

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)*

#03-09100

New Jerusalem #10.

June 1, 2009

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels

In this series, I have focused primarily on the future aspect of New Jerusalem; however, this does not mean that there is no present aspect, for there most assuredly is. Actually, the whole concept of New Jerusalem is like a gem hidden in a rock formation of the earth that is chipped away or mined over time until the gem is fully exposed. Initially, all you can see is a hint of the gem, a glimmer of beauty, but you do not see its full glory. However, as time progresses, more of the gem is exposed or, rather, is unveiled until it is fully revealed. It could also be likened to a ball of light hidden or encased in an egg with a hardened shell. Over time, the shell begins to form cracks and some light shines through these openings until the entire shell breaks open and the light is released. From Genesis to Revelation, we see the light progressively shining forth until, finally, we see the glory of God coming down out of heaven to fill the new earth.

If we approach New Jerusalem as a literal city that is located in time and space, we will never understand God's heart on the matter. In fact, we will remain earthbound in our thinking and never rise to the celestial or the spirit realm of our God, and we will miss the mark. It must be discerned spiritual to spiritual.

New Jerusalem is synonymous with the kingdom of God so that every place we see a hint of light revealing New Jerusalem, in part, we can also see a hint of light revealing the kingdom of the glory of God, in part. When New Jerusalem finally comes down out of heaven in all her glory, we know that the kingdom of God comes down out of heaven as well, for it is the kingdom of glory when all is being made new (Revelation 21:5), and God is all in all new (1 Corinthians 15:28).

But there is one other thing that we must not lose sight of, and that is God's Son, our Lord Jesus. In fact, New Jerusalem and the kingdom of glory have no meaning or life apart from the Son of God. His very life is New Jerusalem and the kingdom of God. I emphasize this point because many ministries that I have listened to over the years that focus on the kingdom seem to treat the matter as something separate from the life of Christ. Let us never lose sight of the fact that the kingdom of God and New Jerusalem speak of the Son of God in all His fullness. The kingdom of Christ and New Jerusalem is **Christ in you** (Colossians 1:27); it is **no longer I but Christ** (Galatians 2:20); it is **Christ formed in you** (Galatians 4:19); it is **for to me, to live is Christ** (Philippians 1:21); and it is **the fullness of God** (Ephesians 3:19), which again speaks of Christ, for all the fullness of God dwells in Him (Colossians 1:19). Many verses from the Bible could be joined together that describe New Jerusalem, but I trust that with these few, you get the point.

We are given our first glimpse of God's city in the garden of Eden with a river flowing from its center that divides into four rivers that water the surrounding land, the tree of life in its midst, the gold and precious stones in the land, and man having dominion over it all. God has revealed the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), and the account of the heavens and the earth, the creation of man to have dominion, and his placement in the garden, as presented in Genesis 1-3, reveals in type all that John saw in antitype as he was in spirit on Patmos, as presented in Revelation 21-22.

Over 2,000 years later, we are introduced to Melchizedek, which by translation of his name means king of righteousness and also king of Salem, which is king of peace (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1-2), who, most likely, was Shem, the third-born son of Noah. Following the flood, the first God-centered kingdom on earth came through Shem, as indicated by Noah's curse of Canaan and blessing of Shem: **"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem"** (Genesis 9:25-26).

For more on Shem, please see my article #9, May 2008, *A Mystery, The Great City Babylon*.

Of significance is that Melchizedek was the builder and first king of ancient Jerusalem, and he was a type of Christ, the high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17), which speaks of the new covenant enacted on better promises (Hebrews 8:6-13). Obviously, there is much to be gleaned from Melchizedek as a type of Christ, but this is beyond the scope of this issue. What needs to be underlined is the fact that, in type, Jerusalem begins to come into focus with the king of righteousness and of Salem and of peace, and that Abram was given insight into God's heart for a city through his great-plus grandfather Shem, a type of Christ. After all, it was Abraham who **was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God** (Hebrews 11:10). In Melchizedek, who, by the way, outlived him, Abraham touched upon God's purpose, and it led him to be a seeker of the city.

After another thousand years, Jerusalem comes into view again as David captured the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites and established Mount Zion, which is also synonymous with the heart of Jerusalem, the city of the great King, the dwelling place of God (2 Samuel 5:7; 1 Kings 8:1; 1 Chronicles 11:5, 7; 2 Chronicles 5:2; Psalm 48:1-2; Psalm 74:2; 76:2; 132:13-14; Isaiah 8:18; Jeremiah 8:19; Zechariah 2:10).

As we move forward in history, Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord that filled Solomon's temple and, we could say, rested in Jerusalem, begin to depart from the temple until **the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city** (see Ezekiel 10-11; 11:23). However, it was not until the Messiah, the Son of God, came to the earth as the second Man that the glory that hovered over Jerusalem was finally removed. Jesus entered Herod's temple and cried out over Jerusalem.

(37) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. (38) Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" (Matthew 23:37-38 NASB)

With this declaration, Jesus walked out of the house of Israel and proceeded to the cross. The glory of God rested in the Son of God, and, with His departure, the glory of God also departed. Consequently, when Jesus died on the cross, was resurrected, and ascended back to His Father, the glory of the Lord finally departed the ancient city of Jerusalem, no longer the dwelling place of God on earth. Apart from the Son, Jerusalem is nothing more than another city built upon the foundation of man.

But the good news is that all was not lost, for fifty days later, on Pentecost, the promise of the Holy Spirit filled the new temple on earth, the body of Christ, which is New Jerusalem. Today, we who believe **have this treasure in earthen vessels** (2 Corinthians 4:7), which speaks of the spirit of the Lord and His glory.

(17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (18) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NASB)

The glory, although hidden in mortal, earthen vessels, is in God's temple on earth today, eagerly awaiting the adoption or placement as sons (Romans 8:18-25).

So, there is a present aspect to New Jerusalem that, at times, has shone forth some measure of glory over the last 2,000 years. However, just as mystery Babylon has remained a secret to most of the world, so has New Jerusalem remained a secret, a mystery hidden to most of the world. But just like the gem that is mined to gradually reveal its beauty or the hardened shell that is cracked to gradually reveal the light hidden within, so is New Jerusalem. Today, we see in a mirror dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12), but a new day is coming when we will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father (Matthew 13:43).

The good news is that the earthen vessel housing New Jerusalem is soon to be broken to release the glory of the Lord so **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea** (Habakkuk 2:14). Let us wait for it, for it will certainly come. Let us patiently endure until our earthen vessels are transfigured into immortal vessels of glory!