

The Sign of the New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem, the city of God, is not a physical city; it is a sign of the consummation of God's economical operation of grace, an operation that began with the incarnation of the Word in humanity in order to produce a corporate person who is joined to and mingled with the Triune God. The New Jerusalem is a divine declaration of the Triune God's desire to reproduce Himself in a corporate God-man. As a divine-human corporate person, the New Jerusalem speaks of God becoming man and man becoming God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. The New Jerusalem is a composition of God's chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, and glorified people who have been deified, that is, made the same as God in life and nature but not in the Godhead.

The deification of humanity involves the impartation of the newness of the Triune God into humanity, which has passed through four distinct stages associated with four distinct expressions: *the first man*, *the old man*, *the second man*, and *the new man*. The first man is the corporate man whom God created for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose; the old man is the created man who became old through the corruption of the fall; the second man is Christ, the first God-man, as the initial accomplishment of God's purpose; and the new man is the corporate God-man as the reproduction of the second man for the full accomplishment of God's purpose. The divine revelation in the entire Bible may be considered the history of these four men with the New Jerusalem as the signification of its culmination. Genesis 1 and 2 unveil the creation of the first man. Genesis 3 through Malachi presents the history of the old man, the first man who fell. The four Gospels offer the biography of the second man as the replacement of the first man, and Acts through Revelation 20 contains the story of the corporate enlargement of the second man as the new man. The last two chapters of the Bible present the description of the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the corporate God-man, the new man.

The reality of the New Jerusalem is presented in Revelation through the use of signs, symbols with spiritual significance. The New Jerusalem is not a physical, material city. If the New Jerusalem were an actual city made of gold, pearls, and precious stones, this would mean that a material city was the conclusion of the entire divine revelation. It is not logical that God's spiritual work

throughout the ages would culminate in a physical city. God created the universe and man in order to be received by man. Then He came to earth to redeem man in order to be received by man. As the God-man, the Lord Jesus lived on earth, He was crucified and resurrected, He ascended, and He poured Himself out as the Spirit upon His disciples. The disciples then preached the gospel of this God-man in order to gain people to be built up as the Body of Christ to express Him. As a sign, the New Jerusalem indicates that God, through creation, incarnation, redemption, resurrection, ascension, and His transforming and building work, will gain a living composition of His chosen, redeemed, regenerated, and transformed people to be His dwelling place and His counterpart to fully satisfy and express Him for eternity. In order to gain such a dwelling place and counterpart, God's work involves an operation of grace.

This operation produces a coinhering expression of the Triune God in Christ in redeemed, transformed, and glorified humanity. The believers' participation in the economy of the grace of God is a continuing matter of faith, and this continuing operation in the New Testament produces a consummation that is allegorized and signified in Galatians and Hebrews. Both Galatians and Hebrews are focused on bringing believers back to God's operation of grace so that they can be built up into God's corporate expression, which is allegorized as the Jerusalem above in Galatians and the heavenly Jerusalem in Hebrews. Galatians, Hebrews, and Revelation point to an allegorized city of grace—the Jerusalem above, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the New Jerusalem. Each of these books concludes with the most fitting interpretation of this allegory: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen" (Gal. 6:18), "Grace be with you all. Amen" (Heb. 13:25), and "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen" (Rev. 22:21). These final utterances succinctly present the divine reality in God's economy: grace, being the coming of the Son with the Father by the Spirit into humanity, is now with us, and just as grace operated in the coinhering living of the unique God-man in the days of His flesh, it is available in our human living in order to bring us into our consummation as a corporate God-man, which is most appropriately signified as a city above, a heavenly city, a new city. **AC**

by the Editors