation.³⁷ Ramsey says heavens and sky are the exact words in Greek. John points out that the earth and sky disappeared (20:11) and were replaced with a "new sky and the new earth."³⁸ David E. Aune argues, "For the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea no longer existed." This statement, taken together with that in 20:11, makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Author has in view the destruction of the physical universe. However, several scholars think that a renewal or transformation of the universe is in view. One of the striking features of this laconic statement is that the destruction of the cosmos by fire is not mentioned here or anywhere else in Revelation. In early Judaism, there was a tradition of two destructions of the world whereby God judges the human race, once by water and once by fire. The alternating destruction of the world, first by fire and then by water, is also found in Greek sources. Berossus speculated that cycles of great years, consisting of 432,000 years, each had a "summer," which brought a fiery conflagration of the world, and a "winter," which brought a universal flood.³⁹

Middleton argues that Revelation 20:11 and 21 are the two explicit statements, in Revelation 21 and the Olivet discourse, that heaven and earth will "pass away." He refers to Jesus's words in the Olivet discourse. After instructing his disciples about a series of signs that will precede the coming of the Son of Man, Jesus states, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). Is this simply a hypothetical statement, to the effect that even if heaven and earth were to "pass away," Jesus's words (his predictions of the coming signs) are sure and trustworthy? We saw in chapter 6 that the impermanence of heaven and earth in Psalm 102 could be read as a hypothetical possibility, grounded in the ambiguity of the Hebrew verbs involved. Nevertheless, the Greek of Jesus's statement does not support a similar reading. He does seem to be predicting the disappearance or passing of the cosmos and but passing in what sense? Likewise, in Revelation 21, John the seer announces, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (v. 1). Revelation 21 suggests that the world as we know it will be gone, to be superseded by a new cosmos whether this is obliteration followed by replacement or a reference to some form of (admittedly radical) transformation. Here we might recall the statement in 2 Peter 3:10 that "the heavens will pass away with a loud noise." The earlier discussion of 2 Peter 3 suggested that this verse had the purification of the heavens in view rather than their strict annihilation. However, can we apply this interpretation also to Jesus's words in the Olivet discourse and John's vision in Revelation 21? To answer this question, let us turn to Paul's description of conversion as "new creation" in 2 Corinthians 5:17. What follows is a literal translation: "If anyone is in Christ—new creation! The old things have passed away; behold, new ones have come. Here, Paul says of the ending of the old life, which is then replaced by a new life in Christ. Are we to

³² Charles Erdman, *Revelation of John*, 166.

³³ John P Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb* (Tennessee: Broad Man Press, 19673), 305.

³⁴ Hughs Endgame Philip, *The Book of Revelation* (Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 222.

³⁵ Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1983), 436.

³⁶ Morris, *The Revelation of St John*, 242.

³⁷ John F Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 311.

³⁸ Michaels, *Revelation*, 233.

³⁹ Plato, Timeus www T 22, cited by David E Aune, *Revelation 17-22 in WBC* (Texas: Word Books, 1998), 130.

believe that Paul thinks that the passing away of the old life is equivalent to the obliteration of the person, who is then replaced by a lookalike? All the Pauline writings, not to mention common sense, suggest that no matter how radical the shift required for conversion to Christ, this describes the transformation rather than the obliteration of the person.⁴⁰

Middleton further says that the passing away of the present heaven and earth is to make way for the new creation which is also transformative and not a matter of destruction followed by replacement. This understanding of passing away as transformation, not simple obliteration and replacement, is supported by the pattern of Scripture, which assumes a parallel between the redemption of persons (including the body) and the redemption of the nonhuman world. Thus, 2 Peter 3 calls on believers to be blameless at Christ's return while affirming that the earth itself will be found after God's judgment. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul addresses the change from the present corruptible body to the incorruptible resurrection body. However, Hebrews 12 speaks transition from a cosmos that can be shaken to the unshakable kingdom that is coming. Moreover, Romans 8 speaks of resurrection (the redemption of the body) and the liberation of creation from its bondage to futility so that it might share in the same glory that God's children will have. The analogy between personal and cosmic renovation suggests that radical purging is necessary. However, in neither case is the picture one of replacement after annihilation. Whether it is the "new creation" of persons who are in Christ or "a new heaven and a new earth" at the end of Revelation (21:1), the point is that salvation consists in the rescue and transformation of the world that God so loves (John 3:16)⁴¹

In search for a solution, scholars often point to John's choice of *καινός*. This word generally denotes qualitatively new compared to the old and, therefore, superior to that which is old. The LXX usually translates *חדש*(hedash)with *καινός*. In its strict theological sense, it was used, especially in the prophetic literature, to refer to God's new, saving acts, which were expected in the future (Jer. 38.31; Ezek. 11.19; 18.31; 36.26). The New Testament appropriates this term to speak of the eschatological newness brought about by Christ's saving work. John envisages in 21.1 a qualitatively new creation brought about by an eschatological act of God (21.5a). However, it is still unclear whether this requires an entirely new creation or the renewal of the existing one; the evidence is appealed to for support by both sides of the debate. Thus, the difficulty cannot be resolved at a strictly lexical level. More help can perhaps be found by considering the function of this text within the broader visionary context of Rev. 16-22. An initial reading of 21.1 within the broader discourse gives the impression that John envisions the disappearance of the old order and a subsequent new creative act of God through an increasing series of judgment scenes; John prepares for the establishment of the new heaven and new earth by depicting the elimination of all that is opposed to the establishment of God's universal kingdom—Babylon (16.19-19.5), the beast and false prophet (19.10-21), Satan (20.1-3,7-10) and death and Hades (20.14).³⁸ Following this pattern, the context of this statement suggests that his genuine concern is not with physical geography but with describing a context of life for God's people

A New Heaven and a New Earth the removal of the first heaven and earth (20.11) is a prerequisite for establishing the new heaven and earth in 21.1. The statement of 21.1a is further explicated by 21.1 b: 'for (*γάρ*) the first heaven and the first earth passed away.' This reference to the first heaven and earth passing away in 21.1b recalls and heightens the reference to their fleeing from the throne in 20.11. In place of the 'fleeing' heaven and earth are found a new heaven and earth. Thus, reading 21.1 within its broader theoretical context, where John reiterates notions of removal, suggests that at an academic level, John envisions nothing less than the complete removal of the old order to make room for a qualitatively new creative act of God. However, to what extent this reflects a corresponding ontological state of affairs (physical destruction followed by a new creation) or is to be understood on a more metaphorical level as symbolic of judgment and salvation is difficult to determine, although it is illegitimate to strip John's symbol of any cosmological implications. However, it must be observed that the primary concern of John's vision is with the results of the creative act rather than the process. The Author has taken over the post-exilic promise from Third Isaiah, which emphasizes the discontinuity between the old and the new, transformed order, and further heightens the antithesis between the old creation and the radical new beginning which an all-embracing, creative act of God would inaugurate. Thus, John grounds his articulation of eschatological hope in the Isaianic new creation promises. By employing Isaian creation language here, the Author emphasizes the discontinuity between the current order and the decisive new beginning in the face of the harsh realities of the current order.⁴²

⁴⁰ Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*,206.

