

Three Sacred Cities: Earthly and Heavenly

The Forbidden City – Recently during President Trump’s visit to China, he visited the Forbidden City, a vast imperial palace complex located in Beijing that served as the home of Chinese emperors during the Ming and Qing dynasties for nearly 500 years. The palace was called the “Forbidden City” because access was strictly controlled. Ordinary citizens could not enter without permission, and the emperor was viewed as the “Son of Heaven,” possessing supreme political and spiritual authority. The complex was surrounded by massive walls and a protective moat, emphasizing both security and sacredness.

Important sections included the Hall of Supreme Harmony, where coronations and official ceremonies were held, the imperial living quarters for the royal family, and peaceful gardens used for reflection and rest. Twenty-four emperors lived in the Forbidden City between 1420 and 1912. After the fall of the imperial system, it became the Palace Museum and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Royal Palace of the Kings of Israel and the Temple in Jerusalem – The royal palace of the kings of Israel and the sacred Temple complex in Jerusalem formed the political and spiritual center of ancient Israel. The royal palace served as the residence of Israel’s kings, including David and Solomon. It was a place where national decisions were made, foreign dignitaries were received, and royal administration was conducted. Solomon’s palace complex was especially magnificent, featuring large halls, ornate cedar woodwork, gold decorations, and elaborate craftsmanship.

Adjacent to the palace stood Solomon’s Temple, the most sacred site in Israel. Constructed on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, the Temple was built as the dwelling place of God’s presence among His people. The complex included outer courts, priestly areas, sacrificial altars, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, also called the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once each year on the Day of Atonement. Together, the palace and Temple symbolized both national identity and spiritual devotion.

The Heavenly City – The Heavenly City, also called the New Jerusalem, is the eternal dwelling place of God prepared for the redeemed faithful. Unlike earthly kingdoms built by human rulers, this city was designed and created by God Himself. Hebrews 11:10 says, “*For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” The Bible describes the Heavenly City in Revelation 21 and 22. John wrote, “*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth.*” Revelation 21:1. Then described, “*the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*” Revelation 21:2. The city is immense and perfectly designed. “*Its length, breadth, and height are equal.*” Revelation 21:16. Its walls are made of jasper, its foundations are adorned with precious stones, and “*the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.*” Revelation 21:21.

At the center of the city is the throne of God and of Christ. *“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon...for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”* Revelation 21:23. There is not temple there, *“For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”* Revelation 21:22. The Heavenly City contains the River of Life and the Tree of Life. Revelation 22:1-2. There is no death, sorrow, pain, or curse there, for *“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”* Revelation 21:4. It is the eternal home of righteousness, peace, and fellowship with God forever.

Conclusion – The description of the Heavenly City reminds us that life on earth is temporary, but eternity is forever. Nations rise and fall, governments change, wealth disappears, and even the greatest cities eventually fade. Yet God has prepared an eternal home that will never be destroyed. Jesus Christ made access to the Heavenly City possible through His death and resurrection. Those who faithfully follow Him have the hope of eternal life in a place where there will be no death, sorrow, pain or sin. Revelation 22:17 extends the invitation. *“Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”*

The Heavenly City stands as a reminder that true peace, security, and joy are not found in earthly power or possessions, but in a faithful and obedient relationship with God. It is the ultimate hope, the final reward, and the eternal home promised by the Lord to those who love and obey Him.

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