

## UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God*  
**IN KING JESUS.**

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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### ***New Creation in Christ***

I am acquainted with a man in Christ, fourteen years before this, (whether in a body I am not aware, or outside of the body, I am not aware—God is aware) such a one was snatched away to the third heaven. And I am acquainted with such a man (whether in a body or outside of the body I am not aware—God is aware) that he was snatched away into paradise and hears ineffable declarations, which it is not allowed a man to speak. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4 CLV)

Paul the apostle was given tremendous visions and revelations of the Lord. Whether in the body or out of the body, he did not know, but he did know that he was snatched away *to* the third heaven and *into* paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. Most people believe that Paul was raptured to the third heaven, where they believe the throne of God is located. However, I believe that this dear apostle, who died daily for the saints, was snatched away into the celestial realm to behold God's purpose for mankind. It was as if the curtain of time was opened and Paul was transported to see a day that would come nearly 3,000 years from his day. He was caught into *God's day* (the day of God) to see the third heaven and the third earth, chronologically speaking. God's day, which is the last eon (age) revealed in scripture, is characterized by a new heaven and new earth; it is the third heaven and earth presented in scripture. When this day arrives, there will have been two heavens and earths. This does not mean that these are entirely new, as if the previous ones were completely eliminated. No; it means they will change in character.

The *first* heaven and earth are discovered in Genesis 1:1, when Elohim created the heavens and the earth. However, in Genesis 1:2, we discover that the heavens and the earth went through a cataclysmic upheaval that brought the original earth into ruin; it became a dark wasteland. Then in Genesis 1:3, it is recorded that Elohim began to restore the first heaven and earth, to regenerate it into the *second* heaven and earth. Man was created and given dominion over the restored earth (second earth). The second heaven and earth are destined for 7,000 years (nearly 6,000 years have passed so far), after which the *third* heaven and earth will come forth. Peter wrote of this day, and John saw it as he was in spirit on the isle of Patmos.

At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God's day, because of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling. (2 Peter 3:11-13 CLV)

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away. And the sea is not [any] more [fig., the sea no longer exists]. 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. (Revelation 21:1-2 ALT)

And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look! I am making all things new!" (Revelation 21:5 ALT)

Peter and John both bear witness to *God's day*. But they were not alone in their view, for Isaiah the prophet saw the day long before they did. *For, lo, I am creating new heavens, and a new earth, and the former things are not remembered, nor do they ascend on the heart* (Isaiah 65:17 YLT).

So, Isaiah, Peter, and John all saw *God's day* in which all is new, not only the heaven and earth but all associated with the new heaven and earth as well. However, how do we know that Paul actually saw this same day? We know it by his use of the term *new creation*.

Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; the old [things] passed away, Look!, all [things] have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 ALT)

For in Christ Jesus neither does circumcision have any power [or, avail anything] nor uncircumcision, but a new creation! (Galatians 6:15 ALT)

Paul's whole perspective was centered on that which is *new*. The old had to be put off and the new put on. But it was more than this, for Paul saw that *in Christ* there is something entirely new. Circumcision, the outward privilege of the flesh, was of no value. What mattered was *a new creation in Christ Jesus*, the exalted and glorified one on high. As Paul proclaimed: *Look! all have become new!* The emphasis is on the word *new*, which means "different in character or nature." It doesn't mean God is making new things. He is reconstituting all things, making them new in character and nature—into His very essence of love patterned after His Son through whom He created all things in the first place. This is what the new creation is all about. This creation stands out as something unique in the history of mankind and this earth and, we presume, throughout God's entire universe.

When he was snatched away to the third heaven, Paul was snatched away outside of time and *into* paradise, which must have been the holy city, New Jerusalem. But it was more than seeing a city like we see on earth today or even the city of Jerusalem that Paul knew so well in his day. In fact, Paul saw something that was absolutely nothing like anything on earth then or that ever will be when the 7,000 years of the history of the second earth has concluded. Paul saw the city-bride of the Lamb, the very same city-bride that John saw.

And one of the seven angels came, the one having the seven bowls full of the last seven plagues, and he spoke with me, saying, "Come, I will show to you the wife, the bride of the Lamb." And he carried me away in spirit [or, by [the] Spirit] to a great and high mountain and showed to me the city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. (Revelation 21:9-11 ALT)

If you believe and trust in Jesus, do you realize that you are part of this new creation? You are not only a new creation now, but you are destined to be part of the new creation when all have become new. ***Christ in you, the hope of glory*** (Colossians 1:27), and New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, are one and the same hope. This is your destiny! This city is not like an earthly city. It is a bride made up of all the new creations in Christ. The city represents a spiritual people who have been purchased with the blood of God and joined together into a dwelling of God *in spirit* (Ephesians 2:22). The new creation is the building of God, not built of bricks and mortar but of spirit-animated bodies of redeemed ones conformed to the image of the Son of God, the creator of all. You will bear the image of the heavenly or celestial one (1 Corinthians 15:49 NASB/CLV). The new creation is the dwelling of God *in spirit* that manifests the glory of God *in Christ*! Can you think of anything greater? This is coming soon!