

Historical Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation

Abstract

There are at least two explicit allusions to historical Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation (Rev 11,2.8) and several more related expressions (11,13; 14,1.20; 16,19; 20,9; 21,2.10). Nevertheless, the majority of modern scholars argue that the text has nothing to reveal about this city. By challenging their arguments, by reasserting the geographical specificity of these allusions and by examining related passages, we discover that historical Jerusalem is indeed a prominent feature of the prophecy at the centre of this book. We also find that this city plays a highly significant, though theologically negative, role in the events of the last days.

Introduction

A growing number of biblical scholars are saying that the allusions to the historical city of Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation are ‘symbolic’ and do not refer to a particular geographical location.¹ So complete is this ‘spiritualization’ of the city of Jerusalem in contemporary exegesis that the following conclusion fairly represents the majority: “There is therefore no teaching in John’s Apocalypse concerning a specific future for Jerusalem... John’s universal emphasis and his use of symbolism prevent a restricted application to Palestine”.² According to this approach, then, the prophecy of Revelation has nothing to reveal about the historical city of Jerusalem.³

In reality, however, the question of whether Revelation speaks about historical Jerusalem is far from settled. The greatest concentration of allusions to this city is to be found in chapter 11 (Rev 11,2.8.13), which is generally held to be among the most difficult.⁴ Furthermore, the hypothesis that Jerusalem is a symbol seems to have won academic approval by supposition rather than by solid textual evidence: “It is highly unlikely”, writes one influential scholar, “that in Revelation 11:1-2 John intends to speak literally of the temple which had been destroyed in AD 70 and the earthly Jerusalem, in which he nowhere else shows any interest. He understands the temple and the city as symbols of the people of God”.⁵ Other scholars arrive at similar conclusions by presuming that everything in

¹ In a survey of commonly available commentaries and monographs, 21 propose the symbolical and 12 the literal interpretation of the allusions to Jerusalem in Rev 11. It is instructive to note that the spiritualization of Jerusalem, here, clearly parallels the allegorical interpretation of other subjects in the same passage (Rev 11,1-13), such as the two witnesses and the two time periods (1260 days and 42 months).

² P.W.L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem*, Grand Rapids /Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 1996, 262.

³ It should be noted, though, that Christian theologians continue to grapple with the complex and divisive theological aspects of the city. Recent efforts include the important attempt by Walker to formulate a credible biblical theology of Jerusalem in the penultimate chapter of his study *Jesus and the Holy City*. Similar intentions guide the recent work by Alain Marchadour and David Neuhaus: “This book poses the question of the Land afresh: is it possible to develop a coherent Christian understanding of the Land that takes all the various diverse and complex factors into account and moves beyond partisan and, consequently, partial perspectives?” *The Land, the Bible and History: Toward the Land that I Will Show You*, New York: Fordham University Press 2007, 2.

⁴ E.g., Ugo Vanni writes: “L’autore riprende il discorso su Gerusalemme in uno dei contesti notoriamente più difficili e discussi: l’episodio cosiddetto dei due testimoni del capitolo 11”, *L’Apocalisse: Ermeneutica, Esegesi, Teologia*, Bologna: Centro Editoriale Dehoniane 1988, 374.

⁵ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1993, 272.

Revelation is purely symbolic.⁶ Another scholar suggests we should take this view simply because it is easier.⁷ Arguments of this kind cannot seriously be accepted as evidence for a wholly symbolical reading of the historical place known as Jerusalem.

Since a symbol is a thing that represents something other than itself,⁸ the claim that the holy city in Rev 11,2 is a ‘symbol’ implies that this designation cannot be referring to a real city. This proposal might be more acceptable if the city to which this expression alludes no longer existed, but this is not the case. It is precisely because Jerusalem still exists that we cannot be so sure that this allusion is to be taken symbolically and not literally.

The literal interpretation is further endorsed by the representation of the same city as the place “where indeed their Lord was crucified” (Rev 11,8), which is rightly described as “a strikingly matter-of-fact, historically specific statement, quite uncharacteristic of the visions of the Apocalypse”.⁹ In a book that is filled with non-literal language, the literal reference to Jerusalem as the city ‘where their Lord was crucified’ cannot be easily missed or dismissed. In the light of this uniquely historical reference, it appears certain that here, at least, the author had in mind the historical city of Jerusalem and urges the reader to interpret it thus.

Starting from this singularly instructive clue from the author, a re-examination of the relevant allusions is called for, with the primary aim of challenging the ‘symbolical’ hypothesis and learning what this Christian prophecy has to say about historical Jerusalem. This can only be done by following verbal and thematic links between the suspected allusions, since the historical city of Jerusalem is never mentioned by the name of Jerusalem. This name is mentioned only three times in the Book of Revelation (Rev 3,12; 21,2.10) and on all three occasions it refers to “*the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God*” (21,2).

The New Jerusalem

The name ‘Jerusalem’ is reserved for the Holy City described in Rev 21-22 as the eternal fulfilment of all God’s biblical promises and the final reward for his servants.¹⁰ The physical realization of the New Jerusalem takes place after the final judgment (Rev 20,11-15), when she will be established at the centre of a totally transformed reality called “the new

⁶ E.g., G.B. Caird: “It is hardly too much to say that in a book in which all things are expressed in symbols, the very last things the Temple and Holy City could mean would be the physical Temple and the earthly Jerusalem. A literal meaning would be inconsistent with his meaning elsewhere.” *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, BNTC, London: A. & C. Black 1966, 131.

⁷ Leon Morris, “It is important we take this whole section (vv. 1-13) symbolically. It is plain enough that the Sanctuary of verse 1 is symbolical, but most expositors take the witnesses and the holy city literally. Then difficulties multiply. They are fewer and a coherent pattern emerges when we see it all as symbolic” *Revelation*, Revised Edition, Leicester: IVP; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 140. Since this was written more and more expositors have come to understand the Holy City symbolically and not literally, see note 1 above.

⁸ This is the basic dictionary definition, e.g. ‘thing standing for or representing something else’ *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1962. Also “Since symbols need not imitate what they represent, and since they usually refer to something that is in a different and higher category, they are ideally suited for expressing not only abstract notions and mental operations but also spiritual and religious truths – none of which can be pictured in any literal way” from ‘Symbol’ in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd Ed. Vol.13, Farmington Hills, MI: Gale 2002, 661.

⁹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 171; also Walker: “Its reference to the Lord’s ‘crucifixion’ makes it impossible to deny an allusion to Jerusalem”, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 254.

¹⁰ Cf. Pilchan Lee: “John’s way of dealing with the traditions in the OT and the early Jewish literature is intended to emphasize the full fulfilment of the eschatological expectation in them”, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21-22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001, 288.

heaven and the new earth” (Rev 21,1). Here God will dwell amongst his peoples and there will be no more suffering (Rev 21,3-4).¹¹

Our concern here is not so much with the nature of this eternal fulfilment,¹² but with its relation to the earthly and historical city of Jerusalem. In his thorough study of the subject, Peter Walker summarizes this relation as follows: “The fact that this city is called by the name ‘Jerusalem’ and not by some quite different name is significant. It is the purposes of Israel’s God, the God associated with Jerusalem, which are now being fulfilled; there is a golden thread of continuity from the Old Testament into the New. This reflects John’s assumption that Jerusalem itself as a city had been peculiarly significant in God’s purposes.”¹³ However, while the transfer of the name ‘Jerusalem’ to the post-historical New Jerusalem honours the special significance of historical Jerusalem in God’s purposes, it also raises the question of whether there will actually be a geographical connection between the two cities. Many Christians seem to take this for granted and imagine that, at the end of history, the New Jerusalem will simply ‘descend from heaven’ (21,2.10) upon the historical Jerusalem, thus restoring, renewing and transforming this city.¹⁴ Other interpreters strenuously deny there will ever be a physical connection between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁵

In fact, the precise connection between the historical Jerusalem and its eternal fulfilment, the New Jerusalem, is difficult to ascertain without knowing the fate of the first and the location of the second on its ‘descent from heaven’. Without a more thorough investigation of the text, it is somewhat hypothetical to affirm or deny that there will be a physical connection between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. So, a second aim of this work, then, will be to examine evidence in the text that may help us determine whether, or not, there will be a geographical connection between the present historical Jerusalem and the future New Jerusalem.

The Holy City in Rev 11,2

“Get up and measure the Sanctuary of God, and the altar and those worshipping there, and reject the outer court, for it was given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for 42 months” (Rev 11,1-2).

¹¹ The prevalence of suffering in the world should be a cause for reflection and change of mind for those who believe that this reality has already been established and that Revelation’s prophecy has been completely fulfilled (E.g., Ariel Álvarez Valdés, “Quand les prophéties de l’Apocalypse s’accompliront-elles?” in *La Terre Sainte* (magazine of the Custody of the Holy Land) Sept-Oct 2003, no. 567, 251-56; *The Lamb’s Supper—The Mass as Heaven on Earth*, Dr. Scott Hahn, New York: Doubleday, 1999; *The Apocalypse of John: A Commentary*, Francis J. Moloney, Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2020).

¹² As described in Rev 21-22; for this see, for example, Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation*, or Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Cambridge: CUP 1993, 126-43.

