

THE NEW JERUSALEM in the Light of the BOOK OF ROMANS

by Ron Kangas

God's eternal economy, as His household administration, is God's plan and arrangement to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people as their life, their life supply, and their everything in order to make them His corporate expression. God's eternal economy is related to His eternal purpose made in Christ according to the good pleasure of God's will, the desire of His heart, and God's household administration refers to God's way of governing His divine family produced through regeneration and of distributing the vast wealth of His Being to His children, the members of His household, all of whom have been born of Him to have His life and nature. According to His plan and sovereign arrangement, God, in His Divine Trinity, dispenses Himself into His chosen (determined in eternity past) and redeemed (accomplished in time) people as their eternal life, as their life supply in the form of spiritual food and spiritual drink, and as their everything, which refers to the all-inclusive Christ—the embodiment of the Triune God realized as the life-giving Spirit—as the reality of God, man, and every positive thing in the universe. God's corporate expression is a single, organic entity consisting of Christ as the firstborn Son and the believers in Christ as the many sons of God. This organic entity is the Body of Christ in this age and will be the New Jerusalem in eternity. The goal of God's economy as defined above is to gain such a corporate expression—the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem—as His delight and satisfaction for eternity in the new heaven and new earth.

Because the New Jerusalem is the ultimate goal of God's economy, it is crucial that we understand it correctly, avoiding natural concepts and superstition and interpreting it according to the content of the Bible as a whole. Two serious errors must be avoided—the misguided notions that the New Jerusalem is a material city with a street of gold and gates of pearl and that the New Jerusalem is a synonym of heaven. Far from being a literal, physical city, the New Jerusalem is actually a corporate person who includes, according to God's eternal economy, the

processed and consummated Triune God, and as the issue of God's complete salvation, all the chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, and built-up believers in Christ. Since the New Jerusalem is this corporate person and since the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, it would be erroneous to teach, as even eminent theologians have done, that the New Jerusalem is synonymous with heaven or is another way of speaking of heaven as the supposed eternal abode of the children of God.

It is the thesis of this exploratory essay that we may be helped to acquire a proper spiritual understanding of the New Jerusalem if we consider the holy city in light of the book of Romans. Whereas the New Jerusalem is the consummation of God's economy, the book of Romans delineates an outline of God's economy in the form of a summary and basic definition of the Christian life and the church life. There is, we will attempt to demonstrate, an intrinsic relationship between the New Jerusalem and the book of Romans, with the New Jerusalem being the full exhibition of the revelation contained in Romans.

Let us now begin to consider the many and varied connections between the book of Romans and the New Jerusalem.

The Will of God

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." If we study this verse in the context of Romans as a whole and of chapter twelve in particular, we will see that the will of God in 12:2 is God's intention, according to His good pleasure, to have the organic Body of Christ as the corporate expression of Christ (Eph. 1:9, 11; 5:17). The focus here is not on God's will for the individual believer but on God's will as what He desires for the fulfillment of the desire of His heart. After speaking of God's will in Romans 12:2, Paul

goes on in verses 4 and 5 to unveil the Body of Christ: “For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” If we put together the will of God in verse 2 and the Body of Christ in verses 4 and 5, we will see that the will of God is the Body of Christ.

In this chapter the will of God is that we whom God has chosen, called, redeemed, justified, sanctified, and conformed unto glorification in the preceding eleven chapters may be members one of another to have the living of the Body of Christ. (Recovery Version, Rom. 12:2, note 6)

In the book of Revelation, the analogue to the will of God in Romans is found in 4:11: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created.” In this verse God’s will is conjoined both to His creation and to His administration. For the carrying out of God’s perfect, eternal will—revealed in Ephesians in relation to God’s intention and the desire of His heart, His good pleasure—God created all things. Because God has a will, something that He intends to accomplish, He created the universe with billions of items. He therefore created all things on account of His will. This conjoins God’s will to God’s creation. The fact that God’s will is also related to His administration is made plain by the context of this chapter. Verses 2 and 3 say, “Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting; and He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance.” This is one of several references to the throne in Revelation (5:1; 6:16; 7:9; 8:3; 21:5; 22:1)—a book of God’s administration which unveils the throne of God for the divine administration throughout the universe. There is an intrinsic connection between the throne in Revelation 4:2 and the will in verse 11, because the throne of God is not only for the reign of God but also for the fulfillment of the will of God. God’s will in creation is carried out by God’s throne in His administration. The throne ensures the realization of God’s will, for which He created all things.

The will of God in chapter four is the holy city, the New Jerusalem, in chapter twenty-one. This means that the will of God in His creation of the universe is to have the New Jerusalem as the mutual dwelling place for the Triune God and His tripartite people. The will of God for which all things were created, for which we should pray (Matt. 6:10), and concerning which we should present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is the New Jerusalem, God’s eternal dwelling place. In and through the New Jerusalem, the desire of God’s heart will be fulfilled, and He will be satisfied to see His glorious expression in His firstborn Son with the many sons as

a corporate, organic entity. As the fulfillment of God’s eternal will, the New Jerusalem in Revelation is the consummation of the Body of Christ in Romans. The perfect will of God is to have the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem.

The Grace of God

Romans is an Epistle of the grace of God, and the New Jerusalem is a product of the grace of God, a city of grace. The grace revealed in Romans produces and culminates in the New Jerusalem, which is a constitution of grace and which will be to the praise of the glory of the Father’s grace, “with which He graced us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6).

At both the beginning and the end of Romans, we have a blessing of grace. “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:7). “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (16:20). According to the traditional theological definition of the grace of God, grace is “unmerited favor.” This definition is not incorrect, but it is incomplete, for it emphasizes the objective aspect of grace at the expense of the subjective aspect. To be sure, grace is unmerited favor—favor received objectively and positionally through God’s mercy and based on His righteousness. We have been freely, richly, and bountifully favored in Christ, and for this we praise God. However, if we are limited by this standard lexical definition of grace, we will lack a much higher understanding of grace that comports more fully with the divine revelation in the New Testament. Grace is not merely the favor that God bestows—grace is what God Himself is. God is the God of all grace (1 Pet. 5:10), grace is of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 13:14), and the Spirit is the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29). Grace, therefore, is the Triune God Himself. Furthermore, since the grace of God reaches us according to the economy of God, we must go on to say that grace is the Triune God processed in Christ to be our enjoyment. For Paul to receive grace (Rom. 1:5) was to receive not only unmerited favor but to receive God Himself as the life and life supply that enabled him to carry out his apostolic ministry. Likewise, the grace that was sufficient for Paul in his affliction was not simply unmerited favor (2 Cor. 12:9); it was the Lord Himself for Paul’s experience, enjoyment, and all-sufficient supply. “Grace in its highest definition is / God in the Son to be enjoyed by us; / It is not only something done or giv’n, / But God Himself, our portion glorious” (*Hymns*, #497).

