

Deification

As we have pointed out in previous articles, the New Jerusalem is not a literal, physical city, nor is it a physical place, the “heaven” commonly taught in the mainstream of today’s Christianity. The New Jerusalem, as the conclusion of the whole Bible and of God’s entire economy, is the greatest and ultimate sign in the Scriptures, the last and consummate sign in the book of Revelation, a book composed of signs, that is, of symbols that have spiritual significance (1:1). Every detail in the description of the holy city given by the apostle John is a sign. In a consummate way the New Jerusalem clearly portrays the deification of God’s redeemed in the fulfillment of His eternal economy.

The Corporate God

The New Jerusalem, in its reality, is an organic constitution of the Triune God with His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite people who have been deified. For God’s people to be deified means that they have been constituted intrinsically with the processed and consummated Triune God so that they have been made God in life, in nature, and in expression but not in the Godhead. On God’s side, the Triune God in Christ was incarnated to be a man and passed through death and then resurrected to uplift His humanity into His divinity, thus deifying His humanity. On the side of God’s elect, they have been redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified, thereby being deified, constituted with the processed and consummated Triune God so that they are the same as God in life and in nature to be His corporate expression for eternity. All the components of the New Jerusalem, being the union and mingling of the Triune God with humanity, have the same life, nature, and constitution and have been built up together to be a corporate person. This corporate person is the enlargement and expansion of God—the corporate God.

The Bible begins with God and ends with God. In the beginning of the Bible the unique Triune God is alone (Gen. 1:1). At the end of the Bible there is a city, New Jerusalem, which is the enlarged God, the corporate God—the processed and consummated Triune God united, mingled, and incorporated with all His redeemed throughout the ages. In eternity, before the foundation of

the world, the unlimited Triune God planned to be enlarged in His expression to be the New Jerusalem. To be sure, God in His unique Godhead can never be enlarged. It is heretical to say that God can be enlarged or expanded in His Godhead. However, God can be enlarged and expanded by dispensing Himself into humanity and growing in humanity (Col. 2:19). It is for this express purpose that God created man in His image and according to His likeness, and formed in him a human spirit as a receptacle (Gen. 1:26; 2:7; Zech. 12:1; Prov. 20:27; Job 32:8) so that man can receive God, contain God, and be mingled with God for His expanded expression.

Four thousand years after He created man, God Himself came to the earth to be a man, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a human virgin (Matt. 1:18-23). This man, Jesus, was the complete God mingled with humanity. He was fully God and fully man, a God-man. His inward essence was His divinity, and His outward shell was His humanity. Thus, He likened Himself to a grain of wheat. One day this grain of wheat fell into the ground and died and then resurrected in order to release His divine life and to produce, and even become, many grains (John 12:24). These many grains, the many believers in Christ, possess the life and nature of the first grain and are thus the multiplication of the first grain. As such, they are actually the reproduction of God. The first grain—Jesus as the first God-man—was a prototype, and the many grains—the believers as the many God-men—produced by this one grain through His death and resurrection are the mass reproduction (cf. Rom. 8:29). This is the reproduction of God, not in His Godhead but in His consummated embodiment, Christ as the God-man. The ultimate consummation of the Triune God and His reproduction is the New Jerusalem as the corporate God.

The Holy City

The New Jerusalem is called *the holy city* (Rev. 21:2). According to the revelation of the Scriptures, to be holy is to be separated unto God from all things other than God. Furthermore, to be holy is to be saturated with the holy nature of God, to be the same as God in His holy nature. In the Old Testament holiness was only positional, involving only separation unto God from a common, worldly position to a position that is for God. This kind of

holiness was referred to by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:17 and 19, where the gold was sanctified, separated, made holy, unto God by being brought into the temple of God and where a gift offered to God was sanctified by being placed on the altar. However, in the New Testament sanctification in its highest sense is not merely positional but dispositional, involving not only a separating of the believers unto God but also a saturating of the believers with God to effect in them a transformation in disposition from a natural, common disposition to a spiritual, holy disposition by the saturating of their inward parts with God's holy life, nature, and essence. This saturating is carried out by Christ as the life-giving Spirit dispensing the holy element of God into the inward parts of the believers during the course of their entire Christian life.