¹³ Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 248.

¹⁴ Known as the Restorationists, and largely composed of Christian Zionists and Messianic Jews, these Christians expect the literal realization of the OT prophecies of restoration (e.g., Mic 4,1-4; Is 2,2-4; Is 60-66; Zech 14; Ezek 40-48; Ps 2,6-8), with little regard for NT doctrine about their fulfilment in and through Christ (see Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 323-4).

¹⁵ As for example, in the study quoted above: “What is revealed, however, is decidedly a new Jerusalem. Any identification or connection with the earthly Jerusalem cannot be maintained. This *new* Jerusalem stands in deliberate contrast to the former Jerusalem. There is no encouragement to believe that the earthly Jerusalem might somehow be metamorphosed into the heavenly one, for John expressly says that this Jerusalem ‘comes down out of heaven’.” Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 249.

“The phrase ‘holy city’ is a clear reference to Jerusalem”, affirms Aune in his commentary,¹⁶ and is echoed in numerous biblical and extra-biblical writings, starting with Deutero-Isaiah and becoming common usage in the Second Temple period (cf. Mt 4,5; 27,53). On the basis of biblical tradition, there is no doubt that this designation refers to historical Jerusalem and therefore represents the first allusion to this city in the Book of Revelation.

However, this straightforward conclusion is disputed in several ways. Some scholars deny it actually refers to historical Jerusalem, by pointing out that the title ‘Holy City’ in Revelation only refers to the New Jerusalem, which remains in heaven until after the final judgment (Rev 21,2.10; cf. Gal 4,26; Heb 12,22).¹⁷ This objection is quickly overruled by recalling that, into the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, “no unclean or impure thing will ever enter” (Rev 21,27; cf. 22,14-15)—a statement that clearly prohibits its identification with the holy city in this context, since this city is going to be ‘trampled’ by the nations for 42 months (Rev 11,2). The verb ‘trample’ (πατεῖν), here, signifies the desecration or profanation of the holy city by unclean and impious forces. While excluding simple identity, the title ‘Holy City’ does nevertheless indicate a certain continuity between the historical city of Jerusalem and its eternal fulfilment at the end of history, the New Jerusalem, as noted above.

Others admit an allusion to the historical city of Jerusalem here, in Rev 11,2, but restrict it to the historical destruction of the city in 70 AD. According to Walker, the allusion is presented here as a foretaste of the judgment that is to fall on Babylon, “outlining in miniature what is to follow in remaining chapters”.¹⁸ Interpreted in this way, as referring to Babylon but alluding to the past destruction of Jerusalem, the passage in question is supposedly informing us that historical Jerusalem has already lost the status of ‘holy city’, and has become instead a symbol of the ‘world’ and a sign of future judgment.¹⁹ This interpretation is then taken as reinforcing the negative attitudes to Jerusalem in other NT writings, and allows Walker to sum up as follows: “the overall conclusion of our analysis of the New Testament is that in the strictest sense of the word, Jerusalem has lost whatever theological status it previously possessed. The way the Old Testament ascribes to Jerusalem a social, central and sacred status within the on-going purposes of God is not reaffirmed by the New Testament writers.”²⁰

The problem with this approach is that the ‘trampling’ of the holy city by the nations is clearly not the same as the physical destruction of the city, so it is inappropriate to link this passage to the extensive destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.²¹ Also, at that time, no part of the

¹⁶ David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson 1998, 608, where references to the biblical and extra-biblical sources are given.

¹⁷ E.g., G.K.Beale: “‘The Holy City’ in 11:2 likely refers to some aspect of the heavenly Jerusalem, since the other occurrences in Revelation of the phrase (21:2,10; 22:19) refer to the heavenly Jerusalem”, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999, 568.

¹⁸ Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 258.

¹⁹ Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 316-17; G.R.Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, NCB, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott 1974, 185-86; and Bauckham: “In its rejection of Jesus, Jerusalem forfeited the role of holy city (11:2), which John then transfers to the new Jerusalem” *Climax of Prophecy*, 172.

²⁰ Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 319.

²¹ According to Seesemann’s analysis in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, πατεῖν is equivalent to καταπατεῖν in this context and has “the sense of ‘destroying,’ ‘plundering,’ though one might go further and render ‘to plunder and desecrate,’ since plundering the holy city (including the temple) is necessarily equivalent to its desecration.” *TDNT* (5:943). However, the main background for Rev 11,2 is the prophecy in Dan 8,9-14, which refers to the pagan desecration of the sanctuary and ‘host’, for a limited period of time (2,300 days), before being ‘put right’ again. There was no substantial destruction on this occasion. Similarly with Zech 12,3 in the Septuagint version, massive destruction is not implied when the Lord says: “I will make Jerusalem a stone trampled by all the nations, everyone who tramples it will utterly mock it”. Although the ‘trampling’ in Rev 11,2

temple or its priesthood were saved from the hands of the Romans, whereas in Rev 11,1-2 the ‘sanctuary of God, the altar and the worshippers’ are not to be given over to the nations. Furthermore, the context of this passage in Revelation is closely related to the mission of the two witnesses and the eschatological fulfilment of God’s purposes at the end of history (Rev 10,7), which distance it considerably from the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70.²²

Finally, and most importantly, Jerusalem has remained the holy city in Christian tradition, despite its physical fall in AD 70, and in spite of the negative attitudes recorded in the NT.²³ Leaving aside putative political motives influencing Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem in the early 4th century,²⁴ the reason for Jerusalem’s persistent sanctity is indicated, and perhaps also inspired, by the same text of Revelation: historical Jerusalem is still regarded as holy precisely because it is the place ‘where the Lord was crucified’ (Rev 11,8). Just as any place of ritual sacrifice is regarded as holy by the faithful of other religions, so it is inevitable, and all the more appropriate, for the Christian faithful to regard the place of Christ’s sacrifice, and the physical spilling of his blood, as holy.²⁵ The important point, here, is that since historical Jerusalem is still formally considered to be holy, the ‘trampling’ for 42 months has not yet begun, and so must be understood as a future event. This is a solid indication that Revelation does indeed have a teaching concerning a specific future for Jerusalem.

The final objection to the holy city as historical Jerusalem is the view that the holy city here refers to the people of God, just as ‘the Sanctuary, the altar, the worshippers and the outer court’ in the first part of the instruction in Rev 11,1-2.²⁶ It is argued that, for the sake of

may involve limited and selective destruction, it would be incorrect to equate this ‘trampling’ with the total destruction that overtook Jerusalem in AD 70. In this context, ‘profanation’ and ‘desecration’ more accurately convey the meaning of the ‘trampling’ of the Holy City. This verb refers to a moral, and not a physical, fall.

²² The only connection between Rev 11,1-2 and the destruction of the city and temple in AD 70 is that the ‘measuring’ here signifies the rebuilding of the God’s temple, understood as a metaphor for the people of God (see John and Gloria Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple: A New Approach to the Book of Revelation*, Jerusalem: Beit Yochanan, 2003, 83-123). In this way, the Book of Revelation can be understood as a divine and theological response to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Written more or less at the same time, at the end of the first century, the Jewish apocalypses of 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and 3 Baruch were also inspired by the second temple’s destruction, as indeed much of apocalyptic literature had been inspired by the previous destruction and profanation of the temple and city (see J.J.Collins, *Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period*, International Rennert Guest Lecture Series 1(1998), Tel Aviv: Bar Ilan University, 1998, 4). It would thus appear that the main purpose of the apocalyptic writings is to offer a satisfying theological response to the temple’s destruction, rather than simply evoking this historical event as a warning of God’s impending judgment.

²³ E.g., Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Redemptionis anno* (1984), frequently refers to Jerusalem as the holy city. The negative NT attitudes are thoroughly exposed by Walker in his *Jesus and the Holy City*, and summarized in the ninth chapter: “A New Theology: New Testament Reverberations”, 291-308.

²⁴ For Christian attitudes to Jerusalem in the centuries following its rebuilding, see the final chapter of Walker’s *Jesus and the Holy City*, entitled: “Afterword: Jerusalem in Christian Reflection”, and also other articles by the same author: “Gospel Sites and ‘Holy Places’: The contrasting Attitudes of Eusebius and Cyril” in *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.1 (1990), and “Jerusalem in the Early Christian Centuries” in *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, ed. Walker, rev. ed. Carlisle/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker 1994.

²⁵ It should of course be noted that the theology of the city’s holiness has changed from OT times. Historical Jerusalem is no longer holy because it is the place of God’s presence on earth, but because it is the site where the world’s redemption began with the sacrifice of Christ. A small but striking piece of evidence for this theological shift comes from the archaeological findings of Bargil Pixner on Mt Zion, in Jerusalem. In the remains of the first century synagogue built there, it is possible to observe a change in the direction of prayer: this was no longer orientated towards the temple, but towards the site of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection (see ‘Church of the Apostles Found on Mount Zion’, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 16:3, May-June 1990, 24).