We need to be mindful of this definition of grace as we consider the relationship between grace in Romans and in the New Jerusalem. Romans 3:24 tells us that we have been “justified freely by His grace.” Grace here, as God’s favor to us, stands in sharp contrast to all

human efforts to be righteous in the sight of God. We are justified by God by His grace, not by our works under the law. “Since Christ has paid the price for our sins and in His redemption has fulfilled all God’s requirements on us, God, because He is just, must justify us freely. Such justification is by the grace of God, not by our works” (Recovery Version, Rom. 3:24, note 2). Because we have been justified by God’s grace, now we have “access by faith into this grace in which we stand” (5:2). By faith (which is itself a gift, a favor, from God) we first have access into grace and then we have a solid standing in grace. We have received the grace of God by which we have been justified by God, and now we stand in the realm, the sphere, of grace where we may enjoy grace in its fullest sense, grace as God Himself.

Grace is the Triune God Himself, processed that we may enter into Him and enjoy Him. Grace here, in the deepest sense, is the Triune God as our enjoyment. It is more than unmerited favor and more than mere outward blessing. We are not merely under God’s blessing; we are in His grace. (Recovery Version, 5:2, note 2)

As those who are standing in grace, we are “not under the law but under grace” (6:14).

In 5:15 we see more concerning grace as unmerited favor and, in verses 17, 20, and 21, more concerning grace as God Himself dispensed into us and operating in us. “If by the offense of the

one the many died, much more the grace of God and the free gift in grace of the one man Jesus Christ have abounded to the many” (v. 15). In the God-man Jesus Christ the grace of God and the free gift in grace have abounded. According to verses 17, 20, and 21, grace not only abounds but also superabounds and reigns unto eternal life. “For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (v. 17). The gift of righteousness is Christ Himself as righteousness to us from God (1 Cor. 1:30). With this gift as the foundation, we may receive, through the divine dispensing, the abundance of grace—God in Christ as the Spirit—through which we can reign in life. This verse is reminiscent of John 1:16: “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.” To receive grace upon grace is first to receive favor from God and then to receive God Himself as grace. In Paul’s words, as we receive this grace with the gift of righteousness, we reign as kings over sin and death.

The abounding grace in Romans 5:17 becomes the superabounding grace in verse 20: “Where sin abounded, grace has superabounded.” Whereas sin is the evil nature of Satan injected into our body, grace is the Triune God imparted into our spirit. This grace is superabounding, and as we give ground to it and allow it to flow and operate in us, this grace reigns unto eternal life. “In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 21). On the one hand, by grace we reign in life; on the other hand, grace itself (actually, Himself) reigns unto eternal life. Ultimately, for grace to reign unto eternal life (cf. John 4:14) is for grace to reign unto the New Jerusalem, which is produced and forever maintained by the grace of God.

As we all know, the New Jerusalem is unveiled in a book—Revelation—which, like Romans, begins and ends with the grace of God (1:4; 22:21). This grace is the origin of the New Jerusalem. In the holy city, the twelve apostles, whose names are on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem, represent the grace of the New Testament; this signifies that grace is the source, the element, and the means for producing the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is produced by the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God into us as grace to bring us forth as God’s many sons to compose the New Jerusalem, which is our mother.

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The union of grace, the sons, the mother, and the heavenly Jerusalem is revealed in Galatians 4. The Jerusalem above—the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22), the New Jerusalem—is the mother of the believers (Gal. 4:26), and this mother is the new covenant of grace symbolized by Sarah (vv. 22-26). Our Father is the grace and the One who gives grace. When what the Father gives of Himself as grace is used in function, it becomes the mother, who produces the sons who, in turn, are the components of the mother, the Jerusalem above. On the one hand, we have been born of this mother to be sons of God; on the other hand, this mother, the New Jerusalem, is composed of the sons born of her (Rev. 21:7). The New Jerusalem is a marvelous composition—a composition of God the Father, of God’s grace, of the new covenant of grace, of the mother, and of all the sons of God produced through the mother as grace. Therefore, the New Jerusalem is produced by the dispensing of the processed and consummated Triune God as grace to bring forth the believers in Christ as God’s many sons; these sons compose the New Jerusalem, which is our mother. All is of grace. The

New Jerusalem is a city of grace, a city filled with and sustained by the Triune God of grace. This grace-city is the consummation of the grace of God revealed in the book of Romans.

Redemption

Romans 3:24 says, “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Although we belonged to God in virtue of His creation, we became lost through sin and were under the requirements of God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory, signified by the cherubim (glory) with the flaming (holiness) sword (righteousness) who guarded the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). However, in Christ God has redeemed, repossessed, purchased us back, at a tremendous cost—the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, the precious blood that has fulfilled all the requirements of God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory. Christ died a vicarious, redemptive death on the cross to redeem us, and His blood has accomplished an eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12, 15; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The application to us of this eternal redemption is the forgiveness of sins. For this reason Ephesians 1:7 assures us, “In whom [the Beloved, v. 6] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace.” Redemption deals with our sins through Christ’s fulfilling of God’s righteous requirement. As a most blessed result, now in Him “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

The center of the New Jerusalem is the throne of the redeeming God—God and the Lamb (Rev. 22:1). On the cross Christ died as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and now the redeeming Lamb is on the throne to carry out God’s administration. The fact that the Lamb is on the throne in the New Jerusalem indicates that the holy city is solidly established upon the eternal redemption accomplished in Christ, upon the redemption accomplished by the One who, as the Lamb of God, satisfied the requirements of God’s righteousness, holiness, and glory. For the sake of the New Jerusalem, the Lamb “has released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev. 1:5), having purchased us for God by His blood (5:9). Those who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” are now “before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple” (7:14-15). It is only through such a washing that we may have the right to the tree of life and become part of the New Jerusalem. “Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city” (22:14).

The robes here symbolize the conduct of the believers. To wash their robes is to keep their conduct clean through

the washing of the blood of the Lamb (7:14; 1 John 1:7). This gives them the right to participate in the tree of life and to enter into the city. (Recovery Version, Rev. 22:14, note 2)

“Through faith in His blood” (Rom. 3:25) we are redeemed, forgiven, and cleansed. The redemption in Romans 3 makes possible the constitution of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Thus, we have here another aspect of the intrinsic connection between Romans and the New Jerusalem.

Justification unto Life

Because of Christ’s redemption, the believers in Christ are “justified freely” by God’s grace (Rom. 3:24). To say that God justifies us means that He approves us, counting us righteous in Christ, according to the standard of His own righteousness. Such a marvelous justification is based solely on the redemption of Christ, and it is appropriated by us solely through faith, not by any works of our own. Far from being an end in itself, justification is actually a righteous procedure which enables God, without contradicting His righteousness, holiness, and glory, to dispense Himself into us as life for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. Hence, 5:18 speaks of “justification of life.” Justification is unto life, that is, justification is for life. This establishes the basis upon which we can receive eternal life (6:23). Justification is the procedure; life is the goal. “Through justification we have come up to the standard of God’s righteousness and correspond with it, so that now He can impart His life to us. Justification changes our outward position; life changes our inward disposition” (Recovery Version, 5:18, note 2).

