

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 #26.

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The Foundation Stones

And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:14 NASB)

The last two issues of this series considered the gates and the pearl of great value, which speak of the true Israel of God that lost its identity among the nations but reappears as part of New Jerusalem. However, there is another reason for having the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel written on the gates, and it is discovered in the twelve foundation stones having the names of the twelve apostles written on them. The two are connected in what Paul called **the one new man or the one new humanity**. In a few more issues, I will close this series with a vision I was given of New Jerusalem that revealed to me that it is, indeed, the one new man.

I believe that Paul offers more spiritual explanation of New Jerusalem than all other contributors to Scripture, particularly in his *Ephesians* epistle.

(11) Wherefore, remember that once you, the nations in flesh – who are termed ‘Uncircumcision’ by those termed ‘Circumcision,’ in flesh, made by hands – (12) that you were, in that era, apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and without God in the world. (13) Yet now, in Christ Jesus, you, who once are far off, are become near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He is our Peace, Who makes both one, and razes the central wall of the barrier (15) (the enmity in His flesh), nullifying the law of precepts in decrees, that He should be creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity [one new man], making peace; (16) and should be reconciling both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in it. (17) And, coming, He brings the evangel of peace to you, those afar, and peace to those near, (18) for through Him we both have had the access, in one spirit, to the Father. (19) Consequently, then, no longer are you guests and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to God’s family, (20) being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the capstone of the corner being Christ Jesus Himself, (21) in Whom the entire building, being connected together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord: (22) in Whom you, also, are being built together for God’s dwelling place, in spirit. (Ephesians 2:11-22 CV [NASB])

In these verses, Paul had two groups in view. The first group was Israel of the flesh, that is, those who were under the law and were circumcised in the flesh. By using the name of Israel, Paul was referring to the genealogical sons of Israel, the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel that are written on the gates of New Jerusalem. The second group consisted of everyone outside of Israel, that is, the nations outside the law and the physical requirement of circumcision. The two groups were separated, with the latter not granted access to God; they were without God in the world. However, in Christ Jesus, the two groups were made into one new man or one new humanity. In other words, in Christ, there is no division; just unity, peace, and reconciliation. Both groups have been made into one body to God through the cross. Consequently, there is no longer a separate entity called Israel and another called the Church. They are one and the same, so that, in Christ, when we refer to Israel, we are referring to the true spiritual Israel of God, which is also the Church of God and the Body of Christ. They must be one and the same if they are to be one new man with no division.

Further, the two have the same access to the Father through one spirit, which speaks of the dwelling of God in spirit. There is one dwelling of God, not two. All from the two groups that are now in Christ are

of God's family, and all are being built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, joined together in Christ, growing to become a holy temple in the Lord.

But there is more, for Israel of the flesh was first given the law, which speaks of God's demand for righteousness. However, none is righteous, not one; so ancient Israel according to the flesh fell short of the glory of God, just as the rest of mankind falls short. They were to have God's laws written on their hearts, which would have led to righteousness, but they failed to listen to God at Mt. Sinai; instead, they feared for their lives and received the law etched in stone. This was the old covenant.

However, under the new covenant, God has taken it upon Himself to write His laws upon the hearts of His people (Hebrews 8:10). Through His Son, the Lamb slain and the King-Priest raised up according to the order of Melchizedek, He has laid a new foundation based on faith and grace. **Grace is the foundation of righteousness, and by grace, God produces righteousness in man, specifically in the one new man.** Paul refers to grace about 90 times in his epistles, and this comes from one who described himself as blameless as to the righteousness which is in the law but also one who cast it all aside when he was made to see that righteousness can only come through faith in Christ, **the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith** (Philippians 3:6, 9).

The names of the sons of Israel written on the gates and the names of the apostles written on the foundation stones signify that law and grace are united in New Jerusalem, with grace being the foundation of righteousness that is expressed through the divine law written on hearts. Law is not done away with; rather, it is taken to a much higher level, for it is spiritual in nature (Romans 7:14).

Jesus said: **"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill"** (Matthew 5:17 NASB). The fulfillment is found in New Jerusalem, for the holy city is the one new man, which is the embodiment of the Son of God Himself.

Thus, John saw the gates with the names of the tribes of the sons of Israel written on them. These gates are made of single pearls of great value, no longer lost but found by Christ the Merchant. He paid a mighty price to save all of Israel, both of the old covenant and the new covenant. Those that had been under the law and the physical requirements, and those that had been under grace and the spiritual requirements are united as one new man *in Christ*. They all are **the new creation in Christ**, having become **the righteousness of God in Him** (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21).

All who enter New Jerusalem enter by way of the gates of righteousness demanded under the law of God; however, God has made the way to enter through His Son who is the Righteous One and whose righteousness is New Jerusalem.

Then, John saw the twelve foundation stones with the names of the twelve apostles written on them. This is the very same foundation that Paul said the one new man was being built upon in Christ. The foundation is built by grace that produces righteousness in hearts. New Jerusalem signifies that the grace of God will produce many living stones built up as a spiritual house.

(4) And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, (5) you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5 NASB)

Finally, John described the foundation stones as the most precious and beautiful stones on earth—vibrant stones that express every color imaginable. Although these stones are identified with the apostles, there should be no doubt that they reflect all the living stones of New Jerusalem.

(19) The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; (20) the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. (Revelation 21:19-20 NASB)

Dear brethren, I trust that by now you see the greatness of New Jerusalem, and that there is a mighty work going on inside of you to make you into this holy city, to conform you to the image of the Son.