

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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Number 144—Perfection of Government

For a while, at the beginning of a new year, I would ask the Lord for a word for the year. I have written about some of these. A couple of years ago; however, I realized there was a potential danger in doing this—namely, that my imagination would come up with something, and I would claim the Lord revealed it. So, I stopped asking.

As 2019 approached, I continued along this line of caution. But something happened very shortly after the new year began that caught my attention. Now, I am not claiming this is from the Lord. Nevertheless, it is a good springboard into scripture, perhaps as a teachable moment.

So, here it is. We do not stay up for the ringing of the bell, announcing a new year, and this year was no exception. I was fast asleep, but woke up shortly after midnight. Immediately upon opening my eyes, I looked at the clock—it read 1:44 am.

Normally, I would not think of the time on the clock as anything to note (although, I have had some interesting experiences along this line and have reported on some), but the number itself did catch my attention as a biblical number. The biblically discerning probably, very quickly, think of the 144,000 (12 times 12,000) from the tribes of the sons of Israel (Revelation 7). Initially, I thought of the tribes, and figured I should start my day by studying them. But I didn't. We will come to them in a moment.

I figured the clock actually read 1:44, which is how time is usually recorded; it didn't say 144. With this, I turned to scripture with the thought that since I was dealing with a number, perhaps I should look up Numbers 1:44. I did, and this is what it says.

These were the ones being mustered whom Moses, Aaron and the princes of Israel mustered, **the twelve men**, one each for his fathers' house. (Numbers 1:44 CLV)

Now my interest was piqued. Anyone with a basic understanding of math (by the way, basic is how I would describe my grasp of math; I'm barely the *anyone* on the scale of math knowledge), knows that 144, as a whole number, is a factor of 12 times 12. So here we are with the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel with twelve men as their leaders, as they are beginning their wilderness journey in which the first generation will be disqualified from entering the promised land of Canaan, due to their unbelief. They literally numbered or counted all the men in the tribes, which came to 603,550. (This has nothing to do with the subject at hand, but it is interesting nonetheless.) All the sons of Jacob-Israel were united under Moses (given their history, united might be a stretch) with the sons of the patriarchs divided up and camped by their respective patriarchal tribe with a leader over each one.

Not to confuse the issue (which I am going to do anyway), but there were actually thirteen tribes, not twelve. Levi was given responsibility for the tabernacle of the testimony. They were a special tribe and, as such, they were not numbered with the rest.

"But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there will be no wrath on the congregation of the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony."
(Numbers 1:53 NASB)

Although there were thirteen tribes, in scripture, we never find them listed as such (in about eighteen references); they are always twelve in number. To do this, most of the time Levi is excluded, but not all the time—in Revelation 7, Dan and Ephraim are left out with Levi and Joseph inserted, yielding only twelve tribes. It seems that the spirit of the Lord wants to make sure we get the point. Twelve it is!

Another interesting fact is that the seventh tribe numbered was Joseph's, but the number is attributed to Joseph's son Ephraim, not Manasseh, who was numbered separately. Although the second born, Ephraim was given a greater blessing than the one given to Manasseh. As a result, throughout the history of ancient Israel, especially after the split-up of Solomon's kingdom, Ephraim became synonymous with Israel (i.e., Ephraim-Israel).

If you are interested in knowing more about this, as well as the prophetic, modern-day significance of the thirteen tribes, then consider these links (a plug for my new articles).

Wake Up America! — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art67.pdf>

Until Shiloh Comes — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art66.pdf>

Back to 1:44. I believe the primary take away of this number, especially in light of Numbers 1:44, is the factor of 12, which is a perfect number that, in biblical language, signifies *perfection of government*, or of *governmental perfection* (Source: *Number in Scripture* by E.W. Bullinger, Kregel Publications, 1967). We see this manifested in the twelve leaders of the sons of Israel; the twelve judges during the time when Israel was a loose federation, governed by judges; and twelve apostles who will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

Coming to New Jerusalem—in which resides the throne of God and of the Lambkin, where there is no temple, for God and the Lambkin are the temple—we discover the holy city is based on twelves—twelve names of the tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve pearls, and twelve foundation stones, and the wall is 144 cubits. According to Isaiah, as the Lord looks forward to New Jerusalem, the wall signifies *salvation: But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise* (Isaiah 60:18). Thus, all those who, by grace through the faith of the Son, come into New Jerusalem enter into the perfection of divine government.

In our world today, modern government is a mess as it has become lawless, even as it keeps producing more and more laws (laws of men, not of God). The 144-cubit wall speaks of how all who are part of this holy city (the people are the city, so don't focus on some physical structure) are under the perfect rule of God. There is no lawlessness in the city, for all have the laws of God in their minds and written on their hearts (Hebrews 8). Given this, what sort of people ought we be even in this day? Do we live lawfully or lawlessly, or some of both?

Dear people of God, do not put New Jerusalem all in the future as if it is some gigantic city that God will lower to a new earth using some angelic crane to gradually lower it so it doesn't slam into the earth. I say this facetiously, but I am not too far off the mark, according to some of the ways others have described this city and its descent. Don't put it all into the future, because we who believe are New Jerusalem, even in this day. Do you have salvation? Then, you have the wall of salvation around you. Do you praise the Lord? Then, you have entered in through the gates, which are the city's praise. Do you belong to Jesus who is the temple of God? Are you in Him? Then, you are part of the city, for God and His Lambkin are the temple. As Paul reminds us, we are the temple of God. Again, why? Because we are in Christ! As Paul says, test yourself!

Test yourselves and find out if you really are true to your faith. If you pass the test, you will discover that Christ is living in you. But if Christ isn't living in you, you have failed. (2 Corinthians 13:5 CEV)

Let us not fail! But let us stay under the guidance of the spirit of God and, by faith, hold to the Christ in us. (By the way, one commentator claims that this is the meaning of the number twelve.) Let us live and walk by the spirit! For in this way, we are under the perfection of God's government that is found in none other than God's Son Himself. We cannot do it, but Jesus can and does and will. What doesn't fail? Love; the love of God because *God is love*. This is the overarching, highest law of God. The perfect government of God is rooted and grounded in love! This is the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Be patient; the perfect government is coming!