This is predicated upon the truth that, in the order of God’s complete salvation, regeneration (the receiving of the divine life through the divine birth) must follow justification, for unless we have Christ as our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), we cannot have Christ as our life (Col. 3:4). Romans 8:10 is evidence of this: “The spirit is life because of righteousness.” The spirit here, of course, is the regenerated human spirit. Because of the gift of righteousness (5:17), God can, righteously, impart Himself as life into our spirit. Through this miraculous impartation, our spirit was enlivened, we were born again (John 3:3-8), and our regenerated spirit became life itself. As we will see, based upon God’s judicial redemption through which we are justified and reconciled to God, we may experience God’s organic salvation in the divine life. Salvation in life must follow justification because life requires a foundation of righteousness.

The New Jerusalem, as the ultimate fulfillment of the revelation in Romans 5:18, is a divine-human structure consisting of life built upon the foundation of righteousness.

Although the word *righteousness* is not used explicitly with respect to the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22, righteousness is implied and indicated.

One indication is related to the foundation of the holy city. The foundation consists of twelve layers of precious stones, the colors of which are like the colors of a rainbow. As used in Scripture, the rainbow is a sign of God's faithfulness in keeping His word (Gen. 9:8-17; Rev. 10:1). However, there cannot be faithfulness without righteousness; only a righteous person can be faithful. The rainbow displayed in the colors of the various precious stones is a sign of God's faithfulness based upon His righteousness. Thus, the foundation of the New Jerusalem is the righteousness of God with His faithfulness.

Another indication of righteousness in the New Jerusalem is the fact that righteousness is related to the throne of God, to the pearl gates, and to the fine linen with which the bride is clothed. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne (Psa. 89:14). Since God's throne is founded on righteousness, the presence of God's throne presupposes God's righteousness as the foundation of His throne. Because the throne of the redeeming God is in the New Jerusalem, and because righteousness is the foundation of God's throne, righteousness must also be a prominent feature of the New Jerusalem.

The gates of the city are twelve pearls (Rev. 21:12-13, 21), signifying Christ's life-releasing death and life-imparting resurrection. Out from the Lord's pierced side came blood and water (John 19:34).

Blood is for redemption, to deal with sins (1:29; Heb. 9:22) for the purchasing of the church (Acts 20:28). Water is for imparting life, to deal with death (John 12:24; 3:14-15) for the producing of the church (Eph. 5:29-30). The Lord's death, on the negative side, takes away our sins, and on the positive side, imparts life into us. Hence, it has two aspects: the redemptive aspect and the life-imparting aspect." (Recovery Version, John 19:34, note 1)

If we understand the two aspects of Christ's death and know the significance of the pearl gates, we will see that these gates imply righteousness because life can be imparted only through the fulfillment of the requirement of God's righteousness. Christ died to fulfill God's righteousness; through His redemptive death, the divine life

was released; and now this life is dispensed into us in His resurrection.

Speaking of the Lamb's wife (who will be the New Jerusalem during the age of the millennial kingdom), Revelation 19:8 says, "It was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." For eternity in the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem will be "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (21:9-10). Since the New Jerusalem as the bride during the millennium will be clothed in fine linen signifying Christ as righteousness, surely the wife, the holy city, New Jerusalem, in eternity will be a constitution of God's righteousness. Therefore, we conclude that a primary characteristic of the New Jerusalem is righteousness and that, as in Romans, righteousness is the basis upon which God in Christ dispenses Himself into us as our life.

Just as righteousness issues in life in Romans, so righteousness issues in life in the New Jerusalem. In fact, the entire New Jerusalem is a structure of life built upon the foundation of righteousness. The New Jerusalem is not only a city of grace but also a city of life, for the city is supplied by the river of water of life in which grows the tree of life (22:1-2). The water of life and the tree of life—these are strong indications that the holy city is produced and sustained by the divine life and that all the

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constituents of the city will forever enjoy God in Christ as their life supply. In Romans 5 righteousness is the base for the imparting of life. Likewise, in the New Jerusalem righteousness is the foundation of life, and life is the issue of righteousness.

Organic Salvation

As an outline of the basic truths concerning the Christian life and the church life, the book of Romans presents a comprehensive view of God's complete salvation. As the consummation of the revelation in Romans, the New Jerusalem is the embodiment of God's complete salvation.

The expression *complete salvation* denotes the totality of God's salvation with its two aspects—judicial redemption and organic salvation. *Judicial redemption* denotes redemption—God's repossessing us at great cost to Himself—accomplished through the vicarious death of Christ on the cross. *Organic salvation* denotes the salvation

in life spoken of in Romans 5:10: “For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.” Although we have been redeemed objectively through Christ’s death from condemnation and eternal punishment, we still need to be saved subjectively by Christ’s life from our old man, our self, and our natural life in order to be vital members of the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem, a structure of life built upon the foundation of righteousness, embodies and displays every step, stage, and experience of God’s organic salvation—salvation in life. At this juncture, we present, in the way of a brief sketch, a point-by-point comparison of the organic salvation revealed in Romans and the organic salvation realized in the New Jerusalem.

Regeneration

The first step in the experience of organic salvation is regeneration, or the new birth. To be regenerated, born anew, is to be born of God the Spirit in our spirit and thereby to receive another life—the divine, uncreated, eternal life of God—in addition to our natural, created human life (John 3:3-6). Those who are born of God (not merely adopted by Him through a legal transaction) are genuine children of God possessing the life and nature of God. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (1:12-13). Now we are children of God in reality and practicality (1 John 3:1-2). Because we have been regenerated with the life of God, “the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

Children of God—this clearly presupposes regeneration, the new birth. Along with our regenerated spirit, the Spirit “witnesses to our most basic and elementary relationship with God, namely, that we are His children....This witnessing of the Spirit begins from the time of our spiritual birth, our regeneration” (Recovery Version, 8:16, note 3). As the children of God grow and develop in the divine life, they eventually become sons of God, and upon them devolve all the rights, blessings, and privileges of sons. As we will see, the sons of God in Romans 8, who are the members of the Body of Christ in Romans 12, are the constituents of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:7). That the New Jerusalem is composed of divine sons points to regeneration—the initial experience of God’s organic salvation.

Sanctification

The second stage of God’s organic salvation is sanctification,

which by its very nature, is related to holiness. Sanctification is, in fact, the experiential aspect of holiness. When God’s holiness becomes our experience, that is sanctification, and when we are sanctified, we become holy, even as God is holy.

The New Jerusalem is the holy city (Rev. 21:2, 10). In eternity past, prior to the creation of the universe, God the Father chose us in Christ to be holy (Eph. 1:4), and in the New Jerusalem this divine determination is consummated in full. For the New Jerusalem to be the holy city means not only that the city is separated unto God and is distinct from everything common but also that the city is saturated with the holy nature of God, thereby becoming the same as God in nature (but not, of course, in the Godhead). The city is holy because its components, who once were common and saturated with the element of the world, have been sanctified and thus exist in a state and condition of sanctification both in position and in disposition. In position the holy city is separated unto God; in disposition the holy city is saturated with God.

The holiness of the holy city is the result of the sanctification in life unfolded in Romans. Romans 6:19 speaks of presenting our “members as slaves to righteousness unto sanctification,” and verse 22 goes on to speak of “fruit unto sanctification, and the end, eternal life.” We need to be deeply impressed here that sanctification does not merely change our outward position but affects, and essentially changes, our intrinsic being through the addition of the holy element of God.

