

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 #27.

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Twelve

(15) And he speaking with me had a golden reed, that he may measure the city, and its gates, and its wall. (16) And the city lies four cornered, even its length as much as the width also. And he measured the city with the reed at twelve thousand [12,000] stadia; its length and width and height are equal. (17) And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty four [144 (12x12)] cubits, a measure of a man, which is of an angel. (Revelation 21:15-17 LITV)

Scripture is replete with numbers that signify spiritual truths. In regard to New Jerusalem, an angel is charged with measuring the city. God is very precise in all that He does, and it is not unusual for Him to give very precise instructions, especially when it comes to building things based on spiritual truths. Moses' tent of meeting and Solomon's temple were built based on precise measurements. Ezekiel's temple is described using precise measurements. Zechariah saw an angel with a plumb-line in hand so that he could measure Jerusalem, which speaks prophetically of New Jerusalem (Zechariah 2:1-5). When we come to the Revelation, John himself was given a measuring rod like a staff to **measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it** (Revelation 11:1).

I have read some commentators who insist that, since all the structures that are measured in Scripture were literally physical structures, we must view the measurements of New Jerusalem as literal as well, which means that we must interpret Revelation 21-22 as depicting a literal physical city built like a huge cube or a mountain that spans 1,500 miles on all sides. But is this how we are to view New Jerusalem? I do not believe so. We must understand what New Jerusalem signifies spiritually, for God is building a spiritual dwelling made of people, not things.

In God's Day, which is comprised of the eons of the future, when the nations see the sons of God, they will see and touch all that New Jerusalem represents in spirit, and, wherever the sons are, so is New Jerusalem. In other words, New Jerusalem is not some static, immovable object on earth but a people that fill the new earth and, we should add, the new heaven with all that New Jerusalem signifies, which is summed up as the divine life of God manifested through His Son and the many immortal sons of God.

Does this mean that there will be nothing in the physical realm that answers to the heart of God and His divine life? Most definitely not! The new earth and new heaven will be so spectacular in the physical sense that it would take our breath away if we were given a glimpse of it now. Poetically speaking, when the physical and spirit realms kiss, it will be beyond our wildest imagination.

What I have been endeavoring to do with this series is to see beyond the physical and touch upon the spiritual truths signified by New Jerusalem. Even so, the more I have dug into this marvelous subject, the more I have realized that I am only touching the tip of the iceberg. New Jerusalem is portrayed throughout Scripture in types and shadows, just as the Son of God is, for New Jerusalem is the manifestation of the Son, our Lord Jesus.

When we come to the measurements of the holy city, one number and its multiples stand out; it is the number 12, which is one of God's perfect numbers. One commentator has stated that the number 12 symbolizes God's perfect, divine accomplishment actively manifested, and shows a completeness of growth or administration. Most commentators agree that it signifies governmental perfection and divine authority. Thus, the number 12 has to do with the rule of God in His creation. The most obvious example of this is discovered in the sun that rules the day and the moon and stars that rule the night.

They course their way through the universe completing a full year of 12 months (12 x 30) by passing through the 12 signs of the Zodiac. This is the hand of God. Some say that God has encoded the heavens. I believe they are correct, for it was God who asked Job who made the Bear, Orion, and Pleiades (Job 9:9; also see 38:31). God did!

Now, when we consider the number 12 as it appears in relationship to New Jerusalem, we discover that it is associated with names, tribes, angels, apostles, gates, foundation stones, pearls, and fruit, as well as the measurements of the city. Thus, there are 12 gates of 12 pearls with 12 names on them, the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel, and with 12 angels at the gates; there are 12 foundations (precious stones) with the names of the 12 apostles on them; and there are 12 kinds of fruit for every month of the year, meaning for 12 months. The city proper is laid out as a cube (equal in length, breadth, and height) with each side being 12,000 furlongs, and its wall being 144 (12 x 12) cubits high. In human measurements, the city encompasses 2,415 kilometers on all sides, including its height. Dimensionally, this is mighty impressive, and spiritually, it is even more impressive, for it means that God, through His Son, is doing a mighty inclusive work. His building project is huge!

Given the symbolism of the number 12, we see that every aspect of New Jerusalem speaks of divine perfection and authority, as well as a completeness of growth, administration, and government.

The holy city represents God's perfect government. It is perfect in its righteousness as seen in the gates of righteousness, which will exude praise as if praise were in the very fiber and pores of the city. The government of God is righteous, and when people experience the perfect righteous rule of God, they too will be unable to hold back their praise of God and of the Lambkin.

God's perfect government is seen in the walls that represent the fiery law of God written on hearts and not on stones or in books that gather dust on bookshelves. Again, the law stands for the righteousness of God.

Dear brethren, I realize that, in our day, many people, including Christians, want no part of God's law, for many prefer man's law or no law at all, which is lawlessness, which, by the way, is sin (1 John 3:4). But, can you imagine a people with God's fiery law written on their hearts (Hebrews 8:10) so that they know, do, and administer God's law with the same ease that our physical hearts beat effortlessly and without direction from us for the entire span of our life in mortal bodies? Can you imagine living in a world where there is perfect government administered through perfect righteousness? This is the meaning of the number 12 as signified in New Jerusalem.

Considering the dimensions of New Jerusalem, we see the number 12,000 assigned to each side of this cube. In some ways, the unit of measurement does not matter; nevertheless, in the physical sense, the city would occupy 60% of the United States' land mass, stretching from Maine to Florida and from the Atlantic Ocean to Colorado. But we miss the point if we focus on the literal unit. The number 12,000 appears 12 times in Revelation 7 as John saw the four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, until 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel were sealed on their foreheads. The total number of those sealed was 144,000, the same number seen in Revelation 14 pertaining to **the first fruits to God and to the Lambkin** (Revelation 14:4). The number 144 also represents the height of the wall. Putting all of this together seems to indicate that the numbers 12,000 and 144 represent the full complement of the number of people that will be included in New Jerusalem. In other words, 12,000 and 144 signify that God will harvest a full crop of conquerors, the ones He calls "My son." He will not fail to bring in a full and complete harvest, all to His glory.

But we need to be cognizant, of what I believe to be fact, that New Jerusalem is not the endpoint in regard to mankind, as if once the full complement of first fruit sons is harvested, the rest of mankind forever will remain outside of New Jerusalem. Revelation 21-22 is not a view of eternity; rather, it is a view of the start of the eighth day, consisting of other eons to follow, that will progress until the consummation of the eons, when, at this point, God's purpose is finally fulfilled and God the Father is all in all new (1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 21:5). In order for God to fulfill His purpose, all mankind and all creation must become New Jerusalem. **This is the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**