⁴¹ Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*,207.

⁴².Mathewson, "A New Heaven and a New Earth the Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation," 38-39.

In the OT and early Judaism, there is a link between divine judgment and fiery destruction, though it is often difficult to determine whether partial or complete destruction of the world is in view. In Isa 51:6 and Ps 102:25-26, the eternity of God is contrasted to the temporary existence of the heavens and the earth, which will eventually wear out and pass away. The destruction of the earth by fire on the day of judgment is predicted in Zeph 1:18—2:2 and 3:8.⁴³ Therefore most acceptable view is that a 'new heaven and new earth' not only age is to down but also an act of new Creation. "The first heaven will vanish and pass away, and a new heaven will appear." The phrase will vanish and pass away occurs in both J Enoch 96:16 and Rev 21:1, suggesting literary dependence or dependence on a common apocalyptic tradition.⁴⁴

There are several early Jewish apocalyptic texts in which the destruction of the cosmos is clearly in view (Sib. Or. 2.196-213; 3.8-92; 4.171-92): Since these texts originate from the second century B.C. and later, the fiery destruction of the cosmos may have been influenced by Stoicism, though the infinitely repeated destructions of the cosmos advocated by Stoicism never adopted accused the Greek authors of stealing the notion of the conflagration of the universe from the prophets. According to the eschatological scenario in Gk. Apoc. Ezra 3:38, "Then the heaven and the earth and the sea will perish." According to Apoc. Elijah 2:1, the dissolution of heaven and earth is part of the eschatological scenario. In 2 Apoc. Bar. 3:7, the question is asked, "Will the universe return to its nature and the world goes back to its original silence?" The fiery destruction of the heavens is even part of the eschatology of the Coptic-Gnostic tractate.⁴⁵

The apocalyptic theme of the destruction of the heavens and the earth occasionally occurs in early Christianity (Heb 12:26-27). This theme is mainly associated with a logion of Jesus concerning the disappearance of heaven and earth, which is found in three major versions, one from the Q-tradition, where it is linked issue of the validity of the Torah, a second in the eschatological discourse (Mark 13), in which it is linked with the permanent validity of the words of Jesus. Finally, the version preserved in the Q-tradition in Luke 16:17:But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one part of a letter to drop out of the law."⁴⁶

Though the destruction of the sea is mentioned in Rev 21:1, it is noteworthy that it is not mentioned in connection with the new heaven and the new earth. This may be because the sea was a negative symbol for chaos and even for the abyss (cf. Rev 13:1 with 11:7). The sea was no more. Most scholars believe that the sea is the place of storm and danger, and the sea is one of the seven evils John speaks of as being no more, the other being death, mourning, weeping, pain (verse 4), curse (22.3) and night (22.5).⁴⁷ John was isolated in the isle of Patmos, and the sea only made more accurate the cruel separation and loneliness that gnawed at his heart.⁴⁸ Adela Yarbro Collins comments that this statement makes clear the mythic, symbolic character of the sea in Rev. The disappearance of the sea is equivalent to the eternal confinement and punishment of the dragon (Satan), the beast (antichrist), and the false prophet and the elimination of the heads. The elimination of the sea symbolizes the complete victory of creation over chaos, of life over death.⁴⁹

For example, the disappearance of the sea in Revelation 21:1 ("and the sea was no more") is not making the point that no one goes swimming in the new creation. The sea is a traditional symbol of the ancient Near East to signify forces of chaos and evil (thus, in Rev. 13:1, one of the beasts comes from the sea).²⁶ The point is that the forces of evil and chaos will be eradicated. Beyond the traditional background of this image, the book of Revelation previously mentioned the exploitative sea trade of the Roman Empire, which will end when Rome, the great city (called, symbolically, "Babylon"), falls (18:11–18); that is why among those who mourn the passing of the city are "all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea" (18:17–18). It is, therefore, the good news that in the eschaton, the sea (which facilitated the economic expansion of the

⁴³ Aune, *Revelation*, 1133.

⁴⁴ Aune, *Revelation*, 1133.

⁴⁵ Aune, *Revelation*, 1132.

⁴⁶ Aune, *Revelation*, 1133.

⁴⁷ Morris, *The Revelation of St John*, 243.

⁴⁸ Anderson Allen Roy, *Unfolding the Revelation* (California: Specific Press Publishing Association, 1953), 199.

⁴⁹ Collins, *The Apocalypse*, 1015.

Roman Empire) will be no more. Perhaps the most crucial point about the new Jerusalem is that through its descent from heaven, God's presence decisively shifts from heaven to earth.⁵⁰

The disappearance of the sea reflects the ancient Israelite tradition of opposition to Yahweh and the sea. The antipathy between Yahweh and the sea is expressed in various ways in the OT and early Judaism: (1) Yahweh establishes a border or sets a guard on the sea (Jer 5:22; Job 7:12). (2) Though the destruction of the sea is mentioned in Rev 21:1, it is noteworthy that it is not mentioned in connection with the new heaven and the new earth.⁵¹ Whereas Ladd strongly argues that the abolition of the sea suggests that there is particularly no substantial continuity between the old fallen order and the new redeemed order; the old order is completely swept away and replaced by something new and different.⁵²

V.2. This entire phrase, less *καινην ειδον*, I saw a new, is repeated verbatim in v 10. Since it is improbable that the Author intended to imply that he saw the holy city descend from heaven twice (in 21:9-22:9). Here, the formula *και ειδον*, functions to focus attention on a new aspect of the vision. This clause's style is unusual; there are thirty-three instances of the phrase *και ειδον* in Revelation, this is the only instance in which the object of a vision, in the accusative, is inserted between *και* and *ειδον*. The phrase descending from heaven is used for the New Jerusalem (in Rev 3:12; 21:10), as well as of an angel (10:1; 18:1; 20:1), fire (13:13; 20:9), and hailstones (16:21). In no other early Jewish or early Christian texts is the heavenly City said to "descend from heaven," but the city is variously described as "coming," "appearing," or "is revealed" (4 Ezra 7:26; 13:36; 10:54). Walvoord says the expression of New Jerusalem the holy city is in antithesis to the earthly Jerusalem, which spiritually was referred as Sodom in 11:8. Nothing is said about New Jerusalem being created at this point. The language implies that it has been in existence in heaven prior to this event. The New Jerusalem is in existence throughout the millennial reign of Christ.⁵³ The idea of New Jerusalem is not uncommon in early Jewish apocalyptic prophecy. New Jerusalem is a place where Saints enjoy God forever Dan.5: 12. This Jewish speculation seemed to envision an areal city located on the spot of the present Jerusalem.⁵⁴ Another suggestion by Ladd is that New Jerusalem is envisioned as already existing in heaven as the dwelling place of the departed saints and that it will descend at the end of time to be the dwelling of all true believers.⁵⁵