²⁶ E.g., R.H.Mounce, who says “In John’s imagery the holy city is yet another designation for the church”, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised Edition, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998, 215.

consistency, the holy city must be understood symbolically as a reference to the people of God. This view, however, does not take into account the particular structure of the instruction, which carefully distinguishes the fate of the outer court (given to the nations) from that of the holy city (trampled by the nations). It accomplishes this by presenting the ‘trampling’ of the holy city by the nations as the final outcome of the giving over of the outer court to the nations.²⁷ After the outer court has been fully given over to the nations, these nations will then ‘trample’ the holy city.

Furthermore, the giving over of the outer court to the nations lasts for an undefined period of time, while the trampling of the holy city lasts only for a specific, and brief, period of 42 months, which happens to correspond exactly with the end-time reign of the Beast described in Rev 13.²⁸ Therefore the time period of 42 months links the brief but global reign of the Beast with the ‘trampling’ (profanation) of the holy city, and carries the implication that the two events are causally related, i.e., that the coming of the Beast to power leads to the profanation of the holy city, historical Jerusalem. This preliminary observation on the destiny of the holy city, at the end of time, prepares us for the interpretation of the next allusion in Rev 11,8.

The Great City in 11,8

*“And whenever they [the two witnesses] finish their witnessing, the beast that is coming up out of the abyss will make war against them and kill them. And their corpse[s lie] on the street of **the great city** which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where indeed their Lord was crucified” (Rev 11,8).*

On the premise that the city ‘where their Lord was crucified’ is indeed the literal and historical Jerusalem (as argued above in the Introduction), the immediate task is to understand why this city is now referred to as the ‘Great City’, and not as the ‘Holy City’ as before (Rev 11,2). This is particularly important because ‘Great City’ is a title elsewhere reserved for Babylon (Rev 17,18; 18,10.16.18.19.21)—the wealthy and powerful city that is supported by the Beast (Rev 17,7), from under the waters,²⁹ in a way that determines her worldly authority and greatness (Rev 17,18). It can therefore be inferred that, as in the case of Babylon, the title ‘Great City’ signifies a close and dependent relationship with the Beast. Following the ascension and revelation of the Beast, in Jerusalem, to kill the two witnesses (Rev 11,7), the transfer of this title from Babylon to Jerusalem implies nothing less than a transfer of the Beast’s personal concern and support to that city. So at this point in the prophecy, Jerusalem becomes the Great City, because the Beast chooses to associate himself with this city in a special way.³⁰

This interpretation concurs with the previous observation that the Beast’s rule for 42 months leads to profanation (trampling) of the holy city. At the start of this period, the Beast transfers his base to Jerusalem, causing the desecration of this once ‘Holy City’, and her

²⁷ Through the use of a conjunction (καί) with a consecutive sense.

²⁸ The ‘Beast’ is the false messiah who is also the last and most powerful manifestation of the antichristian spirit, known in Christian tradition as the antichrist. This can be inferred from his unrepentant hostility to Christ and his followers (Rev 11,7; 13,7; 17,14), combined with his imitation of the true Saviour (Rev 13,3.12.14; 11,7; 13,1), and is confirmed by his position in a hierarchy of three evil figures (the devil, the Beast and the false prophet) that the author contrasts with God, his Christ and their prophet, John.

²⁹ This can be deduced by comparing Rev 17,1 and 17,3, and implies that the Beast supports Babylon in a secret and clandestine way.

³⁰ This would not be the first time Jerusalem is called the Great City (cf. Jer 22,8); for other occasions see Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 619.

assumption of the title ‘Great City’ from Babylon.³¹ During the same period, the Beast and his allies turn against Babylon and completely destroy her (Rev 14,8; 17,16-17), thus confirming the loss of her ‘great-city’ status at this time.

The transfer of the Beast’s support from Babylon to Jerusalem also explains why Jerusalem is now “*spiritually called Sodom and Egypt*”. ‘Sodom and Egypt’ are not only symbols of sexual immorality and oppression, but they are also places from which God’s people were called to leave at short notice. The spiritual naming of Jerusalem as ‘Sodom and Egypt’ not only confirms that the ‘trampling’ of Jerusalem during the Beast’s reign refers to a moral, rather than a physical fall, but also contains a warning for God’s people to depart from there.³²

There is another important aspect to this ‘spiritual’ naming of Jerusalem as ‘Sodom and Egypt’, since the former ‘spiritual’ name of Jerusalem had been ‘Zion’, the place of God’s dwelling on earth. The renaming of Jerusalem implies a thorough dissociation of Zion from Jerusalem—the complete separation of God’s holy presence from the historical city of Jerusalem—and raises the question of Zion’s whereabouts during the 42-month period of the Beast’s reign.³³

This verse is therefore very rich in information concerning the future of historical Jerusalem: the Beast will openly reveal himself here to put the two witnesses to death, and he will then establish a special relationship with this city. For the duration of his 42-month reign, Jerusalem will no longer be regarded as the holy city, but the Great City. She will no longer be spiritually called ‘Zion’, the footstool of the living God, but ‘Sodom and Egypt’, a center of immorality and oppression. As with Sodom and Egypt, God’s people will be called to depart from this place and consequently Zion, the earthly presence of God, will be found elsewhere.³⁴

The usual objection to understanding a reference to historical Jerusalem in this verse is that the title ‘Great City’ is associated with Babylon elsewhere in Revelation (Rev 14,8; 16,19; 17,18; 18,10). Rather than explaining why the city of Jerusalem comes to merit this title, most modern commentators ‘interpret the plain by the obscure’³⁵ and attempt to explain how Babylon, understood as ancient Rome, comes to be the place where Christ was crucified. Similarly with the expression ‘spiritually called Sodom and Egypt’: rather than explain why Jerusalem, as the ‘Great City’, is no longer spiritually called ‘Zion’, but ‘Sodom and Egypt’, modern scholarship sees this as confirmation that the ‘Great City’ is to be understood ‘spiritually’ or ‘allegorically’, as opposed to literally.³⁶ In both cases a process of

³¹ For the identification of Babylon, during her heyday as the ‘Great City’, see this author’s article at <https://www.newtorah.org/pdf/The%20identity%20of%20Babylon.pdf>.

³² The warning is strongly reminiscent of the warnings in the synoptic apocalypses of Mt 24,15-28 and Mk 13,14.

³³ The answer to this question is to be found in the vision of Mount Zion in Rev 14,1-5, where the 144,000 are assembled with the Lamb. The important point at present is that this Mount Zion is no longer to be found in the historical city of Jerusalem. Even in archaeological circles, Mount Zion “has been something of a moveable mountain” (see Pixner, ‘Church of the Apostles Found on Mount Zion’, *BAR*, 16:3, May-June 1990, 20).

³⁴ The exodus of Zion is clearly indicated in the next chapter, at Rev 12,6, and again at Rev 12,14.

³⁵ A. J. Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse: With Particular Reference to the Role of the Church’s Enemies*, Berlin: de Gruyter 1987, 68, referring to the argument of C. van der Waal, *Ofenbarung van Jezus Christus; Inleiding en vertaling*. Groningen: De Vuurbaak 1971, 22.

³⁶ In his study of biblical language, G.B. Caird gives this as an example of the author expressly indicating that he does not intend his words to be taken literally: “John tells us that the great city in whose streets the bodies of the martyrs are to be exposed to the view of all nations is named in allegory ‘Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified’ (Rev 11:8). The world-wide city can be no other than Rome, which inherits the depravity of Sodom, the persecuting despotism of Egypt and the faithlessness of Jerusalem. Yet there are still commentators who ignore John’s statement and identify the city with Jerusalem.” *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*,

allegorization is at work, which disregards the precise and literal aspect of the text in favour of a spurious generalization.³⁷ The results are as unconvincing as the method.³⁸

The City in 11,13

*“And in that hour a great earthquake occurred, and a tenth of **the city** fell and seven thousand names of men were killed in the earthquake, and the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven”* (Rev 11,13).

Since the above verse concludes the narration that started at Rev 11,7, concerning the death, resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses in the city “where indeed their Lord was crucified”, there can be little doubt that the scene described here occurs in the very same place, that is to say, in historical Jerusalem.³⁹ The observation that these two prophets die in historical Jerusalem finds support in the biblical view that “it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem” (Lk 13,33). Clearly the rest who “*became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven*” are the survivors of the earthquake that strikes this particular city, and should not be understood primarily in a symbolical way as referring to all unbelievers in the world.

The main challenge arises from those who interpret the reaction to the deadly earthquake and ascension of the two witnesses as the true and permanent conversion of all surviving unbelievers.⁴⁰ They see here the prediction of the mass, end-time conversion of all those unbelievers who, only a short time before, were trampling the holy city and celebrating the death of the two prophets. The pure optimism of this conclusion challenges the view, emerging from the above analysis, that, immediately after the earthquake and resurrection of the two witnesses, historical Jerusalem becomes the ‘Great City’ and centre of the Beast’s antichristian reign. If all the survivors truly and permanently convert to God, it must be asked how this city could then promptly become the seat of the Beast and the centre of his brutally antichristian empire.