Holiness is God Himself. Only God is intrinsically holy (Rev. 15:4); only He has the holy essence, the holy nature. Thus, for man to be holy means that man is the same as God in His holy nature. Since anything other than God is common, unholy, to be made holy is to be made God in His nature of holiness. Before the incarnation of Christ, only God was holy in His nature intrinsically. In the incarnation the man Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18, 20). This conception by the Holy Spirit, who bears the holy nature of God, involved the imparting of the divine nature into humanity. As a result, the human child born of Mary was called "the holy thing" (Luke 1:35). Thus, Jesus, the God-man, was intrinsically, constitutionally, holy from His birth. In the conception and birth of Jesus, humanity was sanctified, made intrinsically holy through the mingling of the divine nature with the human nature. The sanctifying of Jesus' humanity was consummated by His resurrection, through which He, as the seed of David in His humanity, was designated to be the Son of God in the divine power according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:3-4). In the resurrection of Christ His humanity was fully sanctified, transformed, and uplifted into His divinity. Thus, His humanity was deified.

According to 2 Thessalonians 2:13 the salvation of God is in the sanctification of the Spirit. In order to apply God's salvation to the believers of Christ, the Holy Spirit sanctifies them in three steps. In the first step the Spirit seeks and convicts the believers before they repent and believe in Christ (1 Pet. 1:2; John 16:8). In the second step the Spirit sanctifies the believers both positionally and dispositionally at the time they believe in the Lord (Heb. 13:12; 1 Cor. 6:11). In the third step of His sanctifying work in the believers the Spirit continues to sanctify the believers in their disposition during the full course of their Christian life (Rom. 15:16; 6:19, 22) from their regeneration to their glorification, which is the transfiguration, the redemption, of their body at the Lord's coming back (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:23).

The sanctification of the believers carries out the goal of God's choosing the believers to be holy by His predestinating them unto sonship.

The initiation of the Spirit's dispositional sanctification in the believers is their regeneration, in which the Holy Spirit, the sanctifying Spirit, imparts the holy life, nature, and essence of the Triune God into the believers' spirit (Rom. 8:10), making their spirit holy (2 Cor. 6:6). Through regeneration the believers are brought into an organic union with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17; John 15:4-5) in which they become partakers of the divine nature through God's precious and exceedingly great promises (2 Pet. 1:4) and partake of God's holiness through the Spirit's inward dispensing and the Father's outward discipline (Heb. 12:10). As the believers partake of God's holy nature, they are sanctified, made holy, in all the inward parts of their soul. At the time of the Lord's coming back, the believers who have been fully sanctified in their soul will be glorified through the transfiguration of their body (Phil. 3:21). At that time these believers will be wholly and thoroughly sanctified in their entire tripartite being—spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23).

The sanctification of the believers dispositionally carries out the goal of God's choosing the believers in eternity past to be holy by His predestinating them unto sonship (Eph. 1:4-5). This goal is to make the believers God's sons who possess the life, nature, and glory of God that they may be God's corporate expression. It is through dispositional sanctification that the believers as God's many sons are brought into the divine glory for God's eternal expression (Heb. 2:10-11). Through all the steps of the divine sanctification the believers are gradually deified to become the sons of God, who are the same as God in His life and in His nature but not in His Godhead. Thus, they are made God in His holiness and become a part of the holy city, New Jerusalem.

New Jerusalem

In the name *New Jerusalem* the word *new* indicates that the New Jerusalem is the consummation of God's new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). In the Scriptures there are two creations—the old creation and the new creation. God's goal in His economy is to produce a new creation out of His old creation. The old creation is the first creation, the creation spoken of in Genesis 1 and 2. This creation is old because it does not have God in it intrinsically; it does not have the divine life and the divine nature. It is merely an empty vessel without God as its content. Anything that is without God is old, and anything into which God has been constituted is new. Since newness is

God, to become new is to become God, to become divine, to be deified, by having God wrought into us.¹

God is new, and He is also newness. All God's attributes are forever new. They can never become old; they are everlasting and unfading. As the consummation of the new creation the New Jerusalem is new because it is full of God; the ever-new God has been wrought into it. The New Jerusalem is new because it is full of the divine life, indicated by the tree of life and the river of water of life within the city (Rev. 22:1-2), and the divine nature, signified by the city itself and its street being pure gold (21:18, 21).