However, considerable effort has been expended in accounting for John's characterization of Jerusalem as 'coming down out of heaven' since a similar expression is lacking in Old Testament descriptions of eschatological Jerusalem. This phrase in connection with Jerusalem is repeated in 21.10 and occurs elsewhere only in 3.12. The expectation of a 'heavenly' Jerusalem has its antecedents in the expectation of a new and glorified Jerusalem, which repeatedly surfaces in the Old Testament (Isa. 2,54,60- 62, 65.17-20; Zech. 12-14; Ezek. 40-48). Isa. 65.17-20 certainly could have provided the basis for the concept of a heavenly Jerusalem with its association of Jerusalem with a newly created heavens and new earth. Further precedent for this idea may come from the notion found in Old Testament priestly writings of a heavenly model as the prototype of the earthly tabernacle (Exod. 25.9, 40; 26.30; 27.8; cf. 1 Chron. 28.19). As often noticed, diverse expectations of a new Jerusalem and temple emerge in several apocalyptic texts: 1 Enoch 90.28-29; 91.13; 2 Apoc. Bar. 4.2-6; 6.8, 9; 32.2-4; Jub. 1.29; 4.26; 4 Ezra 7.26; 10.25-28, 54.⁵⁶

The two texts' closest parallels to Rev. 21.2 are generally regarded as contemporary with John's Apocalypse. In the vision of 4 Ezra 10.25-28, the seer beholds a mourning woman (Zion) who is transformed into a newly built city. That Ezra envisions a pre-existent city is suggested in 10.54; 13.15-36, where the city, invisible at present, appears from heaven in a place where there was nothing previously. A similar concept is attested in 2 Apoc. Bar. 4.2-6, where Jerusalem is depicted as carved on God's palms (Isa. 49.16), as pre-existent and shown previously to Adam, Abraham, and Moses. It is preserved along with paradise in heaven (v. 6). The

⁵⁰ Richard Middleton, *Anew Heaven and a New Earth Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*(Michigan: Baker Academic,2014), 169.

⁵¹ Aune, *Revelation*, 1133.

⁵² Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 276.

⁵³ Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, 312.

⁵⁴ WitheringtonIII, *Revelation*, 254.

⁵⁵ L add, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 276.

⁵⁶ David Mathewson, "New Heaven and a New Earth The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 238(2003):238-239.

descent of the city from heaven to earth seems to be implied in these texts, though it is not explicitly stated (Gal. 4.26; Heb. 12.22). However, John's description of a heavenly Jerusalem remains firmly tied to his Old Testament. John understands the new Jerusalem of Isaiah in terms of the apocalyptic heavenly Jerusalem. John's depiction of the new Jerusalem as a coming down out of heaven' reflects the Author's language of spatial movement, where *καταβαίνω* along with *ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* frequently describe the heavenly origin of various entities, and often in participial form. More important, however, is the function of the apocalyptic heavenly Jerusalem within John's visionary construct. By interpreting the new Jerusalem of Isaiah in light of later apocalyptic developments regarding the heavenly city, John has further emphasized the transcendence of the new situation and the apocalyptic discontinuity between the old and new orders. Thus, in keeping with John's stress on discontinuity and a qualitatively new order, a city that comes out of heaven as a new act of God coheres with the vision of a new heaven and earth of 21.1. Though Schiessler Fiorenza denies that a pre-existent city is envisaged here, she correctly perceives that John's emphasis is primarily on the heavenly origin of the city.⁵⁷

The term *νύμφη*, *bride*, is used by the Church here and in 21:9 and 22:17 in Revelation, but not elsewhere in early Christian literature. The metaphorical *τοπος* "as an adorned bride," however, is found in a variety of forms in ancient literature, primarily inspired by Isa 61:10, which uses the simile "'as a bride adorns herself with her jewels ."In the Greek world, the bride's adornment, i.e., her trousseau, consisted primarily of clothing and jewelry for his daughter, who was about to be married. 1 Tim 2:9, however, recommends that women not adorn themselves with braided hair, gold, or expensive clothes. The adornment of the bride = New Jerusalem is in conscious antithesis to the adornment of the whore Babylon (Rev 17:4).

P. M. Sweet says the idea of New Jerusalem goes back to the destruction of 587 BC and the prophecies of Second Isaiah. However, disillusionment with the actual restoration led to the idea being spiritualized, like that of Messiah.⁵⁸

Bauckham Richard explains New Jerusalem as a place, people, and divine presence in his book *The Theology of the book of Revelation*.⁵⁹ However, one widespread view is that the New Jerusalem symbolizes the saints. Schiessler Fiorenza, however, argues that the New Jerusalem is distinguished from the saints: (1) Rev 21:2 compares the city to a bride; the city cannot be that bride. (2) Rev 21:7 mentions that the saints will inherit the city; they cannot be the city. (3) The city is described as where the saints dwell (21:24-26).⁶⁰ William Barclay argues that it is a place. It is a dream of the Jews that never died -the dream of restoring Jerusalem, the holy city. It has a background that is essentially Greek. Plato's doctrines of ideas or forms contributed to the world's philosophical thought significantly. He taught that in the invisible world, the perfect form or idea of everything upon the earth was imperfect copies of the heavenly realities. If so, there is heavenly Jerusalem, an imperfect copy of the earthly Jerusalem. That is the way Paul thinks when he speaks of the above Jerusalem (Gal 4: 26) and also what is in the mind of the author Hebrews when he speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb12: 22). Another background of the conception of the New Jerusalem is entirely Jewish. In his synagogue form of prayer and to Jerusalem city return to with compassion, and rebuild her speedily in our days, O Lord builder of Jerusalem. John's vision of New Jerusalem uses and amplifies many of the dreams of the prophets. We shall set down some of the dreams, and it will be clear how the OT again finds its echo in Revelation. Isaiah had his dream (Isaiah 54:11,12), and Ezekiel had his dream of rebuilding Jerusalem (Ezk48: 31-35). Jews never lost confidence that God would restore it.⁶¹

Ladd says heavenly Jerusalem is represented as the dwelling place of the - departed saints; heaven is not their ultimate destiny, but only the temporary abode of the saints between death and resurrection (Rev: 9-11:). In the consummation after the resurrection (20:4), the heavenly Jerusalem will descend from heaven to take up its permanent location on the new earth.⁶² John P Newport comments that the destination of the New

⁵⁷ Mathewson, "New Heaven and a New Earth The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5 "239.

⁵⁸ Sweet J P M, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: The West Minister Press, 1979), 299.

⁵⁹ Bauckham Richard, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 132.

⁶⁰ Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just Word*, 221.

⁶¹ William Barclay, *Revelation of John* (Bangalore: Theological Publication India, 2004), 201-202.

⁶² Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 276.