The argument for this optimistic view hinges on a positive interpretation of the survivors’ reaction described as “*the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven*”. It is argued that the fear induced by this event is a genuine and holy ‘fear of God’⁴¹ and that the resulting act of ‘giving glory to God’ “refers positively to giving God the worship that is due to him”,⁴² in a way that suggests “true repentance and not just remorse”.⁴³

Pennsylvania: Westminster Press 1980, 186-7. The oversight appears to be Caird’s, however, for interpreting the author’s non-literal instruction as ‘allegorically’ instead of ‘spiritually’ (in Greek these are different words with distinct meanings, see Alan Johnson, ‘Revelation’ in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Gæbelein, Vol. 12, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1981, 506), and for failing to see that this instruction refers only to the naming of the great city as ‘Sodom and Egypt’. The expression ‘where indeed their Lord was crucified’ refers back to the ‘great city’, and not to its spiritual names ‘Sodom and Egypt’. Historical Jerusalem is clearly intended here.
³⁷ Allegorization (allegorical embellishment or interpretation) should be distinguished from allegory: “To allegorize is to impose on a story hidden meanings which the original author neither intended nor envisaged; it is to treat as allegory that which was not intended as allegory” Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, 165-71.

³⁸ For other objections and counterarguments, see Beagley, *The ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Apocalypse*, 66-68.

³⁹ So Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 627.

⁴⁰ This view is held by both the ‘symbolical school’, which argues that this refers to the conversion of all gentiles (e.g., Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 278-9) and the literal interpreters who see this as representing the fulfilment of Paul’s hope for the salvation of all Israel (e.g., George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1972, 159). For a comprehensive list see Beale, *Revelation* 607, n 377.

⁴¹ E.g., Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, SNTSMS 31, Cambridge: CUP 1977, 169-70.

⁴² Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 278-9.

This interpretation of ‘glorifying God’ is indeed consistent with its use elsewhere in the text of Revelation, and in other parts of Scripture, as an idiom for true conversion and worship (Rev 14,7; 15,4; 16,9; Jer 13,16; *1 Esdras* 9,8; cf. Acts 13,48; 1 Pet 2,12).

However, certain aspects of the conversion experienced by the survivors of the earthquake in Rev 11,13 are open to question. Aune makes the point that this would be the only instance in Revelation of people turning to the true God as a result of a punitive miracle.⁴⁴ Beale notes that “elsewhere in the OT ‘giving glory to God’ does not always indicate the response of true Israelites but may also be the response of unbelievers who nevertheless are forced to acknowledge the reality of God’s sovereignty (e.g., Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5; cf. 1 Pet. 2:12; the use in John 9:24 could be taken either way; see similarly Prov. 1:24-32; Acts 12:23)”.⁴⁵ He goes on to show that when King Nebuchadnezzar praises God after experiencing divine punishment in Dan 4,34 (he ‘gives glory to God’ in Theodotion’s translation of Dan 4,37), he did not give up worshipping Babylonian gods as demanded by the Israelite faith. Similarly in Dan 2,46-47, the king’s recognition of God’s sovereignty is only temporary, as he immediately forces the Hebrew saints to worship an idol. In both instances (Dan 2 and 4), the king’s recognition of God’s sovereignty simply results in the addition of another god to the pagan pantheon, rather than conversion to covenantal faith.

Beale also rejects the view that the survivors’ fear in Rev 11,13 is a holy fear, by explaining that the Greek word used here (ἐμφοβος) is “typically translated ‘startled, alarmed, terrified, frightened, in fear, afraid’. It is never used in either the LXX or in the NT in any expression analogous to ‘fear of the Lord,’ where the noun φόβος is used”.⁴⁶ In this context, he concludes, it is much more likely to refer to ‘unbelieving fear’. The implication is that this ‘unbelieving fear’ does not lead to the kind of repentance necessary for genuine and lasting conversion.

So although the survivors certainly do turn to God following the earthquake in Rev 11,13, there must be doubts about the quality and duration of this conversion. In answer to the difficult question: “are the survivors of the earthquake to become genuine believers, or do they remain antagonistic, though compelled to acknowledge the power of God?”,⁴⁷ it must be admitted that both possibilities exist side by side. There are likely to be genuine believers as well as people who remain antagonistic despite their experience of these miraculous events.

Further support for a skeptical attitude to this conversion comes from examining the expression ‘God of heaven’, which describes the subject of the survivors’ awe and praise in Rev 11,13. Since this expression is found only once more in Revelation, a link with that passage is implied: “*And the fifth poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened and they bit their tongues from the pain and they blasphemed the God of heaven from their pains and for their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds*” (Rev 16,10-11).

Not only does this link between Rev 11,13 and 16,10-11 confirm the presence of the Beast’s throne in historical Jerusalem during his 42-month reign, but it also serves to identify those who had earlier given glory to the ‘God of heaven’ in 11,13 with those who here blaspheme the same God, and refuse to repent of their deeds. Hence the act of acknowledging the true God in 11,13 is not a guarantee against blaspheming the same God at a later stage,

⁴³ Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 159.

⁴⁴ Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 628, but this point is answered by Prigent in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, English trans. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001, 358.

⁴⁵ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 603.

⁴⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 605.

⁴⁷ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 603.

and therefore does not necessarily represent an enduring conversion to the Faith.⁴⁸ This act should rather be understood as a transient acknowledgment of the power of God, which can either turn towards enduring faith and salvation, or be turned into blasphemy and enduring loss.

It is in the context of the survivor's acknowledgement of God that we can more fully understand the lengths to which the Beast and his false prophet must subsequently go, in order to deceive these 'inhabitants of the earth' (Rev 13). This context also helps to explain the moral gravity of their blasphemy against God, by revealing that they had previously come to know him and acknowledge his power.⁴⁹ These followers of the Beast become blasphemers of God, despite fully knowing him and despite having experienced his power to restore their lives.⁵⁰

At this point, it is important to challenge Bauckham's assertion that since the phrase 'God of heaven' is almost always used in a non-Jewish context (i.e., when Jews address non-Jews or when non-Jews acknowledge the God of Israel), its use here "should make it quite clear that the city of 11,13 is not Jerusalem, and those who are brought to worship the true God are not Jews but pagans."⁵¹ Firstly, his argument is flawed, because in Revelation 'those who say they are Jews' are not really Jews (cf. Rev 2,9; 3,9) and so any argument based on Jewish, or non-Jewish usage, loses its force unless one first defines who is a Jew and who is a non-Jew in this text. In fact, this distinction no longer exists in the Book of Revelation, as the people of God are no longer identified with one ethnic group, but with those who remain faithful to Christ, whatever their ethnic, national, racial, or linguistic origin. Secondly, the initial observation is questionable, since there are numerous instances in the OT where the expression 'God of heaven' is used by Jews and for Jews, even in their personal prayers (e.g., Gen 24,7; Ps 136,26; Dn 2,18-19, Neh 1,4-5; 2,4). This implies that although the expression 'God of heaven' was used mainly by the Jews in their discourse with neighbouring peoples, and vice versa, it was by no means limited to this usage, and cannot therefore be taken to distinguish between Jews and non-Jews in the present context. Lastly, the ethnic distinction between Jew and non-Jew is irrelevant to the identification of the city with Jerusalem, since this city has just become the 'Great City' (Rev 11,8) and its 'trampling' by the nations has therefore just begun (Rev 11,2). During this 42-month period, as indeed throughout the Christian era, we suppose there will be a multiethnic mixture of Jews and non-Jews residing in the city. In summary, the use of the expression 'God of heaven' here creates no obstacle to the identification of the city in Rev 11,13 with the historical city of Jerusalem.

The City in 14,20

*"And the winepress was trodden outside **the city**, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses, for one thousand six hundred stadia"* (Rev 14,20).

⁴⁸ It may be significant that in Rev 9,20, 16,9 and 16,11 there is an emphasis on the need for repentance that is not explicit in 11,13. Although arguments from silence are the least persuasive, the absence of any reference to repentance in 11,13 may explain why their 'giving glory to the God of heaven' is not an enduring conversion to the faith, but rather a momentary acknowledgment of God that can subsequently be manipulated and redirected by the Beast and his false prophet.

⁴⁹ Those who follow the Beast end up blaspheming God (Rev 16,10-11) and being condemned to eternal perdition (Rev 14,9-11).

⁵⁰ This divine power to restore life is the message of the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses, reinforced by the earthquake (Rev 11,11-13). Verbal allusions to Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of the dry bones (Rev 11,11-12; cf. Ezek 37,1-10) imply an effect amounting to the resurrection and restoration of the entire House of Israel.

⁵¹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 279.

It is generally agreed that the metaphor of the vintage and winepress is derived from the OT prophets (Jl 4,13 and Is 63,1-6) and represents a process of divine judgment and condemnation. The metaphor of wine production is completed in other parts of the Book of Revelation by the liturgical image of the wine of the passion of God mixed in the cup of his anger (Rev 14,10) and then reversed on to the earth in the form of the seven libation-bowl plagues of God's passion (Rev 15-16). The sixth of these plagues sets in motion the preparations for the final battle at Harmageddon (Rev 16,12-14.16) and therefore links this eschatological battle with the judgmental act of wine-pressing. This association is taken up again later in the text, not only by the fact that the leader of the heavenly armies in the battle of Harmageddon is also the one who treads the winepress (Rev 19,15), but also because the enormous volume of blood that comes out of the winepress can only be explained as a consequence of this final battle.⁵² So although the harvest and trampling of the grape evidently precede the battle of Harmageddon, the process of judgment symbolized by these metaphors appears to lead into and culminate with this great final battle, resulting in the horrific bloodbath described.