Sanctification...involves not only a change in position, that is, a separation from a common, worldly position to a position for God, as illustrated in Matt. 23:17, 19 and in 1 Tim. 4:3-5; it involves also a transformation in disposition, that is, a transformation from the natural disposition to a spiritual one by Christ as the life-giving Spirit saturating all the inward parts of our being with God’s nature of holiness, as mentioned in 12:2 and 2 Cor. 3:18. (Recovery Version, Rom. 6:19, note 2)

This dispositional sanctification, this saturation of our inner being, is carried out in life and by life (Rom. 5:10; 6:4, 23), and it results in life, having as “the end, eternal life” (v. 22). The importance of this can hardly be overemphasized, as it is the means, according to His economy, by which God gains a corporate entity—the Body of Christ, the New Jerusalem—that is constituted with Him and that expresses Him.

Renewing

In Romans 12:2 Paul gives us a charge concerning renewing and transformation: “Be transformed by the renewing

of the mind.” To be renewed is to have the element of God added into our being to replace and discharge the old element, the element of the old creation. For all things to become new in the organic union with Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) is for all things to become God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. This follows from the fact that God Himself is newness. Since newness is God, to become new is actually to become God in His attribute of newness by having God wrought into us. Our God is forever new, and He wants to infuse His ever-new essence into us to renew our entire being. Thus, we are renewed by the addition of God into our being through the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. As the element of God is added into us, this element renews us, especially in our mind.

Ephesians 4:23 says, “That you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” The mind must be renewed in its thought, logic, reasoning, and philosophy. Unless such a radical renewing takes place in our mind—the part of our soul that governs and directs our being—we cannot practice the Body life according to God’s intention. The renewing spirit in Ephesians 4:23 is the mingled spirit, the life-imparting Spirit of God mingled with the regenerated human spirit to become one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The more this mingled spirit spreads into our mind and saturates it with God as the element of newness, the more we are renewed.

This process of inward renewing is accompanied and facilitated by the environmental sufferings arranged by God in His sovereignty to consume our outer man so that the inner man may be renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). All the sufferings assigned by God serve the single purpose of renewing us for the New Jerusalem. As we are renewed by the mingled spirit and as we pass through sufferings, we are transferred from the realm of the old creation to the realm of the new creation to become the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate consummation of the new creation (Rev. 21:2-3, 5; Gal. 6:15). God’s goal is to produce the new creation out of the old creation. The old creation does not have the divine life and the divine nature, but the new creation does. This means that although the old creation was brought into existence by the power of God and according to the will of God, it does not contain anything of God. The new creation, on the contrary, has God within it as its life, nature, appearance, and expression. The new creation is new because

God has been wrought into it; the New Jerusalem is new because it is full of God.

Anything created by God that does not have God in it as its life, nature, appearance, and expression is old, but anything that has God within it as its life, nature, appearance, and expression is a new creation. If we see this, we will be able to realize that, in His economy, God desires to work something new out from His old creation; the old creation is the sphere and material by which God gains something new. God accomplishes this by working Himself in Christ as the Spirit into our being, making us a new creation in Christ. The new creation—the New Jerusalem—is the new man—our being which has been regenerated by the Spirit, having God’s life and nature wrought into it and having Christ as its constituent to become a new constitution (Col. 3:10-11). Because God desires to have the new creation, He cares not for the mere improvement of our outward behavior but for whether we are still in the old creation or are being renewed. The book of Romans reveals that, by a crucial

step in God’s organic salvation, we need to be thoroughly and absolutely renewed so that we may become the new creation of God and for God. This new creation, the issue of the experience of the renewing in Romans 12:2, is the New Jerusalem.

Transformation

As we have noted, Romans 12:2 speaks of transformation, the fourth step of organic salvation, through the renewing of the mind. Another crucial verse related to transformation is 2 Corinthians 3:18, a verse that associates beholding and reflecting the glory of the Lord with transformation into the Lord’s image from glory to glory through the operation of the Lord Spirit. We may define transformation as the metabolic function of the life of God in us, by the addition of the divine element of the life of Christ into our being, that we may express the image of Christ outwardly. This means that transformation is a matter of inward spiritual metabolism issuing in an outward expression—the image of the glorified, resurrected Christ. Transformation, therefore, involves an inward, intrinsic change in our soul, the organ that expresses the indwelling Christ in our spirit, causing us to bear the image of Christ. Consummately, the image of Christ is the New Jerusalem, and to express the image of Christ is to express the New Jerusalem; thus, like sanctification and renewing, transformation results in our becoming the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 9-11). The precious materials with which the New

**The new creation
has God within it as its life,
nature, appearance, and
expression. The new creation
is new because God
has been wrought into it;
the New Jerusalem is new
because it is full of God.**

Jerusalem is organically constructed—gold, pearl, and precious stones—indicate that the components of the New Jerusalem are not only regenerated, sanctified, and renewed but also transformed in life and in nature for God’s expression.

The transformation in Romans 12:2 is for the mass reproduction of Christ, the firstborn Son of God, the first God-man as the prototype of a God-man, that we, the many sons of God and the many brothers of Christ, may be formed into His image and thereby become exactly like the firstborn Son of God. In His organic salvation, God is transforming us with the life element of the firstborn Son of God, the first God-man, who passed through death and entered into resurrection, until we are transformed metabolically into His image from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory. On the one hand, Christ has passed through the processes of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection to become the firstborn Son of God with a view to being the prototype for the reproduction of Himself in His believers. On the other hand, God is bringing us through the process of transformation that we may become the mass reproduction of the firstborn Son, the prototype, consummately to become the New Jerusalem, the eternal corporate expression of the Triune God. The more we are shaped into the image of Christ through transformation, the more we become the New Jerusalem. From this we see that the New Jerusalem is the mass reproduction of the firstborn Son of God.

This reproduction is signified by jasper in Revelation 4:2-3 and 21:11. In chapter four God has the appearance of jasper; in chapter twenty-one the glorious city of New Jerusalem has the same appearance—jasper. In spiritual significance, jasper, the appearance of the New Jerusalem, is the appearance and expression of God. The jasper in the New Jerusalem is the issue of the union of the processed and consummated Triune God with the transformed believers through the transforming Spirit. What the Bible presents as its conclusion is not simply the jasper God but the jasper city, indicating that God’s purpose, now seen in splendid consummation, is to produce jasper, the corporate expression of God. In keeping with this marvelous goal of God’s economy, the ultimate purpose of God’s organic salvation is to work in and on all those whom He chose in eternity (Eph. 1:4-5) to such an extent that they become wholly like Him in the divine glory to express the glorious image of God as jasper for His eternal expression. The transformation in Romans 12:2 results in the jasper city unveiled in Revelation 21:11.

Conformation

Conformation is the continuation and solidification of

transformation. The stage of conformation is the stage of maturity in the divine life received through regeneration and worked into us through the successive steps in God’s organic salvation.