Jerusalem is earth. God has come to make His eternal dwelling with us.⁶³ Hughs Endgame Philip also concludes that the new Jerusalem is on the new earth.⁶⁴ However, John F Walvoord says if the New Jerusalem exists throughout the millennium reign of Christ, it may be a satellite city suspended over the earth during the Millenium reign of Jesus as the dwelling place of resurrected saints who also have access to the earthly scene. Moreover, the New Jerusalem is withdrawn from the earthly scene in connection with the destruction of the old earth and later comes down to the new earth.⁶⁵

V.3 "I heard a loud voice from the throne." Though the speaker is not explicitly identified, it is not necessarily God or Christ since the voice refers to God in the third person. On the motif of the unidentified heavenly voice." Behold, the dwelling of God is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people." This is almost certainly an allusion to Ezek 37:27, "My dwelling place reads, "and I will bless them and make them numerous, and I will place my sanctuary in the midst of them forever. I will make My Shekinah dwell among them." One must decide whether *laos* or *laoi* is the proper reading here. The textual evidence is fully balanced. Ben Witherington III comments

The following consideration seems germane. (1) Elsewhere in the book, *laos* is not a technical term for Israel, the O T people of God. Indeed the term is even used by Gentile nations. (2) in this chapter, John will speak of "outsiders" - nations and kings outside the city of god who is being allowed into it. Our Author believes there will be those saved from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. In light of these considerations, *laoi* is likely the proper and original reading of John's vision that goes beyond the OT's one of the people of God. Here we are introduced to the peoples of God (i.e., Jews and various Gentile ethnic groups).⁶⁶

The word dwelt (*σκενω*) is not the usual word for "dwell" but is the same word as used in Revelation 21:2. It is a direct variant of the word for "tabernacle" (*σκενε*), also used in this verse. In the eternal age, however, he will set up his dwelling place on earth and tabernacle forever.⁶⁷ According to the OT, God's tabernacle with his people led naturally to the concept of God's glory in their midst. We beheld his glory," said John, when the word "dwelt among us" (Jhn1: 14)⁶⁸ The tabernacle was a temporary tent in the wilderness. This implies that God is to make his tabernacle among the men forever. Barclay says that here in this world, and amidst the things of time, our realization of the presence of God is spasmodic, but in heaven, we will be permanently aware of that presence. In the new age, the glory of God is not to be a transitory thing but something which abides permanently with the people of God.⁶⁹

He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them" . This is a fulfillment of the ancient promise, articulated in the Pentateuch, that YHWH would "dwell" (*שָׁכַן* *šākan*) among Israel as his people (Exod. 29:45–46) or set his "dwelling" (*מִשְׁכַּן* *miskan*) among them (Lev. 26:11–12). Indeed, the Greek word for "dwell" in Revelation 21:3 (which typically translates *שָׁכַן* *šākan*), the same verb used of the incarnation of the Word in John 1:14. Similarly, "home" in Revelation 21:3 translates the related noun *σκενε* (*skene*), which the Septuagint uses for the tabernacle (Hebrew *מִשְׁכַּן* *miskan*). However, two distinctive verbs are used in the Old Testament for God's presence. The verb *שָׁכַן* *šākan* is often used for God's "dwelling" with Israel, especially in the tabernacle, and Ezekiel 43:7 promises God's permanent or eternal dwelling (also using *שָׁכַן* *šākan*) in the eschatological temple. However, the verb (*יָשַׁב* *yasab*) is reserved for God "sitting" (on a throne, thus "ruling") in heaven. Some Israelites may have thought that YHWH was domiciled in the Jerusalem temple, but Isaiah has a vision of "the Lord sitting (*יָשַׁב* *yasab*) on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple" (Isa. 6:1). The scale of the vision is staggering; YHWH cannot be contained in the Jerusalem temple (as Solomon recognizes in 1 Kings 8:27). Isaiah's vision thus implies that the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies is not God's throne (as might have been popularly thought), but only God's footstool; indeed, as YHWH proclaims later in Isaiah, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool" (Isa. 66:1)⁷⁰

⁶³ Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb*, 305.

⁶⁴ Philip, *The Book of Revelation*, 222.

⁶⁵ Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, 312-313.

⁶⁶ Witherington, *Revelation*, 252.

⁶⁷ Aune, *Revelation*, 1134.

⁶⁸ Morris, *The Revelation Record*, 439-440.

⁶⁹ Barclay, *Revelation*, 203.

⁷⁰ Richard Middleton, *Anew Heaven, and a New Earth Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*, 169-170.

According to John F Walvoord, it symbolizes God's presence with men in the new earth and the New Jerusalem.⁷¹ Tim Lahaye says God's tabernacle is no longer in the third heaven. So he will move His headquarters to the new earth and take up his abode in the New Jerusalem.⁷² However, this view cannot be accepted. The preferable view is that New Jerusalem exists throughout the millennium reign of Christ, as said by Walvoord. *Moreover, God himself will be with them as their God.* This text appears to be corrupt. "They shall be for me a people, and I will be for them forever." The phrase "God is with someone" is a metaphor for the presence of God reflecting victory in battle (Deut 7:21; 20:4; 23:14 etc) or for a variety of other spiritual and temporal advantages and blessings (Gen 21:20; 31:5; 48:21; Exodus 3:12 etc), and occasionally it is affirmed that God was "with" Jesus John 3:2; Acts 10:38). It can also be a wish or prayer, Here the eschatological reality of the presence of God is no longer just metaphorical but actual.⁷³ Ladd comments that this is the oft-repeated aim of the divine self—Revelation and all Gods dealing with His people. All the promises of God's covenant with men, made first through Abraham, renewed through Moses, and embodied in Christ, are finally realized.⁷⁴ Jacob Ratnasingam comments that Paul says the mosaic tabernacle is only a type of heaven, which is called "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb 8: 2). The earthly tabernacle of Moses had three places, namely the outer court, the holy place, and most holy place. These three places correspond with the new earth, the new heaven, and the new Jerusalem. All these heavenly places constitute the heavenly tabernacle which 'the Lord pitched not man' after his resurrection, Jesus entered in too third place as a 'minister of the sanctuary (Heb8: 3). It is where he enthroned as our high priest, on the right hand of the majesty in the heaven (Heb8: 1)⁷⁵

V.4, and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. This statement is a verbatim repetition of Rev 7:17, as well as a clear allusion to Isa 25:8, "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, 'And again, God will take away every tear from every face.' On the eschatological cessation of weeping and mourning motif, Isa 35:10; 51:11; 65:19; Matt 5:4 Luke 6:21; cf. Ps 116:8. Matthew uses the descriptive term "weeping and gnashing of teeth" to describe the fate of those cast into outer darkness (Matt 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30), a fate for which there is no respite. The Epicurean view of the gods was that they lived in perfect peace and tranquility, free from all grief, sorrow, and pain, and served as models for human aspirations. For the Epicureans, death also functioned as the cessation of pain and sorrow, a common in ancient consolation literature. John had wept at the thought that there was no one worthy to open the book and break the seal in heaven, earth or under earth. Is there any answer to the problem of the earth's evil? His vision had answered the question. The lamb has conquered and He is worthy. Now he finds that tears, too, have gone forever.⁷⁶ Hanns Lije points out that the ancient promise of Isa 7:14, "God with us," has been fulfilled. No longer do we see the gloomy vision of cosmic anxiety.⁷⁷