Since the casting of the grape harvest into the winepress of the passion of God is clearly a metaphorical expression denoting the universal gathering of the wicked for divine judgment, it is somewhat surprising to find a specific topographical marker locating the action 'outside the city'. There is no need to explain why the winepress is located 'outside' the city, since winepresses were found in vineyards of a certain size, and vineyards were usually located outside the city walls. However, there are good grounds for understanding that a specific city is being alluded to, and that this city is again the historical city of Jerusalem:

1. The use of the definite article with 'city' in this passage implies that the reader has already been introduced to the place represented. Up to this point in the text, the only city mentioned has been Jerusalem, and all the proximate references were to historical Jerusalem (Rev 11,2.8.13). Although 'Babylon the great' was mentioned briefly in 14,8, she was not referred to as a city. In this context, then, the author is recalling the city mentioned shortly before, which we have identified with the historical city of Jerusalem.
2. With the transfer of the title 'Great City' to Jerusalem denoting the establishment of Beast's throne there, it is not at all improbable that this city will become the focus of God's wrathful judgment at the appropriate time, as described in this passage. The winepress 'outside the city' recalls the winepress of the ancient kings of Jerusalem, whose location is known to have been south of the city wall, in the vicinity of the Valley of Hinnom (*Ge-Hinnom*)—the valley that gave its name to the place of eternal punishment, *Gehenna*. The description of the treading of the grape 'outside the city' therefore alludes to a very ancient tradition that the final judgment of the nations will take place in the valleys to the east and south of the ancient city of Jerusalem (cf. Jl 3,2.12).⁵³

⁵² The link between the metaphor of wine production and the final eschatological battle is found also in the Targum of Isaiah (*Tg Isa* 63,3-4) and in the Targum of the Prophets (*Tg Neb Joel* 4:13-14), see Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 847.

⁵³ See especially *1 Enoch* 26-27: after describing the lush king's garden (the most likely location of the king's winepress) and then Mounts Moriah, Olivet and Sion with the valleys separating them, Enoch focuses on the 'accursed valley' of Hinnom: "This accursed valley is for those who are accursed for ever: Here shall the accursed be gathered together who utter with their lips against the Lord unseemly words and of His glory speak hard things. Here shall they be gathered together, and here shall be their place of judgment. In the last days there shall be upon them the spectacle of the righteous judgment in the presence of the righteous for ever: here shall the merciful bless the Lord of Glory, the Eternal King" (*1 Enoch* 27:2-3; trans R.H. Charles). Other ancient

3. In the reference ‘outside the city’, Aune sees the operation of *ius talionis* (retaliatory justice), based on the Gospel tradition that Jesus was put to death outside the city (Mt 27,33; Mk 15,22; Lk 23,33; Jn 19,17; Heb 13,12-13). In retaliation for being rejected outside the city of Jerusalem, Christ here returns to render justice in a reciprocal way, outside that same city, to those who persist in rejecting him. Perhaps more relevant in this context, however, is the observation that this ‘trampling’ judgment will start with those who ‘trampled’ the holy city. Those who will ‘trample’ (πατήσουσιν) the holy city will end up being trampled (ἐπατήθη) ‘outside the city’, the same city, by the one who ‘tramples’ (πατεῖ) the winepress of God’s passionate anger.⁵⁴ The theme of ‘trampling’ is further support for the identification of the ‘trampled’ city, historical Jerusalem (Rev 11,2), with the city whose perimeter will be the scene of this divine judgment (Rev 14,20).

4. Circumstantial evidence for the identification of this city as historical Jerusalem is to be found in the measurement of the bloody effluent from the winepress “*up to the bridles of the horses, for one thousand six hundred stadia*”. In antiquity, 1600 stadia was the length of the coastal border of Palestine, and the same border helps to define the modern State of Israel-Palestine to this day.⁵⁵ Since the length of the border also closely corresponds to the length of biblical Israel from Dan to Beersheba, the distance of 1600 stadia becomes representative of the entire country, whose capital was, and is, Jerusalem. As a subtle geographical allusion to the country whose capital is Jerusalem, this reference to 1600 stadia lends further support to the identification of historical Jerusalem as the city outside of which the grape harvest will be trodden in God’s winepress.

The Great City in 16,19

“*And the great city came to be split in three parts and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great had been remembered before God, to give her the cup with the wine of the passion of his anger*” (Rev 16,19).

As with the previous occurrence of the title ‘Great City’ in Rev 11,8, there is a lively debate about whether it refers to historical Jerusalem or to Babylon, with most commentators favouring a reference to Babylon. But since the Great City has already been mentioned once previously at 11,8, the author is clearly directing the reader to understand the same place here. The same arguments and conclusions can therefore be applied in the present context: this city is the historical Jerusalem after inheriting the title ‘Great City’ from Babylon.

This interpretation is endorsed by further textual details:

1. The fate of this ‘Great City’ in Rev 16,19 is compared with, and distinguished from, the fate of the cities of the nations, in a way that evokes the biblical distinction between Jerusalem and the gentile world. Furthermore, the splitting of this city into three parts by the earthquake recalls Zechariah’s prophecy regarding the Lord’s eschatological appearance in Jerusalem, when the Mount of Olives will be split into two parts, which are separated from the rest of Jerusalem (the third part) by a valley (Zech 14,4-5).

sources describe Jerusalem as the site of God’s judgment expressed in a final battle: Zech 14:2-4; 4 Ezra 13:33-35; 2 Apoc. Bar. 40.1 .

⁵⁴ The same Greek verb (πατεῖν) for ‘trample’ is used in all these contexts. See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Cambridge: CUP 1993, 52 for further examples of *ius talionis* in Revelation (11,18; 16,6; 18,6; 22,18-19) and a definition: “a way of speaking of God’s eschatological judgment in which the description of the punishment matches verbally the description of the sin. It was a literary way of indicating the absolute justice of God’s judgment: the punishment matches the crime.”

⁵⁵ In the *Itinerarium* of Antonius, ancient Palestine was said to measure 1664 stadia from Tyre on the northern border to El-Arish on the southern border with Egypt, see Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, note 45, 281.

2. The ‘fall’ of the cities of the nations recalls the ‘fall’ of Babylon the great in Rev 14,8 (cf. Rev 18,2) and associates Babylon with the cities of the nations. Babylon’s particular destiny is then described separately, and differs considerably, from that of the ‘Great City’ mentioned in this passage. In this context, the fate of the ‘Great City’ in Rev 16,19 is clearly distinct from that of Babylon (Rev 17-19), and so the two cities must be considered different, irrespective of whether Babylon was also once called the ‘Great City’.⁵⁶
3. There is a temporal difference between the destruction of Babylon and the splitting of the Great City mentioned here. Although Babylon’s fall is described later in the text (Rev 18), it was actually announced earlier, at Rev 14,8, and so precedes the eschatological events described in 16,19. The earlier announcement of Babylon’s fall, and the fact that her destruction takes place during the reign of the Beast, at the hands of the Beast and his allies (Rev 17,16-17), confirm the distinction between Babylon and the ‘Great City’ that is split into three by an earthquake after the fifth bowl plague, at the conclusion of the Beast’s reign.

Mount Zion in 14,1

*“And I looked and behold, the Lamb standing on **Mount Zion**, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads”* (Rev 14,1).

This is the only occurrence of the term ‘Zion’ in Revelation, although previously it was alluded to ‘silently’ as the former ‘spiritual’ name of Jerusalem, replaced by ‘Sodom and Egypt’ at the death of the two witnesses and the start of the Beast’s 42-month reign (Rev 11,8). As we observed above, the spiritual renaming of Jerusalem in those days represents a moral collapse that will bring about the exodus of God’s people from the city, and a complete dissociation of Zion from Jerusalem. In this context, the present passage appears to describe the new whereabouts of Zion. No longer associated with historical city of Jerusalem, the text now describes Zion as an assembly of 144,000 faithful and pure men on a mountain somewhere, in the presence of Christ the Lamb.

Although no geographical directions are given in this passage, it is significant that Zion is still identified with a mountain, called Mount Zion, which biblical tradition considers holy (cf. Ps 2,6). Since there are only two holy mountains in biblical tradition, Mount Zion in Jerusalem and the Mount Sinai (Horeb) in the desert of Sinai, it is not breaking the bounds of credibility to think that, on departing from Jerusalem, Zion’s new location is Mount Sinai.⁵⁷ Since Mount Zion is the mountain of the Lord’s sanctuary, and Mount Sinai is the mountain of the Lord’s Revelation, Mount Sinai would indeed be the most appropriate place for the Revelation of the Lord’s heavenly sanctuary described in the next chapter (Rev 15,5 which repeats 11,19).

For those who are skeptical of this reasoning, confirmation is to be found in chapter 12, where there is no difficulty in identifying the great sign of the woman, clothed with the

⁵⁶ Although the description of Babylon as the ‘Great City’ occurs later in the text (Rev 17,18; 18,10.16.18.19.21), it undoubtedly refers to the status of Babylon at an earlier time, before her abandonment and destruction by the Beast and his allies (14,8; 17,16-17). It is already been explained how and when this title is transferred from Babylon to Jerusalem.