Regarding conformation, Romans 8:29 says, “Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.” Here Paul links predestination with conformation, indicating thereby that in eternity past the God who foreknew us also predestinated us to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son. This is our eternal destiny, and it was determined by God before the existence of the universe. Conformation is, of course, intimately related to transformation. Conformation is “the end result of transformation. It includes the changing of our inward essence and nature, and it also includes the changing of our outward form, that we may match the glorified image of Christ, the God-man” (Recovery Version, v. 29, note 3).

God’s eternal intention is to have many sons for His corporate expression. God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son so that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. The Firstborn—the prototype—with the many brothers—the mass reproduction of the prototype—constitutes the corporate expression of the Triune God in Christ. Now we, the children of God, are gradually being saved in His life, and as the divine life grows within us and transforms us, it spontaneously shapes us into the form, the image, of the firstborn Son of God. To be conformed to Christ’s image is the organic development in life in which we are saved in Christ’s life from self-likeness, that is, from the likeness, appearance, and expression of the self. As a consequence, we no longer express the self—we express Christ. Through the process of being conformed to the image of God’s firstborn Son, Christ as the first God-man, we become a group of God-men, the Lord’s brothers (John 20:17), who are exactly the same as He is in life, in nature, in constitution, in appearance, and in expression but not in the Godhead and not as objects of worship. Such a conformation makes us the reproduction, the reprint, of the firstborn Son, with the result that we are exactly the same as God in His righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). In this way, Christ will eventually be the Firstborn among His many brothers, God’s many sons, that God may obtain what He has desired for so long—the corporate expression of His firstborn Son with the many sons to accomplish His eternal purpose (1:11; 3:11). In the present age, this corporate expression is the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5); in eternity in the new heaven and new earth, this corporate expression will be the New Jerusalem. Hence, the New Jerusalem will manifest the result not only of regeneration, sanctification,

renewing, and transformation but also of conformation, for this holy city, in a solid and substantial way, will bear and express the image of Christ.

Another point remains to be emphasized, and that is the relationship between the law of the Spirit of life in Romans 8:2 and conformation in verse 29. The law of life is the inherent power and spontaneous and automatic function of the divine life within us. Every kind of life has its own characteristic, essence, power, shape, and law, and the function of its law is to produce a life form with a particular shape. The principle is the same with the divine life; it, too, has its characteristic, essence, power, shape, and law. The function of the law of life is not mainly to regulate us from doing wrong in our behavior; rather, the primary function of the law of life is to conform us to the image, the form, of God's firstborn Son so that we may become the same as He is. As the divine life is growing in us and as we are being saved organically in this life, the law of life functions to shape, conform, us to the image of Christ. The ultimate issue of this shaping function of the law of life will be the New Jerusalem, a living, corporate entity bearing the image of Christ.

Glorification

Romans 8:30 says, "And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified." Presently, the indwelling Christ is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27)—the hope not only of being brought into a realm of glory objectively but a hope also of being permeated with the element of God's glory subjectively until He bursts forth from within us in glorious manifestation, comparable to the blossoming of a flower. The divine life within us is a life of glory, and eventually this life will reach full maturity, at which time the matured believers will be glorified from within through the lifelong saturation with the glory of God and from without through their being brought into God's glory (Heb. 2:10). Hence, glorification

is the step in God's complete salvation in which God will completely saturate our body of sin, which is of death and is mortal (7:24; 8:11; 6:6), with the glory of His life and nature according to the principle of His regenerating our spirit through the Spirit. In this way He will transfigure our body, conforming it to the resurrected, glorious body of His Son (Phil. 3:21). This is the ultimate step in God's complete salvation, wherein God obtains a full expression,

which will ultimately be manifested in the New Jerusalem in the coming age. (Recovery Version, Rom. 8:30, note 2)

There surely is an intrinsic connection between the unfolding of God's organic salvation in Romans and the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's organic salvation in Revelation. If we experience each step of this salvation, we will develop in the divine life to maturity and go up level by level until we become beings, persons, in and of the New Jerusalem. We have been regenerated by participating in God's life to become His genuine children in His life and nature (John 1:12-13; Rev. 21:7; 22:14). We are being sanctified by participating in God's nature to become holy as the holy city, New Jerusalem, is holy (1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 5:26; Rev. 21:2). We are being renewed by receiving the infusing of the element of God's newness, God Himself as newness, to become new as the New Jerusalem is new (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23). By participating in God's Being, we are being transformed metabolically into the glorious image of Christ in order to be constituted with the Triune God as gold, silver (pearl), and precious stones—the building materials of the New Jerusalem (1 Cor. 3:12; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 21:18-21). We will be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God to have His image and thus to become jasper, even as God is jasper, to have the appearance of the New Jerusalem. Finally, we will be glorified by participating in God's glory to be completely saturated and permeated with the glory of the New Jerusalem (Rom. 8:21; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:11).

The function of the law of life is not mainly to regulate us from doing wrong in our behavior; rather, the primary function of the law of life is to conform us to the image, the form, of God's firstborn Son so that we may become the same as He is.

Without the experience of God's organic salvation in Romans, we could not become the New Jerusalem, and without the New Jerusalem, there would not be the consummation of organic salvation. To experience every stage and step of organic salvation is to become the New Jerusalem for God's eternal delight and satisfaction.

God's Building

God's building, His corporate expression in redeemed humanity, is the desire of God's heart and the goal of God's salvation (Exo. 25:8). God's good pleasure is to have a dwelling place on earth constituted with Christ and according to Christ (Eph. 1:5, 9). This is portrayed in the book of Exodus, the purpose of which is to show us that the goal of God's full salvation is the building up of His dwelling place (40:1-2, 34-35; 1 Pet. 2:2, 4-5). According to the portrait in Exodus, God's chosen and

redeemed people should be built up together as one entity, the tabernacle, where God and His people may mutually meet, communicate, and dwell (Eph. 2:21-22). In Christ, we and God are built together, meet together, and dwell together; this is the central thought of Exodus and also of the Bible as a whole.

We need to set aside improper concepts of building—for example, that building involves organization, hierarchy, and centralized control—and acquire a divine understanding of God’s building (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 3:9). God’s building is the mingling of God with man (John 14:20; 15:4a; 1 John 4:15). The principle of God’s building is that God builds Himself into us and builds us into Himself (Eph. 3:17). Viewed in this light, the church is God’s building composed of God Himself as the divine material mingled with man as the human material (1 Cor. 3:9, 11). In principle, the church is the same as Christ in having two natures—the divine nature mingled with the human nature to become one entity (Luke 1:35; John 14:20). A second definition of God’s building is that God’s building is the corporate expression of the Triune God (1 Tim. 3:15-16; John 17:22; Eph. 3:19, 21). God’s desire to be expressed and represented by a corporate man on earth can be fulfilled only when we are built up together (Gen. 1:26; 1 Pet. 2:5). Yet another definition of God’s building is that it is the enlargement of God (John 3:29-30; Col. 2:19). To speak of God’s enlargement certainly does not mean that God in Himself needs to increase or can increase. The meaning here is that God increases only in the sense of growing and increasing within us for His expression. This is what Paul means when he says in Colossians 2:19 that all the Body grows with the growth of God. This is the growth not of God in Himself (which is impossible) but of God in us (which is necessary). The genuine building that is both the mingling of divinity and humanity and the corporate expression of the Triune God is the enlargement, expansion, of the Triune God, which enables Him to express Himself in a corporate way. From this we conclude that the building of God is the Triune God as life being wrought into us in Christ so that we may become His corporate expression, the enlargement and expansion of God (Eph. 3:17, 19, 21). We need to have this concept of God’s building as we consider God’s building in Romans and in the New Jerusalem.

