

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)*

#03-09101

New Jerusalem #11. According to Paul's Vision

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In Scripture, New Jerusalem is not directly called a mystery; however, by inference, Paul does call it a mystery, only he calls it the mystery of Christ. Just as Babylon, the great city, is referred to as a mystery, I believe that New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, could be called a mystery as well, for it is part of the mystery of Christ.

The good news is that neither has to remain a mystery for those who are taught by the spirit of God, combining spiritual with spiritual, that is, knowing how to spiritually appraise all things, having the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:12-16). Unfortunately, just as Babylon remains a mystery to many Christians who are looking for a literal city in the modern-day Iraq (or perhaps some other place in the world), so does New Jerusalem remain a mystery to many Christians who are looking for a literal city in heaven with a street of gold, walls of precious stones, and gates of pearl.

According to the Bible, it is a fact that John saw New Jerusalem while he was in spirit on the isle of Patmos, and he has left us the spiritual picture given to him by the Lord. However, there is little doubt that, of the apostles, he was not alone in receiving this spiritual view of the city of the living God, for it is quite apparent that Paul saw the same thing when he was given visions and revelations of the Lord.

We could say that John saw and described New Jerusalem, and Paul saw and explained New Jerusalem.

Whether Paul was in the body or out of the body he did not know, but he did know that he was snatched to the third heaven and snatched into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Although Paul could not repeat the words he heard, he most definitely explained the visions and revelations of the Lord that he had received when snatched away. I believe that he saw New Jerusalem and called it the mystery of Christ, a phrase unique to Paul (Ephesians 3:4; Colossians 1:27; 2:2; 4:3). After all, Paul linked the third heaven and Paradise to the visions and revelations of the Lord that he had received. In other words, seeing the third heaven and Paradise is likened to seeing the Lord, which is what New Jerusalem is all about, only it is about seeing the Lord in a people, the sons of God.

As I was studying the subject of New Jerusalem, I realized that Paul's Ephesians epistle is actually a description of New Jerusalem. For the sake of this discussion, let us assume that Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews as well. According to Paul, the saints are already among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6), for they have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the celestial Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). See issues #03-0996 to #03-0998 of this series. The saints are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets (Ephesians 2:20), and the wall of New Jerusalem is built upon twelve foundation stones carrying the names of the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14). Paul desired that the saints be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of God, being filled up with all the fullness of God, that is, full of His love (Ephesians 3:18-19), and the angel measured the length, width, and height of New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:15-17), which were all equal, which speaks of the impartiality and fullness of God's love. Paul encouraged the saints to inherit the kingdom of Christ and God (Ephesians 5:5) through the adoption as sons (Ephesians 1:5), and the conquerors will inherit all that New Jerusalem stands for and will be sons of God (Revelation 21:7). Paul declared that there is only **one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all** (Ephesians 4:6), and the center and life of New Jerusalem is God who tabernacles and dwells among men as He makes all new (Revelation 21:3, 5). Finally, Paul referred to the age (eon) and the ages (eons) to come (Ephesians 1:21; 2:7), which refer to the oncoming eons when New Jerusalem will be progressively manifested to the nations until it comes down out of heaven to dwell on a new earth.

Now, without mentioning it directly, Paul described New Jerusalem using seven metaphors, all based on the concept that the saints are in Christ (or in Him), an expression used at least twenty times in Ephesians. We are in Christ, and let us not forget that Christ is in us (Colossians 1:27). This sums up New Jerusalem, the mystery of Christ.

Obviously, there is not enough space in one page to discuss the seven metaphors, so I will simply point them out for your study. Lord willing, I will address these in more detail in subsequent writings.

#1 – Ecclesia: Paul refers to the ecclesia or the church (used in most translations) nine times (Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32). The church is not an institution, a building, or a denomination. It is a called-out company of people, a people called out unto Christ that is in Christ and Christ is in them. See issue #02-0806, January 18, 2008, *Ekklesia—“Out-Called” Body*, and #02-0807, January 25, 2008, *His Body, Which Is The Ecclesia*. Interestingly, during our present age, there is much emphasis on the church. Many even capitalize it to make it a proper noun: the Church. But the fact of the matter is that in our present wicked eon (age), the people of God are called out from the world and are not central in the affairs and the life of the kingdoms of men. But in the day of God, they are no longer a called-out people, for they are central in the affairs of the new heaven and earth. By definition (of the word *ekklesia*), New Jerusalem cannot rightly be called the ecclesia when she comes down out of heaven because, in that day, she will be central and supreme in the affairs and life of all mankind. In fact, the ones whose names are not recorded in the Lambkin’s book of life will have no part in New Jerusalem; they will be on the outside. Consequently, New Jerusalem is not out; it is in.

#2 – Body: Paul’s primary metaphor is the body of Christ, which he refers to nine times (Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30). Paul defines the ecclesia as the body of Christ: **the ecclesia (church), which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all** (Ephesians 1:23). In fact, the whole of chapter 4 is about the body. Thus, New Jerusalem is something very organic. We could say that it is full of life, the life of the Son of God.

#3 – House: The body of Christ is of God’s household, that is, it is His house, which implies family, another one of the metaphors. God’s house is built upon a foundation with His Son as the stone that holds it together and gives it life. Again, compare this with the foundation of New Jerusalem.

(19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, (20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.... (Ephesians 2:19-20 NASB)

#4 – Temple: Paul continues on by defining the household of God as the holy temple of the Lord and the dwelling of God in spirit. This is the holy city, New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2).

(21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit [in spirit] . (Ephesians 2:21-22 NASB [CV])

#5 – Family: Paul bowed his knees before the Father, from whom every family in the heavens and on earth derives its name (Ephesians 3:14), which speaks of what New Jerusalem will be at the consummation of the eons when God is all in all new (1 Corinthians 15:28).

#6 – One New Man: New Jerusalem is the one new man, which is the new creation in Christ (Ephesians 2:15; 4:13, 24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). **Behold, I am making all new** (Revelation 21:5).

#7 – Wife: Finally, Paul compares the marriage of a man and a woman, and the man as the head of the wife, to Christ and His ecclesia, which is His body and of which He is the Head. Further, Christ is the Savior of the body, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the ecclesia, because we are members of His body (Ephesians 5:23, 29-30). New Jerusalem is described as **a bride adorned for her husband, the wife of the Lambkin** (Revelation 21:2, 9).

Well, much could be said about each one of these metaphors, but I trust that you get a glimpse of New Jerusalem in Paul’s epistle. May the eyes of your heart be enlightened! **The mystery is great!**