⁵⁷ See Roland de Vaux: “And yet the Old Testament expressly teaches that Yahweh had only two holy mountains, Sinai where he had revealed himself, and Sion where he lived. Sinai-Horeb is called the ‘mountain of God’ in the stories of the Exodus (Ex 3:1; 4:27; 18,5; 24:13), and of Elias’ pilgrimage (1 K 19:8). Yahweh came from Sinai (Dt 33:2, and the obscure text in Ps 68:18), and made his home in the Temple of Jerusalem (1 K 8:10-13).” *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, Eng. Trans, London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1973, IV 1.3, 281. There are grounds, therefore, for thinking of this exodus as a return.

sun and about to deliver a male child, with 'Zion', the faithful community that gave birth to the Messiah (Rev 12,1-5). After giving birth, Zion flees to a place prepared for her in the desert (Rev 12,6.14), where she will be protected for the period of the Beast's reign.⁵⁸ The exodus of Zion to a place prepared for her in the desert, in a way that strongly evokes the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, corresponds precisely with the exodus of God's people from Jerusalem, and the spiritual renaming of that city as 'Sodom and Egypt'. Zion is identified with the 144,000 men, by the fact that they assemble on the mountain of the same name.⁵⁹ Not only is their exodus described in terms recalling the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, but also the text specifies their destination as a mountain (Rev 14,1) in the desert (Rev 12,6.14). Both the holy mountain in the desert and the exodus typology argue strongly for Mount Sinai as the location of the new Mount Zion.

Despite this concentration of textual evidence pointing to Mount Zion as a real place on earth, particularly during the period of the Beast's reign and even before, "some commentators have understood Mount Zion in this pericope as a reference to heaven and suppose that the 144,000 have been exalted to heaven".⁶⁰ However, it is not possible to reconcile this view with the fact that, in the middle of his vision of Mount Zion, the author hears 'a sound from heaven', thus distinguishing the object of the vision from heaven itself. Furthermore, if the 144,000 men were disembodied souls in heaven, there would be no need for them to 'learn' the song being intoned before the throne in heaven (14,3; cf.15,2-4).⁶¹ Further evidence of the earthly location of the eschatological Mt. Zion is to be found in the next reference that we must examine.

The Beloved City in 20,9

"And they went up over the breadth of the land and surrounded the Camp of the Saints and the Beloved City, and fire came down from heaven and consumed them" (Rev 20,9).

The interpretation of the 'Beloved City' in this context is qualified by the fact that it is also identified as the 'Camp of the Saints', a term which strongly evokes the encampments of the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt and before their entry into the promised land (cf. Num 2,2ff; Deut 23,10-15). These camps are often described in military terms, as the advance of an army engaged in holy war.⁶² The recurrence of the exodus theme here requires us to identify the 'Camp of the Saints' with the assembly of 144,000 saintly men seen in a previous

⁵⁸ She is actually protected in the desert for 1260 days (Rev 12,6) and also 'a time, times and half-a-time' (12,14). The expression 'time, times and half a time' occurs at Rev 12,14 and is identical to the expression used in the book of Daniel to represent the period when the saints will be sorely persecuted and oppressed by the beastly tyrant (Dan 7,23-25; 12,7). In the Book of Revelation, this period of tribulation is represented by the period of 42 months, during which the Beast reigns over the world (cf. Rev 13,5-7). The period of 1260 days refers to the period immediately preceding the Beast's reign, during which the two witnesses prophesy. The two consecutive periods of time constitute a final week of years. For the arguments in favour of the interpretation of these periods as consecutive, and against the 'synchronous' interpretation of the two periods, see this author's article "The Time Periods in the Central Part of the Book of Revelation" at <http://newtorah.org/The%20two%20time%20periods.html>.

⁵⁹ For the explanation of how these 144,000 men come to identify with Zion, see this author's article "Towards the Mystical Interpretation of Revelation 12", *Revue Biblique*, 114-4, 2007, 594-614.

⁶⁰ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 803; e.g., Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 261.

⁶¹ Although the verb here for learning (*μανθάνειν*) may refer to both a mystical form of knowing, and to the normal educational process, it still implies that the recipients are men of flesh and blood living at some location on earth.

⁶² De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, III 5.1, 259.

vision, after their exodus to a mountain in the desert (Rev 14,1-5). Their vocation to flee to this place is described in terms that clearly recall the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

So having identified the ‘Camp of the Saints’ with the 144,000 saints on Mount Zion, there is little difficulty in identifying the ‘Beloved City’ with the very same camp, but in a way that emphasizes divine solicitude and closeness—a reference no doubt to the presence of the Lamb and to the heavenly communion described in this vision (Rev 14,1-5). The identification of the 144,000 on Mount Zion as the ‘Beloved City’ is further supported by those biblical passages that speak about God’s special love for Zion (esp. Pss 78,68; 87,2). Because of Zion’s prior exodus, there should be no attempt to include historical Jerusalem in this description. Owing to Jerusalem’s special relationship with the Beast at this time, this city can no longer be called the ‘Beloved City’ (cf. Sir 24,11; Jer 11,15; 12,7), or ‘Holy City’, but instead ‘Great City’ (see above).

Perhaps the most pressing objection to this conclusion arises from the premillennialist view that the ‘Beloved City’ refers to historical Jerusalem towards the close of Christ’s millennial reign based in that city. This view presupposes the return of Zion to earthly Jerusalem, sometime following her exodus from that city. However, there is no indication of the return, or reunion, of Zion with historical Jerusalem in the description of the millennial kingdom (Rev 20,4-6) or anywhere else in the text. Furthermore, the biblical significance of ‘camp’ as the temporary abode of an army on the move is entirely lost if its permanence is extended to a duration of the order of a thousand years. The allusion to the exodus theme would make no sense if there had been a reunion of Zion with historical Jerusalem. Similar inconsistencies appear if one tries to limit the universal aspects of the millennial kingdom, such as the establishment of a global ruling authority, or the setting of thrones, or the first resurrection (Rev 20,4-6), to the confines of a temporary camp, albeit with the dimensions of a city. The most compelling argument against this interpretation, however, is the case against the entire premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20.⁶³

The symbolical interpretation, which claims that Mount Zion, the ‘Camp of the Saints’ and the ‘Beloved City’ all represent purely heavenly realities, can be rejected since the scene is clearly set on earth with heaven above: the armies of Gog and Magog (Rev 20,8) go up over the land to surround this location and then fire comes down from heaven to consume them. The fact that armies are able to surround this camp indeed suggests that the camp is confined to one spot, disqualifying the hypothesis that it is a symbol for Christian communities everywhere and anywhere.⁶⁴ In fact, such physical language supports the understanding of the 144,000 on Mount Zion as a unique group of faithful Christians, called to separate themselves from the world, in order to fulfill a special calling.⁶⁵ The purpose of that call becomes clear on an examination of the next passage.

The Holy City in 21,2 and 21,10

⁶³ See, for example, R.F. White, “Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10”, *WTS* 51 (1989) 319-44; idem, “Making sense of Rev 20:1-10? Harold Hoehner Versus Recapitulation”, *JETS* 37 (1994) 539-51; idem, “On the Hermeneutics and Interpretation of Revelation 20:1-3 A Preconsummationist Perspective”, *JETS* 42 (1999) 53-66; G.K. Beale’s commentary on Rev 20 in *The Book of Revelation*, 972-1038; and Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003). See also this author’s article at https://www.academia.edu/78868602/The_Millennium_and_the_Mystery_of_Iniquity.

⁶⁴ As in Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, 576, also Robert H. Gundry, “The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place as People”, *Novum Testamentum*, XXIX, 3 (1987), 257.

⁶⁵ This is among the conclusions of this author’s article “Towards the Mystical Interpretation of Revelation 12”, *Revue Biblique*, 114-4, 2007, 594-614.

*“And I saw **the Holy City**, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21,2). “And he carried me away in Spirit on to a great and high mountain and showed me **the Holy City**, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the Glory of God—her brilliance like a most precious stone, crystal clear like jasper stone” (Rev 21,10-11)*

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, is the subject of the last two chapters of Revelation. After the final judgment, this city descends out of heaven as the central part of a completely renewed creation, and is presented as the definitive fulfillment of God’s promises to mankind and the reward for his servants. She is described in two ways, both as a bride prepared for her wedding (21,2 taking up 19,7-9) and as a paradisaical city where God will dwell with mankind (Rev 21,10 – 22,5). Although she is described in this double way, there is little doubt the same ultimate reality is intended in both descriptions.

Her name ‘Holy City Jerusalem’ in Rev 21,10 inevitably recalls the ‘Holy City’ in Rev 11,2, which referred to the historical Jerusalem. This indicates a certain continuity between the eternal city described in these chapters and that earthly city of the same name. Evidently, though, there is also substantial discontinuity between the two cities: for the eternal city the adjective ‘new’ in Rev 22,3 (and 3,12), her divine origin in heaven, her immunity from profanation (Rev 21,27), and her immense dimensions (Rev 22,15-17) all point to qualitative and quantitative differences between this eternal fulfillment and her historical predecessor. Nevertheless, despite these discontinuous elements, the continuity is important, since it highlights the significance of historical Jerusalem in the realization of the New Jerusalem, and therefore in the eternal fulfillment of God’s purpose for mankind. It also raises the question of whether there is any geographical continuity between the historical and eternal cities of Jerusalem—whether the New Jerusalem will simply descend upon, and thereupon transform, the historical Jerusalem at the end of history.