Although the expression *God’s building* cannot be found in Romans, the fact of the divine building is there nonetheless. Romans 12:1 urges us to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God.” The bodies are many, but the sacrifice is one; hence, this sacrifice is in the principle of a corporate entity for God’s expression.

Although many bodies are presented, they become one

sacrifice, implying that, although we are many, our service in the Body of Christ should not be many individual services, separated and unrelated. All our service should constitute one whole service, and this service must be unique because it is the service of the one Body of Christ. (Recovery Version, 12:1, note 5)

In verses 4 and 5 Paul goes on to speak about the Body: “For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” We know from 1 Corinthians 12:12 that the Body is *the Christ*, the corporate Christ, and from Ephesians 4:16 that out from Christ, the Head (v. 15), “all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.” “The growth of the Body of Christ is the increase of Christ in the church, which results in the building up of the Body by the Body itself” (Recovery Version, Eph. 4:16, note 9). As God’s building, the Body of Christ is the mingling of divinity and humanity, the corporate expression of the Triune God (vv. 4-6), and the enlargement of God. The consummation of the Body of Christ as God’s building is the New Jerusalem, God’s ultimate building.

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate consummation of God’s building (Exo. 25:8; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; Rev. 21:2, 10-23). Whereas Satan’s building will consummate in the great Babylon, God’s building will consummate in the New Jerusalem, which will ultimately fulfill God’s eternal purpose, express God, and fully satisfy Him for eternity. As God’s ultimate building, the New Jerusalem is a composition of all the saints redeemed by God, saved in His life, and built up together with God and in God as a mutual dwelling place for the satisfaction and rest of both God and man (John 15:4; Rev. 21:12-14).

This consummate building has two natures—divinity and humanity. According to its humanity, the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God among men—the dwelling place of God in His humanity among men on earth (v. 3), and according to its divinity, the New Jerusalem is the temple of God as the dwelling place of His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified elect (v. 22).

Furthermore, as the consummation of the divine building, the New Jerusalem is a mutual abode produced by the building of divinity into humanity and of humanity into divinity (John 15:4). The New Jerusalem is built by God’s constituting Himself into man to make man the same as He is in life and in nature but not in the Godhead so that God and man may become a corporate entity

(Rev. 21:18-21). All the components have the same life, nature, and composition and thus are a corporate person. God and man, man and God, are united, mingled, and incorporated.

In addition, as the consummation of God's building, the New Jerusalem is a constitution of God and man, who are constituted into one to become a mutual dwelling place. The One who is God yet man dwells in the one who is man yet God, and the one who is man yet God dwells in the One who is God yet man. (This is predicated upon the truth concerning deification covered at length in the previous issue of this publication—the truth concerning God becoming man to make man God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead for the New Jerusalem as God's corporate expression.) This mutual dwelling place is divinity expressed in humanity and humanity glorified in divinity, with the divine glory shining forth with great splendor radiantly in humanity (vv. 11, 23).

The Organic Union

In the book of Romans, we have an unveiling of the believers' organic union with Christ based upon their having been grafted into Him. With the New Jerusalem, understood in light of Romans, we see the consummation of this organic union.

The Bible reveals the relationship that God desires to have with man—that He and man

would become one organically, with the divine life and the human life joined together to become one life. In His desire to be one with man in this way, God created man in His own image and according to His likeness and with a spirit to contact Him, receive Him, and contain Him (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). According to the revelation in Romans, as well as elsewhere in the New Testament, the kind of oneness God is seeking to have with His chosen people is the oneness of an organic union, a union in life.

This organic union is the result of a mysterious grafting—the grafting of the divine life and the human life into one. In grafting, two similar lives are joined and then grow together organically; this indicates that grafting can be effective only if the lives to be grafted are similar. This condition was fulfilled in God's creation of humankind in His image and according to His likeness. Because the human life resembles the divine life in image and likeness, it can be joined to the divine life; the divine life and the human life can be grafted together and then grow together organically (John 15:1, 4).

In order for us to be grafted into Christ, He had to pass through the processes of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Christ became flesh to be the seed of David, the branch of David, that we, who are "wood" in our God—created humanity, may be grafted together with Him (John 1:14; Matt. 1:1; Zech. 3:8; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). As human beings, we were already "wood," or "branches." Through incarnation Christ, who in His deity was not "wood," came as the branch of David to be the same as we are so that He and we could be grafted together. Since grafting requires cutting—two branches cannot be grafted together unless both are cut—Christ was "cut" when He died on the cross for our redemption. After He was "cut" through crucifixion, He was resurrected, and in His resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), ready and available for grafting, ready and available to be received by us and be joined to us to become one spirit with us (1 Cor. 6:17). Whereas Christ was "cut" on the cross, we were "cut" when we repented, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11), and the reality of

Christ's crucifixion was applied to our old man. After this second cutting occurred, the grafting, the joining, and the organic union took place, and we entered into Christ (3:15), even as He entered into us, to become one with Him in life.

The Christian life is a grafted life, a life in the organic union where Christ and the believers have one life and one

living. As children of God, regenerated ones who are now parts of Christ as branches of Him as the true vine (John 15:1, 5), we should live a grafted life—a life in which two parties are joined to live and grow together organically. This reveals that after we have been grafted into Christ, we should no longer live by ourselves; rather, we should allow the resurrected Christ—the pneumatic, indwelling Christ, Christ as the life-giving Spirit—to live in us. Instead of living by the flesh, the self, or the natural constitution, we should live and walk according to the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4), the regenerated human spirit mingled with the regenerating divine Spirit. Through grafting we have been united, mingled, and incorporated with Christ to become in Him the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem.

Although it may come as a surprise to some, this is precisely what is revealed in the book of Romans. As those who have believed into Christ and who have received Him into us, we have been baptized into Christ and into His death (6:3). Having been "buried therefore with Him

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through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life” (v. 4). The next verse continues by saying, “For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection” (v. 5). *Grown together with Him*

denotes an organic union in which growth takes place, so that one partakes of the life and characteristics of the other. In the organic union with Christ, whatever Christ passed through has become our history. His death and resurrection are now ours because we are in Him and are organically joined to Him. This is grafting. (Recovery Version, v. 5, note 1)

In chapter eleven Paul speaks explicitly of grafting (v. 24). Although we were “a wild olive tree,” we have been “grafted into” and thereby have become “a fellow partaker of the root of fatness of the olive tree” (v. 17). This grafting that has produced our organic union with Christ

is not the exchanging of a poor life for a better life. Rather, it is the uniting of two lives as one so that they may share one mingled life and one living. Such a mingling of life takes place when two similar yet different lives pass through death (cutting) and resurrection (growth). This depicts our union with Christ. (Recovery Version, v. 17, note 1)

The organic union revealed in chapter six and illustrated in chapter eleven is the basis for the Body life in chapter twelve. “For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (12:4-5). *In Christ*—this is the organic union; *one Body in Christ*—this is the mystical Body of Christ, Christ and His members, existing in the organic union. The Body of Christ is an organism produced by the union in life that we have with Christ. It is crucial that we see this because Romans 12 speaks of the Body from the angle of the organic union, from the union in life and from the uniting life that joins us together not only with Christ but with the other members of His Body so that, in the fellowship of this Body, we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (v. 15). The crucial point here is that apart from our organic union with Christ, based on the grafted life, the Body of Christ has no existence; the Body exists and is held together only “in Christ,” in the organic union with Christ, not as an organization or society apart from Christ.