The New Jerusalem is a living composition of God's redeemed people throughout the ages, who have been constituted with Christ and composed together to be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), a corporate new man (Eph. 2:15; 4:22-24; Col. 3:10-11), in Christ. The new creation is produced by the dispensing of God in Christ as the Spirit into the redeemed believers. This dispensing issues in the mingling of the Triune God with the believers' entire tripartite being, making them a new creation in Christ. The phrase *in Christ* indicates that outside of Christ there is no newness. Christ is both the sphere and the element of newness. Because we are in Christ and Christ is in us (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 13:5), we are new. The Christ in whom we are and who is in us is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17). As such, He is the renewing Spirit who renews us by saturating us with Himself as the element of newness.

We are renewed, deified, to be the New Jerusalem by the renewing work of the Spirit in God's organic salvation, which reconstitutes us with the Triune God as a new element. The Spirit's renewing is a re-creating that transforms us from the old creation into the new creation. Through regeneration by the Spirit (John 3:6), our spirit is made new (Ezek. 36:26); through the Spirit's sanctifying work, our soul is made new (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23); and through glorification, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23), our body is made new (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1). After believing in Christ to be regenerated by the Spirit, we continue to be renewed day by day throughout our Christian life by enjoying Christ as the renewing Spirit, who dwells in our spirit (4:16; Titus 3:5). As we contact Him and set our mind on Him (Rom. 8:6), He spreads from our spirit into our mind, thus renewing our mind and making it new. Through the renewing of our mind, our entire inner being is renewed and transformed. Finally, when our body is transfigured at the Lord's coming (Phil. 3:21), we will be thoroughly new in our entire tripartite being. By such a process of renewing we are deified, made God in life and in nature, to be the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's new creation.

The Bride, the Wife of the Lamb

The New Jerusalem, composed of both the Old Testament saints, represented by the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12), and the New Testament saints, represented by the twelve apostles of the Lamb (v. 14), is also the bride, the wife of the Lamb (vv. 2, 9-10). As such, the New Jerusalem is the ultimate and eternal Eve, fulfilling for eternity the type shown in Genesis 2. In verse 18 of that chapter God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart." Adam typifies God in Christ as the universal Husband, who is seeking a wife for Himself (Rom. 5:14). Adam's need for a wife typifies and portrays God's need, in His economy, to have a wife as His complement. Adam named all the animals, but none of the animals could match him to be his counterpart because none of them had the same life and nature as Adam (Gen. 2:18-20). This typifies that nothing in the old creation, even the man created by God in His image (Gen. 1:26), is qualified to match Christ, because the old creation does not have Christ's divine life and divine nature. To produce a counterpart for Adam, God caused Adam to sleep, opened his side, took out one of his ribs, and built the rib into a woman, Eve, who was fully qualified to be his counterpart because she was taken entirely out of him (vv. 21-23). In this all-encompassing vision Adam as a created man typifies Christ as a man in His incarnation; Adam's sleep typifies Christ's death on the cross for the producing of the church as His counterpart (Eph. 5:25-27); the rib taken out of Adam's side typifies the unbreakable, eternal, divine life (Heb. 7:16), signified by Christ's unbroken bone (John 19:36) and by the water that flowed out of Christ's side when He was pierced on the cross (v. 34); and the building of Eve from Adam's rib typifies the building of the church as Christ's counterpart with the resurrection life of Christ that flows as the living water of life (7:37-39). This resurrection life is Christ Himself in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit (11:25).

Just as Eve was a pure product out of Adam, the church as Christ's wife, which consummates in the New Jerusalem, is a pure product out of Christ. In Eve there was no element other than the element of Adam. Likewise, in the church there is no element other than the element of Christ. Christ is the unique element that constitutes His believers to be the church. Eve was a full reproduction of Adam, and the church, composed of all the regenerated believers, is the increase of Christ (John 3:6, 29-30). The church as Christ's Body and Christ's bride is Christ Himself (1 Cor. 12:12), for Christ has been wrought into the church to be her constituent. The transforming of the believers into Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) is the deifying of the believers to make them the same as Christ in life, in nature, and in expression but not in the Godhead so that they match Christ as His counterpart.