The first part of this clause is an allusion to Isa 25:8, he will swallow up death forever, a passage also cited in 1 Cor 15:54. The phrase "the previous things have passed away" is an apparent allusion to the term חַרְשֵׁי עוֹלָם (harisonowt) "the first things," in Isa 65:17b, which refers to the troubles connected with the earlier fate of Jerusalem. In contrast, the former things in Rev 21:1—5b refer to conditions obtained during the existence of the first heaven and first earth.⁷⁸ The phrase ὅτι τὰ πρότερα ἀπῆλθαν, for the previous things, have passed away refers back to the disappearance of the first heaven, the first earth, and the sea in v 1. This particular phrase might allude to three passages in Isaiah: (1) Isa 65:17 (which has influenced the content of Rev 21:1-4), (2) Isa

⁷¹ Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, 314.

⁷² Tim Lahaye, *Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 308.

⁷³ Aune, *Revelation*, 1137.

⁷⁴ Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 277.

⁷⁵ Jacob Ratnasingam, *An Exposition Of the Book of Revelation* (Madras: The Pentecostal Mission, 1975), 269.

⁷⁶ Morris, *The Revelation of St John*, 245.

⁷⁷ Hanns Lije, *The Last Book of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 259.

⁷⁸ Aune, *Revelation*, 1139.

65:16c, “ (3) Isa 43:18 “Do not consider the former things, or consider the things of old.” A similar allusion to Isa 43:18 is found in 2 Cor 5:17. The rabbinic conception of *השׁוּבָה*(hadasah)"New creation" deals not with cosmic renewal but with various aspects of the renewal of the individual or the renewal of d.3 According to Ben, the individual's external situation or relationship to God.⁷⁹According to WitheringtonII, John contrasted new with the first heaven and earth. Because of what John has already said about the two resurrections, this sounds like replacement language.⁸⁰

V.5 This is a clear allusion to Isa 43:19, Behold, I am doing something new. The apocalyptic theme of cosmic renewal may be reflected. A microcosmic application of the apocalyptic notion of the recreation or renewal of the world is found in 2 Cor 5:17, where Paul says that those in Christ are a "new creation; what is old has disappeared; behold, it has become new ."This is probably also an allusion to Isa 43:18-19. It is clear that the short speech in vv 5-8 is attributed to God himself and is the only such speech in Revelation, except for the brief self-disclosure in 1:8⁸¹

John F Walvoord points out that the word introduces the grand pronouncement are made: behold, I make all things new." or "to see." The verb makes *ποιεω* means "to make, from, or construct" and is a common verb used many times in the NT for a work of accomplishment. However, this proves that no new heaven or earth is created at this time because the specific word creates is not used as building. The same word *ποιεω* is used in Mathew19: 4, Where God is said to have "Made" Adam and Eve, both the word Create *κατεζωω*(w and the word made *ποιεω* for the same act. Everything, of course, is not created on the occasion of the 'new heaven and the new earth,' as all the saints involved have come from old creation; but all things are made new in the same sense that eve was made a new creature though framed from the rib of Adam. The word for “new” means to be both new in character and new in the sense of recently made. It connotes a drastic strange. ⁸²

Mathewson, argues that Rev. 21.5 resonates with the implications of this scriptural text. The effect of this association is that the allusion to Isa. 43.19 provides a new exodus context for the final eschatological scenario in 21.1-5a. Consequently, we can now sketch a complete picture from the cumulative effect of several earlier texts in establishing the second exodus/return pattern. Following their deliverance from Babylon (chs. 17-18), in a new exodus (21.5a; Isa. 43.19), the saints are restored to their homeland, a new heaven and new earth (21.1; Isa. 65.17-18), with the restored bride-new Jerusalem at its center (21.2; Isa. 52.1; 61.10) where God establishes his dwelling with his people in a renewed covenant relationship (21.3; Ezek. 37.26-7), the very goal of the first exodus (cf. Exod. 6.7; 15.17; 25.8). This proposed scenario finds further corroboration from the fact that the presence of new exodus traditions found in 21.1 -5a is part of Revelation's development of exodus typology more generally.⁸³

Exodus typology is particularly visible in the following sections, which correspond to the tripartite pattern of redemption-judgment-inheritance: (1) Rev. 1.5-6 and 5.9-10, where Christ is presented as the passover Lamb; (2) the trumpet and bowl judgments in 8.6-11.19; 15.5-16.21, which are modeled on the exodus plagues, and which elicit the same response from their objects: hardened hearts; (3) the sealing of the servants after the pattern of Israel's protection in Egypt, the redemption by the blood of the Lamb, the white robes, and God's tabernacling over his people in 7.1-17; the mention of Zion, the intimate fellowship with God, and the inheritance to priestly service in 14.1-5; the sequence in 15.1-5, where following the plagues, the people are depicted as standing by the eschatological Red Sea (v. 2) and singing the song of Moses (w. 3-4); and the priestly vocation of the people of God (20.1-6), which reaches a climax with the unrestricted presence of God with his people in a covenant relationship (21.1-8,9-21) where they reign as kings and priests (22.5).

The metaphorical usage of the word sea complex in the message Revelation reflects a similar situation. The sea is the source of the chaotic, evil powers threatening God's kingdom (12.18-13.1; cf. 17.1, 15). Thus, most commentators have correctly concluded that the disappearance of the sea in 21.1c refers to the sea as a symbol of chaos, the source of evil and powers hostile to God, which must pass away with the establishment of the new order. The chaotic, forboding power, which gave rise to the satanic beast (13,1), has disappeared. The closest antecedent to the mention of the sea in Rev. 21.1 c is Rev. 20.13, where the sea is portrayed as the realm of the dead. More importantly, 21.1 parallels 21.4 in the chiasmic arrangement of these verses. Thus, the

⁷⁹ Aune, *Revelation*, 1139.

⁸⁰ Witherington, *Revelation*, 252.

⁸¹ Aune, *Revelation*, 1140.

⁸² Walvoord., *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*,316.