If we would live in the Body of Christ in actuality and practicality, we need to remain in the organic union with Christ. We also need to have our entire tripartite being

exercised: We need to present our bodies a living sacrifice (v. 1), to have our soul transformed by the renewing of our mind (v. 2), and to be burning in spirit (v. 11). From this we can realize that living in the organic union with Christ as members of the Body of Christ is not a passive, quiescent living; on the contrary, it is a vital living in the mingled spirit wherein we have our body presented, our soul transformed by the renewing of the mind, and our spirit burning. If we have such a living and exercise, then, in a way that is real and practical, we are living in the Body of Christ and functioning as members of the Body.

The Body of Christ in Romans 12 consummates in the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Just as the Body of Christ is an organism, so the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the Body is also an organism. We should not make the mistake of supposing that because the heavenly Jerusalem is called the holy city that it is some kind of physical entity with gates of pearl and a street of gold. The New Jerusalem is God’s ultimate organism, and our living in the New Jerusalem, or, more accurately, as the New Jerusalem, will be a living in the consummate organic union. The redeeming God will dwell in us as the tabernacle, and we will dwell in the redeeming God as the temple. This mutual dwelling—this coinherence—is the fulfillment of the Lord’s word in John 15:4—“Abide in Me and I in you.” This mutual indwelling is possible only in a divine-human organism produced by the union, mingling, and incorporation of the processed and consummated Triune God with His chosen and redeemed tripartite people. For eternity in and as the New Jerusalem, we will enjoy the marvelous reality of the Triune God abiding in us and our abiding in the Triune God. This eternal coinherence will actually be the eternal organic union.

Today the Body of Christ exists only in our organic union with Christ; to be outside this union is to be outside the Body actually, practically, and experientially. The principle is the same with the New Jerusalem. The holy city will never have an autonomous existence apart from the organic union with the redeeming God. As we continue to enjoy the tree of life and the water of the life, our organic union with God will be maintained. For eternity, we will have no existence apart from Him but will forever be dependent on Him, and He will maintain this organic union through the continuous dispensing of Himself into us as our life, our life supply, and our everything.

The Divine Dispensing

With the divine dispensing we have yet another connection between Romans and the New Jerusalem. The Body life in Romans 12 is produced and sustained by the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity in chapter eight, where

we have the dispensing of the Triune God as life into our tripartite being. “The spirit is life because of righteousness” (v. 10). With righteousness—Christ Himself (10:4)—as the foundation and base, our human spirit has been regenerated and as a result is not only living but is life itself (the divine life, *zoe*).

Our spirit has not only been regenerated and made living; it has become life. When we believed in Christ, He as the divine Spirit of life came into our spirit and mingled Himself with it; the two spirits thereby have become one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Now our spirit is not merely living but is life. (Recovery Version, Rom. 8:10, note 6)

This involves the dispensing of the Triune God (vv. 2-3, 9, 11) into our spirit, a dispensing that, because of righteousness, has caused our spirit to become life itself.

In His operation within us to continue and expand the divine dispensing, the Triune God seeks to dispense Himself into our mind, the leading part of our soul, and in this way to saturate our soul with the divine life, which is Himself. Verse 6 speaks of this: “The mind set on the spirit [the mingled spirit] is life and peace.” The mind not only receives life but, like the regenerated spirit, becomes life, being saturated and permeated with the divine life by means of the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. The divine dispensing imparts life first to our spirit, making our spirit life, and then spreads this life into our mind, causing our mind to become life.

According to verse 11, the divine dispensing of the Triune God as life affects even our physical bodies. If, as this verse reveals, we allow the Spirit of God to make His home (dwell) in us and saturate our entire tripartite being with the divine life, life will be imparted to our mortal bodies: “If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” Here we see the Triune God engaged in the blessed action of dispensing Himself into us as life.

In this verse we have (1) the entire Triune God—“the One who raised Jesus from the dead,” “Christ Jesus,” and “His Spirit who indwells you”; (2) the process required for His dispensing, as implied in the words *Jesus* (emphasizing incarnation), *Christ* (emphasizing crucifixion and resurrection), and *raised* (emphasizing resurrection); and

(3) His dispensing of Himself into the believers, as shown by the words *give life to your mortal bodies*, which indicate that the dispensing not only occurs at the center of our being but also reaches to the circumference, to our whole being. (Recovery Version, v. 11, note 2)

With the New Jerusalem we also have the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity as our life and our life supply. Consider Revelation 22:1-2:

He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month.

Here we see the throne of God the Father and of the Lamb, the Son as the Redeemer, and the Spirit of life signified by the river of water of life (cf. John 7:37-39). The throne in Revelation 22:1 is not only for administration but also for dispensing. In the river that proceeds out of the throne of the redeeming God the tree of life grows with the abundant supply of life. As the river flows down the golden street, which is a spiral, the entire city of New Jerusalem is watered and nourished. The constituents of the city—the many glorified sons of God—will thus not only live eternally in the organic union with the Triune God but will be supplied perpetually through the divine dispensing of the Triune God as life. The dispensing revealed in Romans 8 culminates in the dispensing unveiled in Revelation 22. The divine dispensing in the Body of Christ becomes the divine dispensing in the New Jerusalem.

The throne in Revelation 22:1 is not only for administration but also for dispensing. In the river that proceeds out of the throne of the redeeming God the tree of life grows with the abundant supply of life.

Sons of God

Both the Body of Christ in Romans and the New Jerusalem in Revelation are composed of sons of God. The central thought of the book of Romans is that God, in His complete salvation, is making sinners into sons, who are the members of the Body of Christ expressed as local churches. The sons in Romans 8 are the members of the Body in Romans 12. Without sons, there cannot be the Body, for the sons of God, not the children of God, are the members of the Body. The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit to what we are through regeneration—children of God (Rom. 8:16). Following their regeneration, all the children of God need to grow and develop into sons of God; this growth and development, as we have pointed out, requires salvation in life

with all the steps of God's organic salvation, including sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification. As the children of God experience sanctification, renewing, transformation, and conformation, they grow into mature sons of God and may then, in reality, live and function as vital members of the Body of Christ. God justifies sinners and dispenses His life into them in order to produce sons to be the members of the Body of Christ. In order for Christ to have the Body for His expression, the children of God must grow in the divine life to become sons of God, members of the Body of Christ.

