

Book Review

Reaching the New Jerusalem: A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City

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UR 510: Urban Theology

February 21, 2023

Introduction and Author's Purpose for Writing the Book

The central theme or objective of *Reaching for the New Jerusalem: A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City*, is that a New Jerusalem mindset and principles are applicable to both present and future contexts. God's people are to earnestly prepare and encourage others for the New Jerusalem, which is to come.

God's ambassadors also need to demonstrate committed engagement in their current "Jerusalem\cities" and in their interaction with "Jerusalem dwellers\ communities." As presented by the author, " the New Jerusalem is a royal city where God dwells, it is both future and present and large and small" (Park, 2013, 17).

Author's Social Analysis

Park stated that "A city can be defined as a network of relationships. Since the city is the place where the greatest concentration of people live, work and interact, it serves as a forum for debating all topics of national and international concern" (2013, 6). Some of the possible challenges which were identified and need to be addressed in large populations are as follows: overwhelming complexities in the different societal systems, gross inequality, school dropouts, increased incarceration, mental health issues, and need for intercultural unity.

Within the above-mentioned areas of concern are various important sub-topics such as access to economic resources or propensity to poverty and injustices facing city residents. "Urban church leaders are forced to navigate not only denominational or theological differences, but also cultural differences and related power dynamics" (Park, 2013, 99). This is also expanded when one examines the political structures and their subsequent impact on what transpires within cities. The United States of America was presented by the author as an example for consideration. "The face of the United States of America, especially in urban centers, is changing and diversifying rapidly; therefore, more possibilities than ever before exist to witness the nature of the New Jerusalem" (Park, 2013, 99). One can increase their social awareness as they seek to correlate theological applicability via scriptures with Biblical examples to the topic.

Author's Urban Theological Reflection & Formation

As presented by Park, an important starting point theme as one look toward the New Jerusalem is that of need for rebuilders in our modern societies. This was demonstrated by Nehemiah and shared throughout the book of Nehemiah from Chapter 1. Nehemiah's heart-felt brokenness to what he heard in Shushan about the devastation in Jerusalem, advanced into him seeking God's direction and then his subsequent engagement until restoration occurred.

Another important theme is that for reconcilers. As outlined in Matt 5:24 and 18: 21- 24, God's followers are to be proponents of reconciliation. This is reconciliation not only to God also to others. This is necessary to promote harmonious relationships and interaction with God as well as individuals in their communities. This leads then to the next theme of loving one another. This is spoken on in such scriptures as Mathew 22:39 and I Corinthians 13. One's love for others is to be evident in what they do and how they are willing to serve others. This love for others is to cross cultural boundaries. This then directs us to the fifth theme.

God's people must view and present the New Jerusalem as an ultimate place of hope and refuge for all of God's people in spite of cultural differences.

This encouragement of hope is to occur despite varying challenges they are presently encountering as part of city living. From Revelations 7:9, "we get a glimpse of God's ultimate vision, a multitude of diverse people all standing before the throne and the Lamb. Jesus has invited us, as his ambassadors, to establish the New Jerusalem in our present day's reality" (Park, 2013, 101) .

Author's Urban Theological Implementation

As is the case with many things in life, there is a need for a suggested course of action to follow which provides the means and method for approaching the matter of concern as well as the best practice which should be maintained for sustained results. One might ask, what would be the author's approach towards addressing matters in our cities? As denoted by Park, "If we are to follow Christ, then we must focus our eyes to look for devastation into which we can bring the restorative kingdom of God" (2013, 28). This will require God's people to be willing to align their plans and decisions to adhere to what is directed by God to engage in.

Refusing to acknowledge or engage with an incarnational mindset is contradictory to what God desires for our current cities as well as preparing individuals for the New Jerusalem. "Bringing order out of chaos means bringing life out of death, restoring what was taken, rebuilding that which was destroyed, and overcoming the work of the evil one – thus bringing unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (Park, 2013, 27). These acts of service as outlined by Park, are examples of what should be part of daily practice as God's people in their respective communities. They should also direct how individuals assist in directing the focus, anticipation, and preparation for present societies amidst all of the current challenges their citizens face, as well for the divine New Jerusalem living which is to come.

Student's Clear and Organized Impressions of the Author's Arguments

I agree with the resounding truth which was echoed throughout this book that there is a need for individuals to be willing to assume their role and responsibility towards impacting people in our present cities as well as directing their attention towards the New Jerusalem. In my view, the church is not here just to occupy space until Jesus' return but are to be His engaged ambassadors, rebuilders and reconcilers. There must be concerted efforts as part of our social analysis to be aware of who we interact with and the challenges they face. "Wholehearted sharing of more than just space can catapult New Jerusalem style kingdom of God churches across our cities (Park 2013, 152). We must strive to do it God's way to reach those around us. "God wants to purify our approach to doing his work so that we learn to participate

with Him in a pure form of ministry that is in tune with how He works” (Park, 2013, 92). It is only then as God’s ambassadors that we are truly operating with a New Jerusalem perspective for the present complexities in our cities as well as for the future city we are expectantly reaching towards.

Works Cited

Park, Seong Hyun. 2013. *Reaching the New Jerusalem: A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.