As noted previously, the precise connection between the historical Jerusalem and its eternal fulfillment, the New Jerusalem, is difficult to ascertain without knowing the fate of the first and the location of the second on its descent from heaven, following the final judgment and the transformation of creation.

Regarding the fate of historical Jerusalem, the text has revealed a great deal: after an earthquake destroys a tenth of the city (Rev 11,13), historical Jerusalem becomes the seat of the Beast, and is profaned by his followers for a period of 42 months (11,2). Towards the end of this period, God’s wrathful judgment will fall on the wicked inhabitants of this city and will involve all of the surrounding country (14,20). As followers of the Beast, the city’s inhabitants will be tormented by the plagues of God’s wrath (16,11), before being condemned at the final judgment to eternal perdition (14,9-11). Finally, historical Jerusalem is split into three parts by a strong earthquake (16,19). Remarkably, though, there is no mention of the ‘fall’ of this city, in contrast to the fall of cities of the nations, including Babylon (14,8; 18,2; 16,19). However, neither is there any mention of her restoration, since the Beloved City does not refer to historical Jerusalem, but to the Camp of the Saints (20,9), which had previously relocated to a divinely protected site in the desert (12,6.14; 14,1). The picture of historical Jerusalem at the end of time, then, is of a city ravaged by a strong earthquake and entirely depopulated by the wrathful judgments of God. Although there is no mention of her ‘fall’, it is hard to imagine, for this once ‘Holy City’, a destiny that could be more bleak. There is certainly nothing here to suggest a glorious future for the historical city, least of all the kind of future described as the New Jerusalem.

Regarding the location of New Jerusalem’s realization, after her ‘descent’ from heaven, the author reports that he is taken in Spirit to a ‘great and high mountain’, and from

there he sees the New Jerusalem descending (Rev 21,10-11). In biblical terms ‘the great and high mountain’ is none other than Mount Zion (Ezek 40,2; cf. Is 2,2-3; Mic 4,1-2).⁶⁶ In Revelation, this is the mountain where the 144,000 assemble (Rev 14,1) after their exodus to the desert, and arguments have been presented above for recognizing the location of this mountain as Mount Sinai. Their assembly can be identified with the Camp of the Saints and the Beloved City (see above). It is from here, then, that the author sees the New Jerusalem descend on to earth, with dimensions that, if literally understood, occupy the territory of a small to medium sized country.⁶⁷ If this new creation were to ‘descend’ and be established to the north-east of Mount Sinai, it would indeed envelop the land of ancient Israel, which is presently called Israel/Palestine. In this case, one could reasonably argue that the New Jerusalem will indeed be geographically connected to the historical Jerusalem.

However, there is one shocking obstacle to this proposal. The angel that gives the order to begin the grape harvest is the angel in charge of the fire (Rev 14,18), whose task in early Jewish tradition was to punish and torture the enemies of God with fire.⁶⁸ Further, the wicked that are thrown into the winepress of God’s passion, and then trampled by the Word of God (Rev 19,15), yielding a ‘lake of blood’ 1600 stadia in length (Rev 14,20),⁶⁹ are indeed the same as those who will finally be condemned to eternal torment in the ‘Lake of Fire’.⁷⁰

Unless one postulates a system of judgment involving two different lakes, the implication is that, close to the time of the final judgment, the ‘lake of blood’ transforms into the ‘Lake of Fire’, in order to receive all the remaining followers of the Beast (Rev 14,9-11), the Beast and his false prophet (19,20), the devil (20,10), Death and Hades (20,14), anyone not written in the Book of Life (20,15), and those reprobates who persist in moral corruption (21,8). Since the latter remain outside the New Jerusalem (22,14-15 cf. 21,8), it is reasonable to suppose that the Lake of Fire, in which they are confined, is also outside this city. And if the Lake of Fire is outside the New Jerusalem, then so also must be its precursor, the ‘lake of blood’, 1600 stadia in length, which was previously identified with the Land of Israel. Since all this territory is excluded from the New Jerusalem, it is inconceivable that the New Jerusalem becomes a reality in the exactly the same geographical territory as historical Jerusalem or the Land of ancient Israel.

⁶⁶ The fact that John was able to see the descent of the New Jerusalem from Mount Zion implies at least some continuity between the old and new orders of creation. The ‘new heaven and new earth’ is not a new creation *ex nihilo*, but a total transformation and renewal of the creation. For fuller treatment of this issue, see Gale Z. Heide “What is New About the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3”, *JETS* 40/1 (March 1997) 37-56; and Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 200-205.

⁶⁷ The measurements of the New Jerusalem can be interpreted literally in one of three ways: 1) as a square with each side measuring 12,000 stadia (approx. 2,220 kms); 2) as a square with all four of its sides totalling 12,000 stadia, so each side is only 3,000 stadia (approx. 555 kms); 3) as a cube whose 12 sides add up to 12,000 stadia, so that each side measures 1,000 stadia (approx. 185 kms). The alternative is to leave aside the literal interpretation, for the time being, and accept that since these numbers are all factors of 144,000, then it is the 144,000 men on Mount Zion who will decide on the eventual dimensions of this city.

⁶⁸ See Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 846

⁶⁹ “Up to the bridles of the horses for 1600 stadia” (Rev 14,20) represents a formidable ‘lake of blood’.

⁷⁰ I.e., these are the followers of the Beast, whose names have been removed from the Book of Life of the Lamb (cf. Rev 13,8; 14,9-11; 20,15). The judgment appears to proceed as follows: the first fruits of the vintage and wine pressing are those who have ‘trampled’ the Holy City, historical Jerusalem (see above). Their ‘wine’ is the first to be received in heaven as the wine of God’s passion, which is then mixed in the cup of God’s anger (14,10) and returned upon earth as the libation-bowl plagues (Rev 15-16). These plagues cause the Beast’s followers to blaspheme God (16,10-11), and in this way merit eternal condemnation (14,9-11) in the Lake of Fire (20,15). The sixth bowl plague also creates the conditions for the final battle (16,12-14.16), in which the enemies of Christ are totally defeated (19,11-21), and their leaders cast into the Lake of Fire. The picture is of an ongoing process of judgment (the vintage and wine pressing) that merges imperceptibly with the final battle and eternal judgment as the end of history approaches.

However, from the geographical reflections presented here, the two cannot be far apart. From the statement that those tormented in the Lake of Fire are “in front of holy angels and in front the Lamb” (Rev 14,10; cf. *1En* 27:2-3, 48:9; 62:12)),⁷¹ and knowing that the New Jerusalem is the home of the Lamb (Rev 21,22; 22.3) and is guarded by holy angels (Rev 21,12), it is feasible that the Lake of Fire may even be adjacent to the walls of the new ‘Holy City’.

Implications and Conclusions

Contrary to common scholarly opinion, the findings of this study have identified, in the Book of Revelation, numerous allusions to the historical city of Jerusalem. From a literary point of view, these help to unite previously disconnected parts of the text in such a way that historical Jerusalem functions as an important link in the interpretation of the central part of the book. From a theological point of view, the findings of the study ascribe to this city a role of central importance in John’s prophecy.

These are unexpected findings, since the identity of historical Jerusalem is carefully hidden in the text, and the historical city is never explicitly called Jerusalem by name. Her identity emerges only by reasserting the plain meaning of the allusions such as ‘they will trample the holy city’ in Rev 11,2, and ‘the city where the Lord was crucified’ in 11,8, and by rejecting alternative proposals. The full significance of this city then comes to light by examining each successive mention of the city in the light of its verbal and thematic links to previous allusions.

The simple fact that Christian tradition still unanimously regards Jerusalem as the holy city informs us that the period of trampling for 42 months (Rev 11,2) has not yet commenced. Since this period of 42 months is also the duration of a global, end-historical, antichristian empire that has not yet been realized,⁷² Revelation is here describing historical Jerusalem in the context of a prophecy for the future and final stage of history. Statements to the effect that there is “no teaching in John’s Apocalypse concerning a specific future for Jerusalem”⁷³ should be rejected.

It is during this period of 42 months, immediately preceding the Parousia, that Jerusalem plays her exceedingly important, though shockingly negative, role at the center of the Beast’s antichristian empire. During this period, Jerusalem succeeds Babylon as the ‘Great City’—the city that is given a ‘special status’ by the Beast’s regime. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to this conclusion is the scholarly tendency to allegorize times, places and persons in the text,⁷⁴ with the result that the clues indicating this transfer of ‘Great City’ status are missed. The main indication of this radical change in the status of historical Jerusalem is to be found at the end of the 1,260-day mission of the two witnesses, and the start of the 42-month rule of the Beast. Up to this point the Beast had been supporting

⁷¹ Although the place of torment here in Rev 14,10 is not specifically called the ‘Lake of Fire’, the description is close enough to the description of the ‘Lake of Fire (and Sulphur)’ in 20,10 as to be understood as the same place.

