

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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The Pearl of Great Value

(12) It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, ... and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ... (21) And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. (Revelation 21:12, 21 NASB)

The last issue dealt with the twelve gates of praise, which are described as single pearls, which, in turn, speak of righteousness. The twelve gates of praise are also the twelve gates of righteousness, and all who enter into New Jerusalem to become the city are righteous, and all that they do is righteous. Simply, New Jerusalem speaks of what is right in the sight of God and of the perfect will of God. New Jerusalem is the manifestation of God's righteousness and will.

However, there is more to be seen regarding the twelve gates of pearl. Each gate is described as a single pearl. Obviously, the pearls in view are much larger than the natural pearl that comes from the sea and, most likely, were not seen by John as a round orb, for this would be a most unnatural gate. Most likely, the gates of pearl were seen by John as structures or buildings in the wall. In other words, the gates were like portals or vestibules made of a substance that looked like pearl.

To me, modern-day renderings of the gates are rather comical. Many depict St. Peter, with wings all aflutter and clouds all about, standing at the "pearly gates" with clip board in hand, checking off names of people who are allowed entrance into the city of golden streets. Others sing fanciful songs about meeting their departed loved ones at the gates. This might be good for songs and raising sentiment, but it is not the truth of the word of God.

To add to our understanding of the gates of pearl, we need to keep in mind that written on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. At the outset, I feel that my work is cut out for me in trying to explain this because so many Christians have been taught that, whenever they see the word *Israel*, they are to think of the Jews according to the flesh, especially the ones in the present state of Israel. If you have followed my writings, you know that there is a difference between the apparent Jew (circumcised *flesh*) and the true Jew (circumcised *heart*), and the historic earthly Israel and the true Israel of God. The true spiritual Israel of God is not based on the flesh but on the spirit and the heart. Jacob did not become Israel based on his flesh, that is, he was not born Israel; rather, he became Israel when his heart was changed to see that God rules. Consequently, the true Jew and the true Israel refer to ones who are born from above, having the seed of God residing within them (1 John 3:9), having submitted their lives to the rule of God.

Now, with this brief background, let us consider the parable of the merchant seeking fine pearls.

(45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, (46) and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:45-46 NASB)

When Jesus walked this earth, He said: "**I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Matthew 15:24 NASB). Many people fail to understand what Jesus meant by this. He was not referring to them as many refer to the lost (i.e., unsaved) today. He was referring to the fact that after Solomon's death, the kingdom was split into two houses (1 Kings 12:16-20), the house of Judah [tribes of Judah and Benjamin] and the house of Israel [the remaining ten tribes with emphasis on the house of Joseph because Joseph was given the birthright and thus the name of Israel (1 Chronicles 5:1)]. Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians, but a remnant of the house of Judah eventually returned to Jerusalem, so that when Jesus arrived on the scene, they were not lost, for their identity was known. In

fact, most of the house of Judah rejected the very King of Judah and crucified Him. The true house of Judah, the good figs, was (and still is) made up of all who accepted (accept) Jesus as the King of Judah. However, in 723 BC, the Assyrians laid siege to the house of Israel as they resided in Samaria, and from there they were dispersed and their national identity lost. They did not cease to exist nor were they condemned to some fictitious hell created by the imagination of man. Simply, they ceased being identified as the house of Israel.

Consequently, Jesus stood in the midst of the Judeans and proclaimed that He had come to seek the house of Israel that had been split away from Judah and dispersed among the nations. The fact of the matter is that the whereabouts of the house of Israel was known. The issue at hand was to get the word to them that Messiah had come, and reunification with Judah was now possible, even if it were not to take place for at least another 2,000 years when Christ comes a second time.

The house of Israel spread north through the Caucasian Mountains to become known as the Caucasians. They occupied much of Europe and spread to the British Isles, becoming known as the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts. All of these names should catch our attention, for these tribes migrated not only throughout Europe but also to North America to become Canada and the United States, and to South Africa and Australia, and ultimately throughout the whole earth. Many of us, especially in North America, are descendants of these tribes.

It was the Lord who caused their loss of identity, for He sold both Judah and Israel to the nations due to their harlotry and rebellion (Judges 2:14; Nehemiah 5:8; Isaiah 50:1). Joseph being sold into bondage by his brothers is a type of the Lord selling His brethren of Israel to the nations. But we need to be clear that the Lord sold both Judah and Israel. A remnant of the house of Judah returned to Jerusalem and its identity was known; nevertheless, they fell under the rule of other nations, even to this day.

Now, returning to the parable of the pearl, the Lord is the merchant, and He is the one who sold all to purchase the pearl of great value. This may be a stretch for some, but the selling took place when the Lord sold ancient Israel to the nations and hid it among the nations. A pearl is formed by a mollusk when a piece of sand or grit is embedded inside the shellfish. To deal with this irritant, the mollusk secretes a pearly substance to enshroud the sand until it becomes the exquisite pearl, having been formed in the sea in a dark, hidden place. The sea often signifies nations. Thus, Israel was cast into the sea (sold to the nations), hidden in the dark places (among the nations), as the Lord went about taking the grit and making it into something of great value through trials, tribulations, and discipline. On the individual level, it is what Jesus called losing the soul-life, which refers to sanctification.

But notice that the merchant found and bought one pearl of great value. This refers to the fact that **all Israel shall be saved** (Romans 11:26), and both Judah (the King) and Israel (His Kingdom) shall be reunited as one. The Israel that shall be saved is comprised of all who have been born from above.

Some might question: Do you mean to tell me that the church is Israel and that we are associated with the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel? Yes, I do mean this. Have you ever asked the Lord for the name of the tribe you are associated with? Try it! God is not forming two separate entities, one called "the church" and the other called "Israel." No; they are one and the same. He is doing one work on one line in, through, and for His Son. We are all being built up as a new creation in Christ, and this new creation is the true Israel of God, New Jerusalem, the dwelling of God in spirit.

The Lord started with the ecclesia (church) in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), which is the Passover church; then He proceeded to call forth the ecclesia (church) from the good figs of Judah and from among the nations, which is the body of Christ. For the last 2,000 years, this ecclesia has been the Pentecostal church. The Lord has placed His spirit within a born-from-above people so that His laws can be written on their hearts, which is the meaning and purpose of Pentecost. But the Lord is not finished, for there is yet a third ecclesia, the Tabernacles church, which is made up of the immortal conquerors of Christ, the sons of God and the sons of glory. This ecclesia is **the complement of the One completing the all in all** (Ephesians 1:23 CV).

So, the parable of the pearl of great value speaks of one pearl, meaning all Israel is united, which speaks of both kingship and sonship. However, New Jerusalem has twelve single pearls to signify that all Israel shall be saved; none will be left out. Thus, New Jerusalem is the full complement of the Son of God.