

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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New Jerusalem #1.

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Signifies

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having been prepared like a bride having been adorned [for] her husband. (Revelation 21:2 ALT)

(9) And one of the seven messengers who have the seven bowls brimming with the last seven calamities came, and he speaks with me, saying, “Hither! I shall be showing you the bride, the wife of the Lambkin.” (10) And he carries me away, in spirit, on a mountain, huge and high, and shows me the holy city, Jerusalem, as it is descending out of heaven from God, (11) having the glory from God. (Revelation 21:9-11 CV)

This is the first issue of a series, which, Lord willing, will look at New Jerusalem, which is also called the holy city and the bride of the Lambkin. It could be called a city-bride. Like the series on the kingdom of our Lord, I plan to keep this series as an open-ended one that I will expand upon over the next year.

To begin, it seems rather strange to call a bride a city, or to call a city a bride. How are we to interpret John’s vision of this city-bride? Is it to be seen as a literal city, a great monumental structure geographically located on a new earth or perhaps above it in the heavenlies?

Over the years, I have read many descriptions that focus on a geographical city and what men think the city will look like. For example, some picture it as a huge cube; some picture it as a pyramid; some picture it as this thing floating amongst the clouds of the sky; and yet some picture it as the moon, a bright shining orb that will circle the new earth. Others just sing fancifully about the city and “meeting their loved ones at the pearly gates,” “walking on golden streets,” and “living in heavenly mansions” forever and ever. But is this how we are to view the city that John was told by the angel of the Lord is the bride, the wife of the Lambkin? Did the Father send His Son to this earth to die for the sin of the world just so a select group of people will be able to walk on streets of gold? Was Jesus’ death on the cross about bringing forth a literal city; and is this God’s desire, a literal structure of gold and precious stones in which to reside with mankind?

I suggest that the only way to approach a study of the bride, the wife of the Lambkin, is to see it the same way that John saw it—in spirit, and to discern what it **signifies**. It is important to understand that *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* as penned by John, the apostle of love, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, signifies what must occur.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.... (Revelation 1:1 KJV)

Signify means “to be a sign of or indication of;” it refers to something of meaning and importance. The Greek-English Keyword Concordance defines signify as “a faded metaphor, no longer meaning to make known by signs, but by speech.” A *metaphor* is “a figure of speech transferring attributes to an object which does not possess them.” For example, the river of the water of life (Revelation 22:1; also 21:6) represents the spirit of God (John 7:38-39). Therefore, if we want to know God’s heart, we must discern John’s word-pictures for their spiritual meaning.

Unfortunately, many people see the many images of the Revelation in a literal sense and fail to see that they signify something important. In order to understand what is signified in the Revelation, we must look beyond the physical realm to see into the spiritual realm. After all, John was in spirit in the Lord's day when he was given his vision of the unveiling [revelation] of Jesus Christ.

I believe that it is safe to state that many of the Lord's people interpret Scripture with the natural mind and fail to see beyond the physical realm in which we live. Another way of stating this is that many Christians look at Scripture through the lens of the world and the things of the world rather than discerning the meaning *in* spirit. Many are like the Corinthian believers that Paul had to exhort because they were babes who required the milk of the word and could not digest the meat of the word, which is for those who are spiritual.

(9) But just as it has been written, “What [things] an eye did not see and an ear did not hear and did not enter into the heart of humanity, [fig., no person thought could happen], which [things] God prepared for the ones loving Him.” [Isaiah 64:4] (10) But God revealed [them] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all [things], even the depths of God. (11) For who among people knows the [things] of the person, except the spirit of the person, the [one] in him? In the same way also no one knows the [things] of God, except the Spirit of God. (12) But we did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit, the [One] from God, so that we should know the [things] having been graciously given to us by God; (13) which [things] also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in [words] taught by the Holy Spirit, interpreting spiritual [things] by spiritual [words] [or, combining spiritual [ideas] with spiritual [words]]. (1 Corinthians 2:9-13 ALT)

Paul clearly laid down the principle in understanding Scripture and, especially, in understanding the purpose and plan of God. First, he declared that something tremendous is in store for those who love God. Second, he declared that these things are revealed to us through His spirit. Immediately, this tells us that this is a spiritual matter that cannot be discerned through our natural mind. Third, Paul confirms this thought by declaring that only the spirit of God knows such things. Fourth, he reminds all the saints of Christ that we do not receive the spirit of the world but the spirit that comes from God. Fifth, he tells us that the spirit is given so that we should know what God has given us. Sixth, what Paul taught the Corinthians and all the church of his day, as well as us today, was taught him by the Holy Spirit. Seventh, and most importantly, to understand the things of God, one must interpret them spiritual by spiritual. The words in brackets in the above verses are not in the original Greek and most translations add words to make the meaning clearer. This particular translation makes the point that we must interpret spiritual things or ideas with spiritual words.

Now, this fits perfectly with the Patmos vision, which signifies what the spirit of God revealed to John while in spirit. John saw pictures of things in spirit and heard words in spirit. And the only way to understand and interpret what John saw and heard is in spirit, interpreting spiritual things [symbols, pictures] by spiritual words, or combining spiritual pictures with spiritual words. The objective is to see all that John saw from the perspective of the spirit of God and not from the spirit of the world. This is why John had to be carried away in spirit to a mountain, huge and high, when it came time to see the bride, the Lambkin's wife (Revelation 21:9-10).

In spirit, you cannot see or discern the bride, which is also described as the holy city, unless you get above the things of this world and get away from the fog and clouds of life to see into the spiritual realm, to see the very heart of God. You must combine spiritual with spiritual. Anything else is of the world that is passing away. If you believe in Jesus, then you have received the spirit from God so that you should know the things taught by the Holy Spirit.

Be like John, who, when he was in spirit, declared: **“Then I saw...”**

It is time to see what John saw.