⁸³ Mathewson, “New Heaven and a New Earth The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5 ”69.

disappearance of the sea parallels the disappearance of the afflictions suffered by God's people in the old order. All of these connotations—chaos; a realm of evil powers; the abode of the dead; affliction, and suffering—contribute negative notion of the sea as incompatible with the new creation and constitutes a barrier to its enjoyment. Consequently, its removal is a prerequisite to establishing the new order (21.1c).⁸⁴

Chaoskampf motif is indebted to Ugaritic mythology, where the god struggles with and triumphs over the sea monster/chaos. Whatever the precise background for 51.9-10, 'the prophet identifies the mythical time of the conflict with the watery chaos with the historical time of the Exodus when Yahweh prepared a way for his people through the Sea of Reeds'; therefore, the exodus at the Red Sea is conceived of as a victory over the primordial powers of chaos and evil which oppose and oppress God's people (Isa. 51.9). The subduing of the sea in 51.9 is a prelude to entrance into Zion (v. 11). Like Zech. 10.11, this will mean the absence of sorrow and mourning (v. 11). This notion is also present in Rev. 21.1c. The disappearance of the sea in 21.1c is chiasmatically paired with the absence of sorrow and affliction in 21.4, the same connection found in Isa. 51.10-11 and Zech. 10.11. Therefore, just as Yahweh won a victory over chaos by 'drying up' the Red Sea, which barred the way to freedom, so he will once again remove all opposition through a victory over the hostile forces when he dries up the sea of chaos and affliction in a new exodus from exile so the redeemed can cross over safely into their inheritance. A close parallel to Rev. 21.1c can be found in Lev. 27.4, and God's drying of the sea in the time to come is connected with the drying of the sea at the first exodus, followed by a citation from Exod. 14.16.⁸⁵

"He also said, 'write, for this message is trustworthy and true.'" This is the last of several commands to write with the entire composition in view (Rev 1:11, 19; 21:5; cf. 10:4) rather than just the partial texts that are the objects of the commands to be written in 14:13 and 19:9. The phrase, "this message is trustworthy and true," occurs again verbatim in 22:6, while in 19:9 we find the parallel phrase, "these are the true words of God." In Greco-Roman divinatory charms, there is a significant concern, as there is here, emphasizing the truthfulness of the Revelation, implying the apparent possibility of unreliable revelations.⁸⁶

V.6 The subject of *γέγοναν*, *it is finished*, a third-person plural perfect verb, is unexpressed, though it may imply *πάντα ταῦτα*, "all these things" (Matt 24:3334), the eschatological events that are part of the eternal plan of God. John uses plural verbs with neuter plural nouns almost as frequently as he uses singular verbs with neuter plural nouns construes *οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι*, "these words," as the subject of *γέγοναν*. The verb *γέγοναν* has a close parallel with 16:17, where a voice from the throne announces, after pouring out of the seventh bowl, "It is finished *γέγοναν!*" Here, *γέγοναν* is a third-person singular perfect verb. According to John 19:28, Jesus' final utterance on the cross before his death was *τετέλεσται*, "it is finished." It has been suggested that this is an attempt to translate the Hebrew "amen" into Greek.⁸⁷

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." The divine title "Alpha and Omega" occurs several times in Revelation (1:8a; 21:6; 22:13). In 1:8a and 21:6, it is used for God, while in 22:13, it is used for Christ. In each context, the title is not used alone. However, it is juxtaposed with other titles, each emphasizing God's absolute power and sovereignty (in 1:8 and 21:6) or Christ (in 22:13), and each serves to define and expand the others. The Beginning and End motif are also stated negatively; it describes the Gnostic God as 'without beginning or end.'⁸⁸ Hughes Endgame Philip says that What he starts, he brings to fulfillment. His purpose, as the creator of all things, cannot fail of realized. The end is implanted in the beginning. The divine alpha guarantees the attainment of the divine omega.⁸⁹ Tim Lahaye says He is the end not merely in point of time, but the goal, the consummation, the one through whom all things reach their grand climax. "For of him, and through him, and to Him, are all things: to him be glory forever"(Rome 1: 36).⁹⁰ Ben Witherington III comments that the creator or Author of our life is now seen as the finisher or completer of life. Thus, we will hear of creation renewed, restored, and recreated in the 'new heaven and new earth.' God is not merely at the

⁸⁴ Mathewson, "New Heaven and a New Earth The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5" 69.

⁸⁵ Mathewson, "New Heaven and a New Earth The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1-22.5" 69.

⁸⁶ Aune, *Revelation*, 1142.

⁸⁷ Aune, 1143.

⁸⁸ Aune, *Revelation*, 1143.

⁸⁹ Philip, *The Book of Revelation*, 224.

⁹⁰ Lahaye, *Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain*, 351-52.

beginning and end of things; God is the beginner and ender of things. Therefore, God is both the source and goal of human life. The divine plan is the humans to go forward and dwell with God in the divine presence forever in an eternal, loving relationship.⁹¹

6c "I will freely give some water to the one who is thirsty from the well of living water." This is an allusion, with the addition of the motif of the well of living water, to Isa 55:1 "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters ... Come, buy wine and milk without money and price." Isa 55:1, applied to Wisdom, is also alluded to in Sir 55:23—25 and Tg. Isa. 55:1. The "I" of v 6c makes it clear that God is the one who makes living water freely available to the thirsty, whereas, in Rev 7:17, it is the Lamb who leads people to the fountains of living water. The same combination of motifs also occurs in Rev 22:17, John 7:37-38.

The phrase *ῥῥωρ ζωῆς*, literally, the water of life, is ambiguous in that it can mean "flowing water," or it can be used in a religious sense of "living water," i.e., "water of (eternal) life" or "water, that is, eternal life". The imagery of this verse has several motifs in common with John 4:4-16, including (1) the *πηγῆ*, "well," in 4:6a, 6b, 14, (2) the phrase *ῥῥωρ ζωῆς*, "living water" (4:10, 11, 14; cf. 7:38; always as an adjectival participle in John, whereas in Revelation the noun (*ζωῆ* "life," is always used with *ῥῥωρ* as a descriptive or appositional genitive), (3) the emphasis on "living water" as a gift from God (4:10), and (4) the use of the verb, *διδόναι* "to give" (4:14, 15). Particularly close grammatically is the sentence in John 4:14, where a putative genitive is used as the object of the verb *δώσω*, "I will give": "Whoever drinks some of the water which I will give him will never thirst forever, but the water which I will give him will be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life. ⁹²The adverb freely emphasizes that God's gift is not grudging. On the contrary, the thirsty rely on a total and free supply of their need. ⁹³Ben Witherington III suggests that since God is the source of life, it is only appropriate to freely offer the water of life for the thirsty to drink. Humanity has been made so that we thirst for life that only God can give. Water was the difference between life and death in a dry, weary land like Israel. ⁹⁴Ladd says the figure of thirst represents the sense of spiritual need, hunger, and thirst after God. Therefore, the final degree of salvation will not be arbitrary; the way is open to all who will sense their need and turn to God to be satisfied.⁹⁵

V.7 Those who conquer will inherit these things (21:7). The substantival participle *ὁ νικῶν*, the one who conquers, introduces a promise-of-victory formula Similar to the seven formulas found after each of the seven proclamations (Rev2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Deliberative rhetoric is used here, i.e., John calls his audience for repentance because this is not for everyone but only for the one who conquers. Even though *ὁ νικῶν* is singular, it is undoubtedly restricted not to a single person who conquers but to all those who conquer. Hence it can reasonably be understood to mean, with the NRSV, "those who conquer. ⁹⁶Victor is assured that he will inherit all things in the final triumph. He will have no lack.⁹⁷ Ben Witherington III points out that the blessed state of eternal life is only for those who conquer, those who overcome and become sons and daughters of God, a part of the family, and so able to inherit all these things. ⁹⁸

"For I will be their God, and they will be my children." This is probably a metaphor based on ancient adoption law, providing a reasonable basis for the right of inheritance mentioned in v 7a. The father-child (father-son) imagery in this phrase reflects the adaptation of adoption language in the Davidic covenant tradition reflected in 2 Sam 7:14 and several other passages in the OT (Pss 2:7; 89:26-27; Jer 4:19 etc.). This covenant formula based on the metaphorical use of adoption language is also found in Job. 1:24, "And I shall be a father

⁹¹ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 256.