In the New Jerusalem Christ and the church as the great mystery (Eph. 5:32) will consummate as a universal couple composed of divinity and humanity mingled together as one (Rev. 22:17). As the divine Husband, the Triune God has the human life and nature, and as the human wife, His redeemed people have the divine life and the divine nature. Thus, the processed and consummated Triune God as the Husband and His created, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified (i.e., deified) elect as the wife will be joined together and will live together as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17) for eternity.

The Tabernacle and the Temple

According to its two natures, divinity and humanity, the New Jerusalem is both the tabernacle of God and the temple of God. According to its humanity the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God as the dwelling place of God in His humanity among men on the earth (Rev. 21:3). God can dwell in humanity because He became a man and partook of humanity (John 1:14). According to its divinity the New Jerusalem is the temple of God as the eternal dwelling place of God's redeemed elect, who serve Him as priests (Rev. 21:22; 22:3). This temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb, the redeeming God. God's elect can dwell in God as a divine temple because they have been deified, made God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. In eternity the New Jerusalem, as the union, mingling, and incorporation of the Triune God with all His redeemed, will be the mutual dwelling place of God in man and man in God (cf. John 14:20, 23; 15:4-5). God and His elect will dwell together in a mingled way. God in His humanity will dwell in His elect, and His elect in their divinity will dwell in God.

The Sons of God

According to Revelation 21:7 those who constitute the New Jerusalem are the sons of God. This indicates that the New Jerusalem is the aggregate of all the sons of God, the totality and consummation of the divine sonship. All the believers in Christ are the sons of God (Gal. 3:26; 4:6) who have been regenerated by God (1 Pet. 1:3) and thus possess His divine life and divine nature in addition to their human life and human nature. Hence, they are God-men as the mingling of God and man. Since they have been begotten of God (John 1:12-13), they are God's species, but they have no share in the Godhead, just as a son born of a human father is a man but does not have the fatherhood. The aggregate and totality of all the sons of God as the many God-men, who have become God in life, in nature, and in expression but not in the Godhead, will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Among these God-men, the sons of God, is God the Father. Thus, the New Jerusalem is God the Father with many "God the sons."

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The New Jerusalem is the conclusion of the entire divine revelation of the New Testament regarding the divine sonship. Before the foundation of the world God predestinated many human beings to be His sons (Eph. 1:5). This is a strong indication that God's heart's desire in eternity was to have not only one Son, His only Begotten, to be His individual expression (John 1:18; 14:9) but myriads of sons (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29) to be His enlarged corporate expression. Christ, the second of the Divine Trinity, is God's unique, only begotten Son in the Godhead. Apart from Him there can be no more sons of God. In order for God to produce many sons, the only begotten Son of God was incarnated to be a man by partaking of human blood and flesh (John 1:14; Heb. 2:14), thereby becoming the Son of Man in addition to the Son of God. Then He lived as a God-man in His humanity for thirty-three and a half years, living the human life by the divine life to set up a pattern of the proper living of a God-man. Finally, He was crucified to accomplish God's eternal redemption, to terminate all the negative things and solve all the problems in the universe, and to release the divine life from within Him. On the third day He rose from the dead, and in His resurrection three great things occurred: He was begotten in His humanity to be the firstborn Son of God, who possesses both divinity and humanity distinctly but inseparably (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29; Heb. 1:5-6); all His believers were regenerated to be God's many sons, the many brothers of the Firstborn (1 Pet. 1:3; John 20:17); and He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17). After His resurrection He as the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life, indwells His many brothers and imparts the divine life into their entire tripartite being (Rom. 8:2, 9-10, 6, 11), thereby sanctifying them, renewing them, transforming them, conforming them to His image, and glorifying them (i.e., deifying them) to make them the mass reproduction of Himself as God's firstborn Son. By such a dispensing of life He builds them all together in Himself to be His organic Body as His corporate expression, which will ultimately consummate in the New Jerusalem as God's corporate Son, the corporate Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 3:10-11), composed of Christ as the Firstborn incorporated with all the believers as the many sons of God.