⁷² There is nothing in history to date that can match the antichristian character and extension of the Beast’s reign described in Revelation 13 and 17. The Preterist claim that these chapters describe the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Domitian, have been confounded by studies such as that of L.L.Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, Oxford: OUP, 1990: “It would be a mistake to interpret the Book of Revelation as a response to Domitian’s supposed excessive claims to divinity or to a reign of terror at the end of Domitian’s rule”, *ibid.*, 116.

⁷³ Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 262.

⁷⁴ Especially the two time periods (the 1260 days and the 42 months), the Holy City/Great City, and the two witnesses of Rev 11,1-13.

Babylon from under the waters, in a clandestine and invisible way. At the conclusion of the 1,260-day mission of the two witnesses, the Beast reveals himself fully to the world, in order to put these two Christians to death and start his 42-month reign. If the two periods (1,260 days and 42 months) are considered synchronous, instead of consecutive, then there is no possibility of perceiving Jerusalem's replacement of Babylon as the Beast's favoured city and recipient of the title of 'Great City'.⁷⁵ Instead, Jerusalem is confused with Babylon, and both are said to be symbolical of any, and every, 'world city'. The geographical specificity is lost.

Another cause of misunderstanding is that, even if the city's negative role has been noticed, it has rarely been considered theologically significant and little attention has been given to it. The findings in this study portray historical Jerusalem in an even more negative light than Babylon, in the sense that she is openly associated with the Beast, whereas Babylon's support from that evil source was carefully hidden. With great sadness, it must be said that the identification of historical Jerusalem in the text with the throne of the Beast yields what could be termed the geography of eternal damnation. Precisely because it is negative in the extreme, such a role cannot be dismissed as theologically insignificant.

In a surprising way these findings bring together the widely different view-points of the Restorationists, who understand that Jerusalem has a very important and positive role to play at the end of history, and the replacement theologians, who argue that Jerusalem has already been judged negatively for her rejection of Jesus Christ, has lost her 'holy' status, and therefore has no further role to play. According to the findings above, historical Jerusalem does indeed have an important role to play at the end-time, but that role is entirely negative. It is no understatement to say that in the final period of 42 months, Jerusalem is exploited and manipulated by the forces of evil in their last attempt to dominate the world and resist the kingdom of Christ and God. John's prophecy is telling us, though, that this too is a part of God's plan, for a brief period of time.⁷⁶

Knowing that Jerusalem will be at the center of the devil's final efforts to mislead mankind helps to interpret one particular expression of this deception described in Rev 13. The involvement of the historical city of Jerusalem raises the suspicion that the idolatrous personality cult of the Beast described in Rev 13,11-17 will be based on the Temple Mount.⁷⁷ The suspicion is confirmed in the following description of one of the signs performed by the Beast's accomplice, or false prophet: "*And he performs great signs such that he even makes fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men; and he deceives the inhabitants of the earth by the signs he was allowed to perform in front of the beast...*" (Rev 13,13-14).

In the history of the ancient Israelite cult, the sign of fire falling from heaven appeared at the consecration of a new altar and indicated divine confirmation (Lev 9,24; 1Chr 21,26; 2Chr 7,1; 2Macc 1,18-36). So the false prophet's imitation of this sign, in an impressive but inauthentic way, implies his participation in the dedication of a new altar connected to the ancient Israelite cult.⁷⁸ Occurring in Jerusalem, this act undoubtedly entails the reconstruction of the temple on the Temple Mount. Despite occupying the most sacred site of the ancient temple in Jerusalem (cf. 2Thess 2,4; Mt 24,15; Mk 13,14), the cult established and enforced by the false prophet is nevertheless directed towards the worship of a false messiah (the first Beast) and the source of his authority, the devil (Rev 13,2-3.8.15).⁷⁹

⁷⁵ See note 58 above.

⁷⁶ It is indeed, to all intents and purposes, an essential part of the final judgment, see note 70 above.

⁷⁷ Especially in the light of other NT prophecies: 2Thess 2,4; Mt 24,15; Mk 13,14.

⁷⁸ The imitation of this sign by the false prophet also suggests that he wishes to identify himself with Elijah, since it recalls the divine powers given to this prophet (cf. 2Kgs 1,9-14; 1Kgs 18,30-40).

⁷⁹ Modern interpretations of the religious activity described in this passage identify it with the imperial cult—a form of pagan idolatry practiced in the first century AD, which made the image of the Emperor an object of

The localization of the centre of the false messianic empire at the historical city of Jerusalem, and the subtlety of the textual allusions to this phenomenon, raise the broader issue of the literal interpretation of specific geographical markers elsewhere in the text, for example the River Euphrates (Rev 9,14; 16,12), Harmageddon (16,16) and Babylon (14,8; Rev 17-18).⁸⁰ It would be entirely consistent with the above findings, for example, if the River Euphrates actually referred to the river of that name, which essentially prevents the crossing of large armies from the East to the Middle East, and if Harmageddon were interpreted literally as the mountain in Northern Israel overlooking the historical battleground on the plains of Jezreel.⁸¹ This mount, would then represent the diabolical counterpart to Mount Zion, since here the false-messiah (the Beast) attempts to demonstrate his military power against the kings of the East (Rev 16,12), but is defeated by the true Messiah coming from Mount Zion (17,14; 19,11-16; cf. Ps 2,6-9; 110,2).⁸² Similarly, these findings offer further support for the interpretation of Babylon as a literal city on this earth, in accordance with the geographical indication provided in the text, i.e., as sitting on seven hills (Rev 17,9). This is an ancient and widely recognized allusion to the city of Rome. However, the precise localization and identification of these places go beyond the limits of this work and must be considered separately.

Finally, but on the same theme, it should be noted that the author's subtle allusions to specific geographical locations is not unique to the Book of Revelation. Examples of similar allusions are to be found in other apocalyptic works, especially in *I Enoch*. As noted by one expert in the field, "What is obvious in *I Enoch*, once one sees it, is the authors' preoccupation with a world that is described in spatial and material terms, a world that can be experienced, at least in principle, by the five senses. This spatial dimension, however, is rarely spelled out with reference to specific geographic locations, and place names are used only of sacred sites: Sinai (1.4; cf. 89,29); Hermon and its environs (6.5; 13.7,9); Jerusalem, though not by name (26-27; cf. 25.5; 56.7; 89.50, 54-56, 66, 72-73; 90.26-36; 93.7-8, 13). Certainly the authors think of events as occurring in particular places..."⁸³

worship. Very few commentators seem to notice the messianic overtones in this passage, or the allusion to ancient Israelite prophetic and ceremonial traditions. Those scholars who have noticed these allusions (e.g., Beale, *Revelation*, 710-15) do not seem to be aware of their incompatibility with first-century pagan practices. In fact there is only one religion into which the religious activity described in this passage fits, and that is Judaism, especially those branches of orthodox Judaism that await the rebuilding of their temple in its former place. In the *Halacha* defined by Maimonides, in fact, the rebuilding of the temple in its place is the act that definitively identifies Judaism's messiah and the inauguration of its messianic age (*The Code [Mishneh Torah]*, Book 14: Judges; Treatise 5: Kings and Wars, chs. 11-12, Yale Judaica Series, New Haven: Yale University Press [1949], 238-42). In this it differs fundamentally from the Christian view, as represented in the Apocalypse, which sees this act as diabolical, and its instigator as the Antichrist.

⁸⁰ One could include here the Greek word 'γη', which can be translated in several ways as 1) earth or world, 2) land as opposed to sea or water, 3) ground, 4) a region or country. Of the many occurrences of this word in Revelation, most undoubtedly refer to the earth or world in general, but some occurrences seem to have a specific geographical reference to the Land of Israel, 'The Land' *par excellence* (הארץ in Hebrew). There are 3 occurrences in particular where, according to the context, this meaning may apply (Rev 11,6; 13,11; 20,9). However, apart from the context, there is no apparent rule for confirming this interpretation.

⁸¹ Since *Har* in Hebrew means a mountain, *Har-Mageddon* would represent the mountain closest to the ancient city of Megiddo. This is the Carmel range (the 'Muhraka'), which indeed has a commanding view over the entire Valley of Jezreel and was the site of Elijah's contest with the false prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18,20-46).

⁸² Contra Beasley-Murray, who writes: "Whatever the origin of the term, we are not to think in terms of a geographical locality in Israel (the Holy Land does not really feature in John's prophecy). Indeed, it is doubtful that any single locality is in mind at all. The name stands for an event", *The Book of Revelation*, 246.

⁸³ George W.E. Nickelsburg, "The Apocalyptic Construction of Reality in 1 Enoch", *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium*", eds. J.J. Collins and J.H. Charlesworth, JSTOR, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991; 54-55.

One suspects that almost the same observation could be made about the geographical locations in the Book of Revelation, most especially in the case of historical Jerusalem. The literal interpretation of the places alluded to in the prophecy of Revelation is perfectly consistent with other works of the same genre and, as argued above, would appear to be the original intention of the author.

John Ben-Daniel,
Jerusalem.