⁹² Aune, *Revelation*, 1145.

⁹³ Morris, *The Revelation of St John*, 246.

⁹⁴ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 256.

⁹⁵ Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 279.

⁹⁶ Aune, *Revelation*, 1148.

⁹⁷ Morris, *The Revelation of St John*, 246.

⁹⁸ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 256.

to them, and they will be sons to me.⁹⁹ Donald Gracy points out that John emphasizes that the new relationship with God will be personal and corporate.¹⁰⁰

V8 "they will experience the lake that burns with fire and sulfur." Here we see Judicial or forensic rhetoric used by John. The lake of fire and sulfur is mentioned six times in Revelation (19:20; 20:10, 14[2x], 15; 21:8); 19:20. It is striking that vice lists often formally consists of two main sections, the list of vices (v 8a) and the penalty for those who do such things (v 8b). Such penalty clauses following vice lists are found in Rom 1:32a; 1 Cor 6:10; Gal 5:21b; Eph 5:5; Col 3:6; 1 Pet 4:5¹⁰¹

Second death the second death is mentioned four times in Revelation (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8) on 20:6. Here it is of interest that Isa 65:17—20 has exerted demonstrable influence on Rev 21:1—5 and that the conception of the second death found here also occurs in Isa. 65:6, 15.¹⁰² This warns those who reject God's invitation, whether they call themselves Christian. The grim ending is a list of those whose place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur, which is the second death.¹⁰³ Here we see Judicial or forensic rhetoric used by John.

MEANING AND THEOLOGY OF THE TEXT

The systematic study of this particular text gives the insight that John sees a 'New heaven and a new earth' in place of the first heaven and earth and the sea that had "passed away" (21:1) or had "fled away" (20:11) from the presence of God. It is peculiar that such an essential cosmic cataclysm is passed over with just two oblique references. The destruction of heaven and earth was part of the Synoptic tradition (Matt 5:18 Luke 16:17; Mark 13:31 Matt 24:35 Luke 21:33) and occasionally appears in second-century Christian literature (2 Pet 3:10-13). The prophetic conception of a 'new heaven and a new earth' in which Edenic conditions prevail is found in Isa 65:17-25. This idea is based on the supposition that a transformation of creation is necessary so that the perfect life of the eternal kingdom will be set within a perfect environment.

The descent of the New Jerusalem is accompanied by an explanation from the throne that God now dwells with people and that all death and suffering are now eliminated from human experience (vv 3-4) since primordial conditions of bliss and perfection have been reinstated. In some strands of Jewish eschatology, the heavenly Jerusalem descends to earth to replace the earthly Jerusalem, or a heavenly temple replaces the earthly temple. The climactic statement of God found in vv 5-8 succinctly summarizes the central message of Revelation. The following message states that those who conquer, i.e., hold fast to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, will be children of God and enjoy the 'new heaven and new earth' including eternal blessedness; those who do not turn from their sinful ways will be punished with eternal torment.

However, when we come to the theology of the text, the critical issue here is whether this 'new heaven and new earth' is connected with the Parousia of Christ or merely political deliverance—or accomplished fully when Israel became a nation in 1947. Or is 'new heaven and new earth' part of "Partially realized eschatology" or entirely future-oriented? Therefore, we would like to analyze different interpretations of the particular text before we conclude.

When we come to the Preterist view, they interpret that new creation begins in the first century itself. They give several reasons, which are given below:

1). John's frame demands a first-century context. "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near" (Rev.22: 10) . A delay of several thousand years would dominate sound exegesis of these clear temporal statements.

2). Revelation flow expects a first-century setting. As Robert Thomas notes, there is a significant antithesis between the two women in the end chapters of the apocalypse.¹⁰⁴ However, Kenneth L . Gentry says the coming of the New Jerusalem down from heaven (Rev.21-22) should follow soon upon the destruction of the old Jerusalem on earth rather than waiting thousands of years.

3). The new creation language suggests the first-century setting. The new creation begins flowing into history before final consummation. The paradigmatic new creation passage that serves as John's backdrop is

⁹⁹ Aune, *Revelation*, 1148.

¹⁰⁰ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Revelation* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, House, 1977), 152.

¹⁰¹ Aune, *Revelation*, 1148.

¹⁰² Aune, *Revelation*, 1149.

¹⁰³ Michaels, *Revelation*, 239.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 569.

Isaiah 65:17-20 behold, I will create...accursed. Here Isaiah writes that this new creation still experiences sin, aging, and death. Thus it cannot refer to heaven or the consummate, eternal new creation. Paul uses similar language to John's (Rev: 1) when he describes the Christian new condition in Christ

4). NT theology supports a first-century setting. In the NT, the Church appears as the bride of Christ (Jn 3:29, Eph 5:28). This new bride (the international Church) must replace the old wife (the racially based Church, Israel). This change is dramatically finalized in AD 70 when God removes the physical temple from the earth. The NT anticipates this imminent change of the old typological temple era into the new final era of spiritual worship. (Jn.4: 21-23) the Pentecost experience in Acts 2 itself anticipates the fast-approaching day of the Lord Jerusalem for crying Christ.

Preterist believes that John is expressing, using high poetic imagery, the glory of salvation. Thus preterist concludes 'new heaven and new earth' began in the first century itself. The absence of the sea speaks of harmony and peace within. In scripture, the sea often symbolizes discord and sin. The bride's Church is the tabernacle temple of God (Rev.21: 3) because God dwells within her; no literal temple is needed. The old Jerusalem with its tabernacle/temple "made with hands" is passing as the new Jerusalem temple supplants it (Heb8: 13; 9:11). This was finalized in AD 70.¹⁰⁵

Idealist views the 'new heaven and new earth' not as the replacement of heaven and earth; instead, it assures believers that God will provide an eternal dwelling place that is beautiful, safe, and secure.¹⁰⁶The serenity and peace of this place will not be disturbed by the troubled sea (Isa57: 20), for the 'new heaven and new earth' will not have a sea from which evil raises its ugly head (Rev13: 1).