Three Precious Materials

The New Jerusalem is constructed of three precious materials—gold, pearl, and precious stones. The city proper and the street are gold (Rev. 21:18, 21), the gates

are pearls (v. 21), and the wall and its foundations are precious stones (vv. 18-20). Besides these three materials, there are no other materials in the structure of the New Jerusalem. These three materials are not literal, physical materials, just as the three materials in 1 Corinthians 3:12—gold, silver, and precious stones—used in building the church as the Body of Christ on Christ as the unique foundation are not literal, physical materials but are signs, symbols with spiritual significance. In the structure of the New Jerusalem gold signifies God the Father with His divine nature as the base of the city, pearls signify God the Son with His redeeming death and life-dispensing resurrection as the entrance to the city, and precious stones signify God the Spirit with His transforming work as the expression, the separation, and the protection of the city. Thus, the three precious materials in the structure of the New Jerusalem signify the processed Triune God as the building material for His unique, divine, organic building.

The fact that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the twelve gates of the city and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are on the twelve foundations (Rev. 21:12, 14) indicates that God's redeemed people of the Old Testament and the New Testament are also part of the holy city. Thus, the New Jerusalem is built of both God and man, divinity and humanity. In the holy city these two constituents are distinct but not separate; they are united, mingled, and incorporated together as one. Through the processes that the Triune God passed through in Christ, including His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, He has mingled Himself with humanity to become a God-man, and through the believers' experience of the divine dispensing in God's organic salvation, which includes regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification, they are constituted with the processed and consummated Triune God to become God-men, the same as God in life, in nature, and in expression but not in His Godhead. Thus, God has become man and man has become God to constitute the New Jerusalem.

Jasper

The wall of the New Jerusalem is the main part of its structure. The entire wall and the first layer of its foundation are jasper (21:18-19). The primary function of the wall is to express God in bearing His glory. According to Revelation 21:11 the holy city has the glory of God, and its light is "like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal." This indicates that the appearance of the New Jerusalem is jasper, a transformed precious stone. This appearance is God's glory, which is God Himself expressed in splendor radiantly. When God is seen, there is glory (Lev. 9:23; Acts 7:2). According to Revelation 4:3 God on the throne is like a jasper stone in

appearance. Hence, both God and the New Jerusalem have the same appearance, the appearance of jasper.

The color of jasper is dark green, which signifies life in its richness. Thus, jasper signifies God's communicable glory in His rich life (John 17:22, 1). The jasper wall of the New Jerusalem is the issue of the union and mingling of the processed Triune God and the transformed believers through the transforming work of the Spirit. In the believers' experience of the Spirit's transforming work, the glory of God's rich life permeates the believers, thereby constituting them intrinsically with the glory of God and transforming them into the image of the glorious Christ from one degree of glory to another degree of glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus, the glory of the New Jerusalem is not some kind of radiance shining upon the city extrinsically but a shining out of the God of glory from within the deified believers (Rev. 21:23, 11; cf. Matt. 17:1-2; 2 Thes. 1:10). The jasper wall of the New Jerusalem is strong proof that in the consummation of God's salvation the believers in Christ are the same as God in life, in nature, and in glory. This indicates the deification of the believers for God's eternal enlargement and expression.

Conclusion

According to Revelation 22:4 the redeemed in eternity, as the constituents of the New Jerusalem, will have the name of God on their foreheads (cf. 3:12; 14:1). The name of God denotes the person of God with all that God is. A name is a sign of both identity and ownership. That the name of God is on their foreheads indicates that in eternity God's redeemed are one with God and belong to God. What God is has been wrought into them to be their intrinsic constitution. This shows clearly that the blessed destiny of every genuine believer in Christ is to be deified, to become God in His life, nature, and appearance but not in His Godhead, to bear the glorious image and likeness of the Triune God (1 John 3:2) for His corporate expression. When we as God's children arrive at such a destiny, we will fully enjoy our divine right (John 1:12; Rev. 22:14) to participate in God's divinity, and God will enjoy the consummation of His good pleasure in joining and mingling Himself with humanity for His enlargement and eternal expression (Eph. 1:5, 9).

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Notes

¹Here we should point out that in the new heaven and new earth the new creation of God will be limited to the New Jerusalem, for only the New Jerusalem, composed of all Christ's deified believers, will be constituted with God intrinsically. In eternity the newness of the heavens and the earth will be different from the newness of the New Jerusalem.