

# 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 #3. God's Dwelling Place***

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New Jerusalem is generally associated with what John was given while in spirit on Patmos, but the fact of the matter is that Paul actually explains what it signifies. For this reason, I believe it is best to start with Paul's revelation and not John's description of what he saw. As we do this, it will become apparent that New Jerusalem, as the new creation, is not about literal streets or rivers or trees but about a people.

Just as John was in spirit as he was given such great revelation, so was Paul, except that Paul did not state he was in spirit but simply that he was snatched away. I believe that it is safe to assume that he too was in spirit.

**(1) If boasting must be, though it is not expedient, indeed, yet I shall also be coming to apparitions and revelations of the Lord. (2) I am acquainted with a man in Christ, fourteen years before this, (whether in a body I am not aware, or outside of the body, I am not aware – God is aware) such a one was snatched away to the third heaven. (3) And I am acquainted with such a man (whether in a body or outside of the body I am not aware – God is aware) (4) that he was snatched away into paradise and hears ineffable declarations, which it is not allowed a man to speak. (2 Corinthians 12:1-4 CV)**

Paul could not speak forth what he heard, but this does not mean that he never described the revelation given to him. After all, in seeing the third heaven and paradise, he saw the new creation in Christ which is referenced in his writings. There is no doubt that Paul saw the same thing that John saw, but Paul's vision was of a people, a dwelling place of God. Paul's city-bride was actually a people in which God Himself dwells. It is called a holy temple in the Lord and God's dwelling place in spirit. The city is a people, not a specific geographical place with bricks and mortar. Consider how Paul describes it in his Ephesians epistle.

**(19) Consequently, then, no longer are you guests and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to God's family, (20) being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the capstone of the corner being Christ Jesus Himself, (21) in Whom the entire building, being connected together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord: (22) in Whom you, also, are being built together for God's dwelling place, in spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 CV)**

Notice how Paul refers to God's family, the entire building, a holy temple, and a dwelling place. In other words, he uses metaphors to liken physical structures to people. The people are part of the family as well as a place in which to reside, a dwelling place for God. This dwelling place begins at the individual level and grows into a collection of individuals, a family, and, we might add, a body, the body of Christ, which was a secret revealed through Paul.

**(16) Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (17) If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NASB)**

**Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19 NASB)**

The basis for the temple of God is the fact that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer, a fact that Paul testifies to throughout his epistles (Romans 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 7:40; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Galatians 3:2, 5, 14; 4:6; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:14). But it is more than the Holy Spirit simply taking up residence in the believer, for the believer becomes a temple of the living God. We could say that this is the atomic level of the dwelling of God in spirit, New Jerusalem.

**(16) And what harmony [is there for the] temple of God with idols? For you are a temple of the living God, just as God said, “I will dwell in them and will walk about [fig., live] among [them], and I will be their God, and they will be a people to Me [or, My people].” [Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Ezek 37:27] (17) For this reason, “Come out from [the] midst of them and be separated,” says the Lord. “And stop touching [any] unclean [or, defiling] [thing; or, person],” and I will receive you. [Isaiah 52:11; Ezek 20:34, 41] (18) “And I will be to you for a Father, and you will be to Me for sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.” [2 Sam 7:14; Isaiah 43:6; Jer 31:9] (2 Corinthians 6:16-18 ALT)**

Notice how Paul relied heavily on Hebrew Scripture. The prophets knew that God’s heart was to dwell among His people and Paul, being a Pharisee, knew this heart. However, Paul revealed that it was more than this, for God desires to take up residence in His people by His spirit. God’s desire is that His sons and daughters be a temple of His life, expressing Him in character and nature. His people will inherit all that His Son inherits, which includes all creation.

By comparing all the above verses with John’s revelation, it is easy to see that they shared the same vision.

**And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.... (Revelation 21:3 NASB)**

**“He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.” (Revelation 21:7 NASB)**

Clearly, New Jerusalem is about a people coming into sonship, which is God’s ultimate desire for all mankind. But notice that, with John, the loud voice from the throne states that God will simply tabernacle among men, not dwell in them. How are we to answer the apparent discrepancy? Actually, it is not a discrepancy but two sides of the truth. Individually, by His spirit, God takes up residence in His people, and collectively, that is, all together, He dwells among them. In other words, God is fully engaged in the affairs and life of His people as a Father to His children. It takes His spirit in each and every one of His children in order for Him to tabernacle among them.

For this reason, we must join Paul’s vision with John’s vision to have a full understanding of New Jerusalem.

Consequently, New Jerusalem is not about the individual; but rather, it is about the Father having a large family that He can call His house or, if you will, His home. It is rather strange that so many of the Lord’s people have been taught about and are looking for a mansion in the sky, a place in which they will reside in heaven forever and ever, when God is after one mansion of all His people united together in His one spirit. God’s mansion is a people, and it is called New Jerusalem.

Isn’t it time for us to desire what God desires and quit looking to what is in it for us? Oh, there is much in God’s plan for us individually, but it is only on the basis of what God is after and what will satisfy His heart of love. He is after a family that ultimately will include all mankind. But it will start with those called and chosen to be joint heirs with His Son in the next eon. Let us join our hearts with the beating heart of the universe; the very heart of **God is love**. This is the essence of New Jerusalem.