What is revealed in Romans regarding the Body of Christ composed of the sons of God is consummated in the New Jerusalem, which, as a corporate person, the corporate God-man, is the aggregate and totality of the divine sonship composed of glorified sons. In the context of a chapter that unveils the New Jerusalem in a detailed way, Revelation 21:7 says, "He who overcomers will inherit these things, and I will be God to him, and he will be a son to me." If we compare Revelation 21 with Galatians 4, we will see that the sons of God not only dwell in the New Jerusalem but are components of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is not something objective apart from us, the sons of God, which we enter; rather, the New Jerusalem is something—a corporate person—that we are in the process of becoming. From Ephesians 1 we know that God, in eternity past, predestinated us unto sonship, and in Revelation 21 we see the consummation of God's predestination—the New Jerusalem as a living composition of the firstborn Son of God and the many sons of God. The sonship in Romans 8, along with that in Galatians 4, is for the New Jerusalem, God's ultimate, consummate corporate Son in God's economy.

Reigning in Life

Romans 5:12-21 shows us four reigning things—sin (v. 21), death (vv. 14, 17), grace (v. 21), and the believers (v. 17). Verse 17 says, "For if by the offense of the one death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." God's complete salvation (v. 10) is for us to reign in life through the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. The gift of righteousness is God's judicial redemption applied to us in a practical way, and grace in its abundance is God Himself as our all-sufficient supply (2 Cor. 12:9). Through grace and righteousness we reign in life, in the divine, uncreated, eternal life received in regeneration. This life is a spiritual, heavenly, kingly, and royal life; such a life enthrones us as kings to reign over all things. First, we ourselves are under the ruling of the divine life. Then in this life we will be able to reign as

kings, and we will have the key to everything in Romans 6 through 16.

According to the structure and content of Romans, the goal of reigning in life is the Body life. The issue of reigning in life by living under the ruling of the divine life is the real and practical Body life. Reigning in life is related to, and is a requirement of, every aspect of the Body life in Romans 12: being transformed by the renewing of the mind (v. 2); not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think but thinking so as to be sober-minded (v. 3); realizing that we who are many are one Body in Christ and that we are individually members one of another, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us (vv. 4-8); loving without hypocrisy and loving warmly in brother love (vv. 9-10); not being slothful in zeal but burning in spirit, serving the Lord (v. 11); rejoicing in hope, enduring in tribulation, and persevering in prayer (v. 12); rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (v. 15); not being wise in ourselves (v. 16); taking forethought for things honorable in the sight of all men (v. 17); and if possible, as far as it depends on us, living in peace with all men (v. 18). Furthermore, if we reign in life for the Body life, we will live a watchful life, casting off the works of darkness and putting on the weapons of light, walking becomingly "as in the day," and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ by living and expressing Him (13:12-14).

Ultimately, the issue of reigning in life is not only the Body life but the New Jerusalem. This is implied in 5:21: "In order that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." To reign in life unto "eternal life" (cf. John 4:14) is to reign in life unto the New Jerusalem, because the New Jerusalem is the totality of eternal life, the totality of the life of God. The ultimate issue of our reigning in life in the Body life will be the New Jerusalem as the consummation of the Body of Christ. If we are enlightened by the Lord regarding this, we will see that the goal of our reigning in life in the Body and for the Body life should be the goal of God's eternal economy—the New Jerusalem as God's corporate expression. The Lord God will shine upon the sons of God, the components of the New Jerusalem, and "they will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). Thus, the reigning in life in Romans 5 is linked, essentially and vitally, to the reigning in Revelation 22.

The Body of Christ, the Local Churches, and the New Jerusalem

In the book of Romans we see the Body of Christ expressed as the local churches and in the local churches, and in the book of Revelation we see the local churches, the golden lampstands, consummating in the

New Jerusalem, the unique, universal, eternal golden lampstand.

According to Romans 16 the Body life is lived out and expressed in the local churches: “the church which is in Cenchrea” (v. 1), “the churches of the Gentiles” (v. 4), “the church, which is in their house” (v. 5), “the churches of Christ” (v. 16), and “my host and host of the whole church” (v. 23). That the universal church (Matt. 16:18) is expressed in the local church (18:17) is a clear and consistent teaching in the New Testament.

The expression *local church* is not a name and should not be used as a name but as a designation of a fact—the New Testament practice of having one church in one city with one eldership (Acts 8:1; 13:1; 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:2). The Body of Christ is uniquely one universally, and the expression of the Body must be uniquely one locally. This was both the teaching and the practice of the apostles in the New Testament. God’s goal is to have the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem.

According to God’s own ordination and requirement, this goal cannot be reached apart from having local churches in keeping with the fixed principle of one city, one church. It is through the building up of the churches locally that the Lord will have the building up of the Body universally (1 Cor. 14:4-5, 12; Eph. 4:16).

In Revelation 22:16 the Lord Jesus says, “I Jesus have sent

My angel to testify to you these things for the churches.” To understand what is meant by *the churches*, we need to turn back to chapter one of Revelation. Verse 4 says, “John to the seven churches which are in Asia.” In verse 11 the Lord said to him, “What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” We should take note of the fact that the Lord, the Head of church, first spoke of “seven churches” and then named seven cities, identifying each church with the city in which it was located. This identification is strengthened by the opening of the Lord’s address to each of these seven churches. In 2:1 He says, “To the messenger of the church in Ephesus”; He then proceeds to follow this pattern in 2:8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14. At the end of each particular address, He mentions the churches: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The Lord, who prophesied, “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18), took the lead to make evident that this church, the universal church, is expressed in the

local churches, of which the seven churches in Revelation are representatives.

It remains to be seen that in Revelation the churches are golden lampstands. Revelation 1:12 says, “I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands.” In verse 20 the Lord Himself makes the connection between the golden lampstands and the local churches: “The seven lampstands are the seven churches.” Whereas in chapter one we have the local churches as many separate lampstands, in Revelation 21 we have the New Jerusalem as the unique golden lampstand. That the New Jerusalem is a golden lampstand is indicated by the fact that the city is a golden mountain (vv. 10, 18), upon which is a light shining in a lamp: “The glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb” (v. 23). God, who is the light (1 John 1:5), is shining in Christ, the Lamb, who is the lamp, and this lamp rests upon the top of a mountain of gold. This is the New Jerusalem as the unique golden lampstand in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. Thus, according

to Romans, the Body of Christ is expressed in the local churches, and according to Revelation, these local churches are golden lampstands that ultimately will consummate in the unique, universal lampstand—the New Jerusalem.

This article is entitled “The New Jerusalem in Light of the Book of Romans”; it could also bear the title “The

Book of Romans in Light of the New Jerusalem.” If we would have the proper understanding of the New Jerusalem as the ultimate goal of God’s economy, we need the revelation in Romans, and if we would have the full understanding of the truth in Romans, we need to see the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation (21:10-11). The New Jerusalem is the fulfillment of Romans, and Romans, the highest point of which is the Body of Christ, consummates in the New Jerusalem. Therefore, as believers in Christ, children of God, and students of the Word of God, we should see the New Jerusalem in light of Romans and understand Romans in light of the New Jerusalem. **AFC**

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