

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 #21.

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Prepared As A Bride of Glory

And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, having been prepared as a bride, having been adorned for her Husband. (Revelation 21:2 LITV)

John heard the mighty proclamation of heaven that **the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready** (Revelation 19:7-9), then he saw the bride of glory coming down out of heaven, readied for her Husband. Based on Hebrew Scripture, John knew that God was after a relationship likened to a husband and a wife. Further, he had heard Jesus speak parables about a wedding feast (Matthew 22:2-14; 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40) and, undoubtedly, knew that He referred to Himself as the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15). However, while on Patmos, the veil was lifted, so to speak, and John was given a full view of the completed bride of the Lambkin.

God's desire to be betrothed to a people He calls "My people" (Hosea 2:23) was not new to John or the other apostles. There is a thread woven throughout the Bible from the beginning to the end, and this thread speaks of betrothal in marriage. The Bible begins with a marriage and ends with a marriage, and in the very middle is a love story of a Shulammitte bride.

God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10), and the first thing we see in relation to the first Adam is a joining together of man and woman as one flesh. God put Adam to sleep, removed one of his ribs, fashioned Eve, gave her the breath of life, and then presented her to Adam as his helpmate. Obviously, God must have explained what He had done, for when Adam saw his helper, he knew from whence she came.

(23) And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (24) Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:23-24 ASV)

Paul picked up this theme in his mighty Ephesians epistle as he likened the marriage of a man and a woman to Adam and Eve and the mystery of Christ and the ecclesia.

(22) Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. (23) For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church [ecclesia], being himself the saviour of the body. (24) But as the church [ecclesia] is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. (25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church [ecclesia], and gave himself up for it; (26) that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, (27) that he might present the church [ecclesia] to himself a glorious church [ecclesia], not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (28) Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: (29) for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church [ecclesia]; (30) because we are members of his body. (31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. (32) This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church [ecclesia]. (Ephesians 5:22-32 ASV)

The marriage of a man to a woman is a picture of the marriage of Christ to His body, which is His ecclesia, and the type for this marriage began with Adam and Eve. Adam loved his wife who came forth

from his body. He cared for her and nourished her. In fact, this is the very reason why he followed her in eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The love of God that was put in his heart for his helper demanded that he sin to save her. If you are willing to accept a fresh view on the fall, please see issues #01-0714, November 8, 2007, *Loving Their Own Wives As Their Own Bodies*, and #01-0724, November 13, 2007, *No One Has Greater Love Than This*. The first Adam is a type of the last Adam, but what the first was unable to do, the second has done and will do. He will present to Himself His body full of glory, holy and without blemish. This is the holy city, New Jerusalem, having the glory of God. This is why the mystery is great!

The old covenant between God and the sons of Israel was based on obedience. After the Lord had delivered Israel out of Egypt, He told Moses to tell them: **“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; (6) and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** Upon hearing this, the Israelites responded: **“All that the Lord has spoken we will do!”** (Exodus 19:5-6, 8 NASB). With this promise, they were wed or betrothed to the Lord; however, this betrothal was dependent on obedience if it were to continue. In other words, there was a contingency to the marriage, and if the nation did not keep their end of the deal, then God could divorce them, which, in fact, is what happened. Unfortunately for them, the sons of Israel were unfaithful to the Lord, and He gave them a writ of divorce. Jeremiah was a prophet raised up to speak against the treachery of the house of Judah, but he also was called to speak against the faithlessness of the house of Israel (Jeremiah 3:6-15; 31:32). The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah saying: **“Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals, your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown”’** (Jeremiah 2:2 NASB).

This was a word to ancient Jerusalem, which, in this case, was a word to all the sons of Israel. The Lord reminded them that their fathers were betrothed to the Lord in first love (Revelation 2:4), but they strayed from this love and instead accused the Lord of injustice (Jeremiah 2:4-8). To the house of Israel and, by inference, to the house of Judah, the Lord pronounced His judgment of their condition: **“And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also”** (Jeremiah 3:8 NASB). Also, Hosea was raised up to pronounce judgment on the house of Israel: **“For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband”** (Hosea 2:2 NASB).

This is based on the old covenant, but the new covenant is entirely different, for it is based on God’s word, His promise and oath based on His Son, not on man’s word and obedience of the flesh. God has promised: **“I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they will be My people”** (Hebrews 8:10 NASB). In writing to the Hebrew believers, Paul merely quoted the Lord as He spoke through Jeremiah declaring that He would make a new covenant with the sons of Israel [i.e., both houses] (Jeremiah 31:27-38). This is the promise to the true spiritual Israel, the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ. Hosea also adds to this promise.

(16) “It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD, “That you will call Me Ishi [my husband] and will no longer call Me Baali [my master]. ... (19) “I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, (20) and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD. ... (23) ... and I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they will say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hosea 2:16-20, 23 NASB)

Returning to Paul, he knew the promises of God in light of the old covenant that had been made obsolete and the new covenant that is based on better promises and the power of an indestructible life. With this in mind, Paul wrote to the brethren to remind them that **they were betrothed to another, to Him who was raised from the dead** (Romans 7:4), and that he had **betrothed them to one husband**, so that he might present them to Christ as a pure virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2).

We could say that Paul connected the dots for us based on the word of the Lord that came through the ancient prophets. But John saw! He saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, a people that Christ will present to Himself without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish. He saw the bride of glory.