

Revelation 21:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Analysis

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.... This verse from Revelation's vision of new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem - eternal state, god dwelling with his people employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 21:23 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ή	πόλις	οὐ	χρείαν	ἔχει	τοῦ	ἡλίου	οὐδὲ	τῆς
And	G3588	the city	no	need	had	G3588	of the sun	neither	G3588
G2532		G4172	G3756	G5532	G2192		G2246	G3761	
σελήνης ἵνα φαίνωσιν ἐν αὐτῇς ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ									
of the moon	to	shine	in	it	G3588	for	the glory	G3588	
G4582	G2443	G5316	G1722	G846		G1063	G1391		
θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτῇς καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῇς τὸ ἀρνίον									
of God	did lighten	it	And	G3588	is the light	it	G3588	the Lamb	
G2316	G5461	G846	G2532		G3088	G846		G721	

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 22:5 (Light): And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 21:11 (Glory): Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

John 1:9 (Light): That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Isaiah 24:23 (Glory): Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

Luke 2:32 (Glory): A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Revelation 18:1 (Glory): And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

John 1:18 (References God): No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

John 5:23 (Parallel theme): That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Habakkuk 3:3 (Glory): God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

Revelation 21:25 (Parallel theme): And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

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