

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)

#03-0992

New Jerusalem #2.

January 16, 2009

The Name

This open-ended series has one purpose, and that is to explore the nature and character of New Jerusalem. When John saw it, he was in spirit, and, as such, we need to see it as John saw it; we need the eyes of our heart opened to see what it spiritually signifies.

To understand what John saw, we need to cast aside some things that have conditioned our thinking.

First, we need to put aside the thought that it is simply a literal, physical city with streets of gold, trees of life, the river of life, and many mansions. Without doubt, this is how many of us have been taught to view the city.

Second, we need to take our eyes off the present-day Jerusalem that sits in the Middle East. This is the old Jerusalem that is in bondage. Again, without doubt, many of us have been taught to think of the ancient, earthly Jerusalem as the apple of God's eye. However, what we need to see is that ancient Jerusalem is guilty of crucifying the Lord and is likened to Sodom and Egypt and the great city Babylon (Revelation 11:8), and that God has removed His name from that city (Jeremiah 7:12-15; 26:6; Ezekiel 10-11) and placed it on a people (Revelation 3:12). We can only imagine the joy in John's heart as he beheld a Jerusalem that is not tainted by the blood of the prophets, but something holy and heavenly.

Now, the first thing that needs to be underlined as we begin this series is the actual name of the city of God. If you have read much of my material, you will notice that I refer to the city as **New Jerusalem**, not as *the new* Jerusalem. Most translations call it **the new Jerusalem**; that is, the article *the* is included, as if to place the emphasis on the word *new*. In one sense, this is true, for it is new in comparison to the ancient Jerusalem on earth that has been at the center of worldwide controversy, and is even in our day. It is new in location, in character, and in its very nature. In fact, it is not of this earth, and it is not made of physical materials. As will be shown, it is made of living stones.

Even though many translations use the article *the*, it is apparent that, in some cases, the article does not appear in the Greek. Consequently, some translations leave it out in some verses but not consistently so in all verses.

My reason for leaving it out is more fundamental. New Jerusalem is the name of God's city, at least as far as we are told at this point in time. God may have another name entirely at some point. When we refer to cities, we usually do not precede it with an article. Thus, we call the capital city of the US, Washington, DC, not *the* Washington DC, or the capital of Ghana, Accra, not *the* Accra.

But how do we know that New Jerusalem is the name of God's city? For starters, Isaiah tells us that Jerusalem will be called by a new name.

(1) For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning. (2) The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name which the mouth of the LORD will designate. (Isaiah 62:1-2 NASB)

Next, Isaiah also tells us that Jerusalem will be associated with new heavens and a new earth.

(17) “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. (18) But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness. (19) I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. (Isaiah 65:17-19 NASB)

Isaiah refers to Jerusalem, not New Jerusalem, because he was not given the new name; he was only informed that there would be a new name. However, when we see new heavens and a new earth, it should immediately draw our attention to other Scripture, especially the book of Revelation. The fact is that it is not until we come to John’s Patmos vision and the Lord Himself speaking to the ecclesia that we discover that the name of the city of God is New Jerusalem. Notice that John emphasizes names three times, and within this context, he names the city of God, which is New Jerusalem.

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (Revelation 3:12 KJV)

Of the many translations that I reviewed, only the King James leaves out the article. Whether one capitalizes new or not is preference, but if it is the actual name of the city, then it too should be capitalized. I have chosen to capitalize it based on the conclusion that this is its name.

With the arrival of the day of God, in which all is being made new, John saw New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2 NASB)

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)

It is interesting that John introduces the city as New Jerusalem, but the last mention of Jerusalem drops the word *new* and inserts the phrase *the holy city*.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.... (Revelation 21:10 NASB)

Since punctuation is not used in the Greek, translators have discretion in where to place commas. Thus, the NASB states *the holy city, Jerusalem*, while other translations state *the holy city Jerusalem*. Either way, it is no longer New Jerusalem but simply Jerusalem. I think the reason for this omission is because, at this point, there is no question whatsoever that there is only one Jerusalem; there is no old and new Jerusalem. The old will have completely passed away, never to rise again. New Jerusalem is not part of the old and has never been nor ever will be part of it. It is part of the all new, the new creation in Christ. Consequently, on our side of the day of God, the city of God is New Jerusalem; but in the day of God, it will be known as Jerusalem, just as the new heaven and the new earth will be known as the heaven and the earth, since the former will have passed away. In fact, all associated with the prior eons will have passed away. For this reason, it is important to make a clear break from the old Jerusalem that is destined to pass away. The sooner we make the break, the better.

Obviously, there are other descriptive names for New Jerusalem used in Scripture. Along with the holy city, there is the celestial or heavenly Jerusalem; the bride, the wife of the Lambkin; and the dwelling of God in spirit, to name a few. These will be discussed in subsequent issues.