

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 #9. Government of God

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Among the nations, cities are readily identified by a physical location. One can take a map of the world and point out well-known cities such as New York, Toronto, London, Paris, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Jerusalem, to name a few from among a myriad. Although a city has a unique geographical place in the world that can be identified by longitude and latitude coordinates, this is not what makes it a city. Mere location does not make something into a city, nor do buildings joined together by streets, for without people to occupy the buildings and to walk the streets, there is no life in the city. In other words, in order for a city to be a city, it must have life. But there is more, for this life must be joined together in some sort of common bond, something that unites people together for a common purpose, often laid out in a charter issued by a higher governing authority, such as a state or a nation.

But there is much more to a city than a mere charter. Of the cities listed above, each has its own character that makes it unique from the others. The fact of the matter is that each city is distinct in its people, its history, its culture, its lifestyle, its religion, its commerce, and, often, its form of government.

Some definitions that I have read of the word *city* make it simply a legal entity of the state; however, these definitions seem to miss the real heart of the matter. To me, **a city is a community of people bound together by government, commerce, and social intercourse.** There is much involved in each of these categories, and in an imperfect and, often, corrupt world, cities may differ greatly in the manner by which they operate, but I offer a few thoughts and leave it to your imagination to fill in any blanks. Government encompasses the laws and regulations required to maintain peace and order and by which to judge behavior that is detrimental to the community. Government also provides services and infrastructure required for the common good and to support and encourage commerce and social intercourse. Of course, this assumes that government is for the good of the people and not for the good of corrupt officials who care little for the people. Commerce encompasses the economic and financial realm of a city, that is, how labor and goods are traded and wealth is achieved. Social intercourse encompasses culture and lifestyle, including the religious beliefs (life) of the people.

I have taken the time to discuss the nature of a city in an attempt to break the mindset and, I might add, the teaching that New Jerusalem is all about a physical place located somewhere in the universe or in what is thought to be heaven. A city is much more than a physical location. Throughout this series on New Jerusalem, I have made the point repeatedly that the city of God is not about a physical place; rather, it is about a people. Today, it is a colony of heaven, but a day is coming when it will be a city. New Jerusalem is a people, generally the people of God, and more specifically, at least in the present and oncoming eon, Christ's conquering or overcoming saints. This city is completed in the mind and heart of God, but on our end, which is stuck in time and space, it is still under construction. In God's day, the city of the living God will be the full complement of the body of Christ, with every member built together into the temple of the Lord Jesus, the dwelling of God in spirit. It is vital that we see that New Jerusalem will not merely be a people but rather the very character and nature of the Son of God manifested in and through an immortal, fully spiritual, celestial, glorified people. In other words, just as the Son of God is the exact image of the invisible God, so too is New Jerusalem the exact image of the Son of God. If we are not captivated by this vision, then we will continue to be lost in a sea of gospel songs that have us walking on golden streets, meeting at pearly gates, and living in great mansions for an eternally boring existence with no connection to God's ultimate purpose. We will never make the jump from the physical and the earth to the spiritual and the celestial if we try to discern New Jerusalem in the light of man's cities. May the spiritual eyes of our heart be opened!

Now, I would like to change the emphasis a bit and look at New Jerusalem as the government of God. In other words, God's government is represented as the city of God, or, we could say, His government goes forth through New Jerusalem. Daniel tells us that **the heavens do rule** (Daniel 4:26 ASV), so we know that the government, as represented in New Jerusalem, is heavenly and speaks of the rule of God. In fact, everything associated with the city of God is heavenly or, to use my preferred word, *celestial*. However, for this discussion, I will remain with the word *heavenly*.

The genesis of God becoming all in all new is the heavens do rule. If the heavens do not rule, that is, if God, through His Son, does not rule, then there is no hope of God's purpose being fully achieved. The heavens do rule is paramount in the fulfillment of God's purpose. In fact, the heavens do rule is the plan of God or the means by which His purpose is accomplished. But there is more, for this rule must extend through a people, specifically through a people as signified in New Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the city of the living God. God will not rule by fiat but through a people who have been conformed to the image of His Son, having His character, knowing the will of God through His laws written on their hearts, and being vessels of love filled with the glory of God. Collectively, these spirit- and love-filled people are New Jerusalem. Through them, the glory of the Lord will begin to go forth until it fills the whole earth.

The pattern has been set in our Lord Jesus who declared that He is the living bread that came down out of heaven to do the will of His Father in heaven. Over 2,000 years ago, He came down out of heaven, having emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men, humbling himself by becoming obedient to the point of death (Philippians 2:7-8). Although He did the will of His Father, His glory was hidden from the eye of man until three of His disciples saw it as He was transfigured while on the mountain, which signified His coming in His kingdom of glory (Matthew 16:28; 17:1-2). When Jesus came to earth, He brought the rule of heaven to earth as well, and He manifested the glory of the kingdom or the rule of God.

Another pattern set by our Lord Jesus is the fact that He is the center of God's purpose and plan, for it is the Father's intent **that in all things He might have the preeminence (first place)** (Colossians 1:18). Simply, the Son of God is central and supreme in the purpose of God. Fail to embrace Christ and His preeminence and you will fail to embrace God's purpose and plan.

These two patterns are seen in New Jerusalem as well. Of the ancient, earthly Jerusalem, the Lord declared: **"This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations"** (Ezekiel 5:5). However, this is a prophetic word as well, for it points to New Jerusalem **coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God** (Revelation 21:2, 10-11), as it becomes the center of the new earth in the day of God (2 Peter 3:12). The Son of God came down out of heaven as one, but when New Jerusalem comes down, it is the full complement of His body, the many sons of God in Christ, brought unto glory. In that glorious day, the many will bring the rule of the heavens to the new earth. This is proven in the fact that the city is a manifestation of the very glory of God, which means that the absolute rule of God has come to the new earth. When the heavens do rule or, we could say, when the will of God is absolute, with no exceptions, then there is glory. When he beheld the King seated upon His throne, Isaiah heard the seraphim declaring: **"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory"** (Isaiah 6:3). The throne of the Lord speaks of the authority and rule of God, and when the Lord is seated on His throne, He is ruling, and when He is ruling, there is glory.

This is clearly seen in the next eon as **the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness** (Isaiah 26:9), until **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea** (Habakkuk 2:14; also Numbers 14:21; Psalm 72:19; Isaiah 6:3). Who will teach them righteousness? New Jerusalem will teach them, for those signified by the city know the perfect will of God and how to administer it. They know the very heart and will of the One who is on the throne. Further, they are filled with the perfect love of God and manifest this love in their lives.

In that glorious day, there will be no doubt about the nature and character of the government of the new earth, for the throne of God and of the Lambkin will be in the midst of the city (Revelation 22:1, 3), which means the body of Christ will reign over and upon the entire earth. The Head and His body are the Christ and the Lambkin, and they shall be reigning for the eons of the eons (Revelation 22:5 CV).