The majority of the vision deals with the unveiling of the holy city, the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb (21:2) . The New Jerusalem is not a place but a people.¹⁰⁷ It is not the final home of the redeemed; it is redeemed! New Jerusalem is the symbol of the bride, the Church. It is the natural community of the individuals who have fellowship with God. The city is the ideal condition of Christ's flock, enjoying its victory in Christ over both sin and death. Of course, the New Jerusalem is not a remote possibility in the distant future. The city portrays a real encounter with living Christ within the fellowship of the Church here and now through fragmented and sporadic. This analogy should quell the complacency of Laodicean congregation throughout the ages.¹⁰⁸

The holy city descends from heaven, indicating its gracious origin. The name "Jerusalem" reflects the continuity between the old and new covenant, between the ancient sanctuary and its eternal successor. At the same time, the adjective "new" and "holy" distinguish from the present dispensation. The 'new heaven and new earth' with its holy city is the stage on which the world witnesses the marriage of the Lamb, who is mentioned seven times in the final two chapters of Revelation. Now the unbelievers will find their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (21:8). The marriage of the Church illustrates the complete and perfect fulfillment of the covenant promise found throughout scripture. (Gen17: 7:Jer31: 33; Rom.4: 22; 2Cor: 16). The divine marriage from the throne proclaims, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them and be their God" (Rev21: 3) the marriage of the Lamb and New Jerusalem provides intimate and abiding fellowship with God.¹⁰⁹

The classical dispensationalist view accepts the new creation but places it after the future temporal kingdom of a thousand years on earth. Revelation 21:1-22:5 provides the most extensive biblical Revelation about the new heaven and earth.

The new creation will be the scene of Christ's eternal kingdom on the present earth. John's overview of the new creation constitutes the eighth and last seal of the seventh bowl judgment (21: 1-8). Though the bulk of this scene tells of future bliss and not judgment (21:1-7), the last verse (21:8) describes exclusion from the new creation because God relegated the rebels to the lake of fire (20-12-15). An extensive elaboration regarding the New Jerusalem, the wonder of new creation, follows in 21:9-22:5.

This dispensationalism allows for the material reality of the new creation and its ethical perfection but acknowledges that its description is an accommodation to finite minds. The 'new heaven and new earth' will exceed human comprehension because no human has experienced it. Unquestionably, the tangible aspect of the city's architecture has symbolic meaning but does not deny its materiality. An infinite God will create this city,

¹⁰⁵ Kenneth L.Gentry Jr, *A Preterist view of Revelation*,87-90.

¹⁰⁶ Morris, 243.

¹⁰⁷ Millgan, *The Book of Revelation* cited by Sam Hamstra, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, ed. by Marvin Pate (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 87.

¹⁰⁸ Hamstra, *An Idealistic View of Revelation*, 123-125.

¹⁰⁹Hamstra, *An Idealistic View of Revelation*, 125.

illuminated by his glory. An advanced preview in this portion of Revelation is as much as humans can grasp in this life.¹¹⁰

Progressive dispensationalist believes in partially realized eschatology. They see the book of Revelation in "already /not yet eschatological tension ."Revelation 21-22 and its portrayal of the eternal state will be treated no differently here. The key to grasping the significance of these chapters, they suggest, is to realize that they envision the feature restoration of paradise lost (not yet aspect, which is to be actualized at the second coming of Christ. (The already aspect, which begins with the first coming of Christ).

Progressive dispensationalist believes Revelation 21.1ff envisions the feature restoration of several paradisiacal blessings, which are partially being fulfilled now for believers in Christ; some are given below.

1) The new creation of the eternal state will restore the old creation marred by the fall of Adam and Eve. However, even now, when people place their faith in Christ, they participate in the new creation.

2) The eternal state will fully recover the presence and fellowship with God that humanity lost in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, Christ, the temple and locus of God's presence, is in the process of restoring that fellowship to the believers.

3) The eternal state will witness the defeat of death and the gift of eternal life, with which death and resurrection of Christ have already begun.¹¹¹

IV. CONCLUSION

Socio-Rhetorical Analysis and Interpretation Judicial and Deliberative rhetoric are seen in this passage but generally judicial. "new heaven and new earth" imagery consider dynamic rhetoric used by John to persuade the troubled Church in his own time. As we have seen in the previous text, John again used judicial language to portray God as a righteous Judge, 'and He sitting on the throne said, ". At the same time he brings the tribunal of God in this particular context. Then He said after making everything new, "It is finished"(Greek *γέγοναν*). (v.6) Here, *γέγοναν* is a third-person singular perfect verb. According to John 19:28, Jesus' final utterance on the cross before his death was *τετέλεσται* "it is finished." The first word of Jesus "it is finished" signifies the purpose of His first coming accomplished. However, in Revelation, it is the accomplishment of His second coming. Through this, we can clearly understand that the "new heaven and new earth" is not only a political change but also accurate, coming after the Parousia of Christ. Then he uses deliberative rhetoric to warn the people influenced by Rome and its corruption. "But as for the cowards and unbelievers and the abominable and murderers and the immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all who lie, they will experience the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."(V.8). The indented rhetorical effect of this verse was not to criticize the lost or take pride in their demise but to warn the faithful of the dangers of spiritual or moral apostasy. Since this deliberative rhetoric is concerned with the future aspect, thus "new heaven and new earth" though" partially realized," it is fully realized after the Parousia and white throne judgment. It is also a replacement for old heaven and old earth.

As discussed above, all the interpretations are helpful in getting a complete understanding of the text. Preterist can teach us about God's powerful dealings with humanity in the past, while classical dispensationalist reminds us that God's work is not yet finished; only the future will unveil the full scope of the divine plan. Progressive perhaps offers a balanced statement of the previous views, arguing that the past is proof positive that God will fulfill in the future what he started. Meanwhile, the idealist provides a model for applying God's prophetic word to our contemporary and changing situations. However, the fulfillment of these casts the preterist regards them as prophecy primarily accomplished in the first Christian centuries. At the same time, the classical dispensationalist believes their realization awaits the future, and the progressive dispensationalist argues that there was partial actualization of Jesus' Statement surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, which serves as a backdrop for their final fulfillment at the end of history. For the idealist, Jesus's comments were not prophecies but symbolic statements about the present structure of spiritual reality. According to progressive Revelation, the kingdom of God is down in heaven, but it has not yet appeared on earth. That awaits the return of Christ. Therefore we can conclude that 'new heaven and new earth' is not merely a political reform in the first-century context, nor is it accomplished fully when Israel became a nation in 1947; instead, it is partially realized.

¹¹⁰ Robert L Thomas Classical Dispensationalist View of Revelation, *The Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, ed. by Marvin Pate (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 209-210.

¹¹¹ Marvin Pate, A Progressive Dispensationalist View of Revelation, ed. Marvin Pate, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 171-172.