

## DANCING ON THE STREETS OF GOLD ?

**Gerrie Malan**



The same precious friend who asked us about the Lion and Lamb that would lie down together (read here), also asked us about the streets of gold, in view of our understanding that the Book of Revelation had been fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple.

Once again, our Bible study made us realise just how nonchalantly we are indoctrinated by gospel songs, paintings, and the wrong teaching of sincere people. We remembered how we enjoyed singing the Vineyard song, *We Will Dance*, that included the words, “...and we will dance on the streets that are golden; the glorious Bride, and the great Son of Man...”

Revelation 21:21 & 22:1 mention only a street of gold, and not streets. The plural is therefore error to begin with. Please check this yourself. If you should find any translation that has the plural, it would only be because the translators have translated their own interpretation into the text. We have personally not yet found such a translation.

Another realisation, once again, was the poverty of expression of the English language compared to the Greek. The word that is translated with street, is the Greek word *plateia*. It means ‘a wide place; an open (public) square’. And yes, it is also translated street.

I have said many times that we cannot form a proper understanding of the Scriptures without studying them within their full context - and that includes literary, historical, geographical and cultural context. My study on this topic underlined the importance of such an approach.

**Revelation describes the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, as a cube.** If we want to be blindly literal in our understanding, then we need to explain just how one will fit one street into the cube! But as far as I am concerned, **the cube is a poetic/prophetic description of perfection.** This view is not in conflict with sound principles of interpretation. And the context of temples of that time provides further clarification.

The Bible is not a book of fables, as some would have it, and is certainly not characterised by silly comparisons. **Note that Revelation 21 and 22 are descriptive of the worship of God.** According to Rev. 21:22 the city has no temple, for God and the Lamb are the temple! Therefore we need to look at the context of the temple in the city, for the temple was the place of God’s presence in the earthly Jerusalem. Considering the context, then, this image is undoubtedly taken from the realities of temple design in the ancient pagan and Hebrew world environments. Temple design in those times and environments included a “public square” or plain where the ordinary people could worship. They did not have the right of entry to the inner parts of the temple. It was not necessarily a square as our modern understanding would lead us to believe, but a set apart area. Very few Bible translations give us this perspective (the Holman’s Christian Standard Bible does so in a footnote).

If you studied pictures of the ancient Zion or City of David and the temple, you should notice the large area that the temple took up. Then also note the area, or “public square” surrounding the temple.

Bear in mind that, when Herod rebuilt the temple, he made sure it was to stand as a monument *par excellence* for himself - and that included the public (worship) square. This “square”, and as far as I could ascertain it was the largest of any temple’s, certainly resembled a street.

It would have been on this square where Jesus turned over the tables of the traders and drove the money lenders out, because they were preventing the people from worshiping.

The writer of the Revelation received a perfect image of this real part of the worldview of the time to describe the New (spiritual) Jerusalem. Here you have the “street of gold”, the perfect setting to worship the living God and His Lamb. Remember what Jesus taught the Samaritan woman at the well about worshiping in spirit and in truth!

For those who are still waiting for the New Jerusalem to come – the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declared in Chapter 12:22 that they (the readers, or that generation) **had already come** to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem (read more here). It was at hand, and not something in the distant future, thousands of years later as the popular end-times doctrines would have it. To view it differently would be to declare that the Bible contradicts itself. And as you read the Revelation, remember to have a New Testament world map at hand, always asking Who? Why? When? Where? What?