

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)

#03-0997

New Jerusalem #7.

May 14, 2009

The City of the Living God

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly [celestial] Jerusalem.... (Hebrews 12:22 NASB [CV])

The last issue of this series (#03-0996, May 11, 2009) dealt with the first half of this verse. We have come to Mount Zion, which speaks of the very heart of New Jerusalem as the source of life for the Lord's people and, I must add, eventually all mankind as well. **Zion is the sunny kingdom**, and we get our first intimation of this from Jesus as He explained to His disciples the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens and the end of the eon: **Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father** (Matthew 13:43). As a play on words, we could say that the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ (Revelation 12:10) is the sunny kingdom, the kingdom of sons (suns), the sons of glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Well, I must leave Zion for the time. Lord willing, I plan to write an article or, perhaps, a book on the subject, since it is so vital to our understanding of our destiny and especially the heart of New Jerusalem. Until then, let us press on with the matter of New Jerusalem and the latter half of the above verse.

We have not only come to Mount Zion, but we have come to the city of the living God. It was stated previously that, at times, the Bible presents Zion and Jerusalem as if they are similar or one and the same. We can liken Zion to the heart of the human body. Both are indispensable and both are integral parts of the whole, in this case, the whole being New Jerusalem and the human body. The city of the great King and the celestial Jerusalem are the city of the living God, not two cities but one glorious city.

To understand why the city of the living God was injected in this verse between Mount Zion and the celestial Jerusalem, we need to backtrack a bit and look at some of the verses that precede Hebrews 12:22.

(18) For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, (19) and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. (20) For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED." (21) And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling." (Hebrews 12:18-21 NASB)

When the sons of Israel were delivered out of Egyptian bondage on Passover by way of the Red Sea, they were led to Mount Sinai to have the laws of God written on their hearts and to become a kingdom nation under God's rule. However, when the glory of the Lord descended on the mount and the Lord spoke, the sons of Israel feared for their lives. They believed that they would have been killed if it had continued on much longer. In fact, they were so fearful that it was fine with them that Moses ascended the mount and left them out of it. Due to their fear, they failed.

The recipients of the Hebrews epistle knew full-well the history of the ancient Hebrews; therefore, Paul, most likely the writer of the epistle, could appeal to their history. "You have not come to this mountain!" You have not come to something so terrible that you will fear for your very life. No; you have come to the city of the living God, the celestial Jerusalem. You have come to life itself, not death; and this life is in **Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant** (Hebrews 12:24)!"

This might not seem to be a big deal to us, but it was to those who were in the ancestral line of that history that was marked by death, defeat, and failure. They needed to be reminded that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of the living, not of the dead; a fact borne out by the words of Jesus in response to a question by the Sadducees, the ones that believed there is no resurrection.

(29) But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. (30) For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (31) “But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: (32) ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” (Matthew 22:29-32 NASB)

We could say that the city of the living God is the city of resurrection life. There is no death in the city, another fact borne out by John in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

(2) 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. (3) And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, “Look! The tabernacle of God [is] with the people, and He will tabernacle [or, dwell] with them. And they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them. (4) And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not be [any] more [fig., death no longer will exist], nor sorrow, nor crying, nor will pain be any more [fig., pain will no longer exist], because the first [things] passed away.” (Revelation 21:2-4 ALT)

Death will be no more! Why? Because New Jerusalem is the city of the living God, and all that are the **dwelling of God in spirit** (Ephesians 2:22; see issues #02-0879, July 2, 2008 and #03-0993, January 23, 2009) are the city of the living, not the dead. It is not a city of the walking dead like so many of the cities of the world are in our day. No; it is the city of the living, the gathering together of all that are in Christ, all that have believed on Him and trusted in His life, the ones that did not stumble over the stone of offense. These are the ones who have come to Mount Zion, not with fear and trembling that they might be killed but with love that they are part of the glorious life of the Son of God's love.

It is not a matter of one's genealogy or one's flesh but a matter of faith. The great danger that Hebrew believers faced in Paul's day was of returning to the old ways, the old covenant, and not pursuing the new covenant in which the God of the living puts His laws into minds and writes them on hearts (Hebrews 8:7-12). The ancient Hebrews hid in fear from the mountain and the voice of the Lord; consequently, they received the law of God etched on inorganic, lifeless stones rather than on life-giving spiritual hearts. They were destined to fail as the law became a matter of outward actions regardless of motive. Their hearts could be deceitful above all else, but as long as they did the right things, they felt justified. Instead of seeing their need for a circumcised heart, they sought to justify themselves by the circumcision of the flesh (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4). They missed the glorious opportunity to truly become a kingdom of priests that would have led all the nations of the world to God and His righteousness. Instead, they failed, and all who stayed on this line, even to our day, are disqualified from entering the kingdom of God and being the light and the salt of the world.

Consequently, the Hebrews epistle was directed to those who were in danger of following after another gospel. The same danger is present in our day, especially in regard to Zionism and the many Christians who continue to believe that the modern-day state of Israel, as supported by the Zionist movement that birthed the nation and continues to prop it up, is destined to rule the nations in the next eon. No, a thousands times no! Zionism of our day will only lead to death. We have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the celestial Jerusalem. Those who hold to Zionism according to the flesh are still circling Mount Sinai, a mountain they cannot touch but which will bring great fear and trembling upon them. We have not come to that mountain; we have come to the mountain and the city of the living God. The Zionists of our day need to be told of the mountain that they can approach, not based on their flesh but based on a circumcised heart that believes on Jesus, the only true Messiah of God. They need to be told that there is only one true Jerusalem in the heart of God; it is the city of the living God, the celestial New Jerusalem. We who believe in Jesus are the city of the living God; let us live in this light; let us shine brightly to the world. We have come to the city of the living God.