



The Upward Call

Volume 01-07

2007

For you know that we acted towards every one of you as a father does towards his own children, encouraging and cheering you, and imploring you to live lives worthy of fellowship with God who is inviting you to share His own Kingship and glory.

[1 Thessalonians 2.11-12 WNT]

The Upward Call

[A Periodical]

Volume 1

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that were issued in 2007.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF SCRIPTURE VERSIONS

The following list represents Scripture versions that may have been referenced in issues of *The Upward Call*.

Primary: versions referenced most frequently

ALT	Analytical-Literal Translation (2001)
ASV	American Standard Version (1901)
CV	Concordant Version (1926, 1983)
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1960, 2002)
REB	Rotherham's Emphasized Bible (1959, 1994)
WNT	Weymouth's New Testament in Modern Speech (1912)
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (1898)

Secondary: versions referenced less frequently, perhaps only once

BBE	Bible in Basic English (1965)
BTCB	Bullinger's The Companion Bible (1922)
CEV	Contemporary English Version
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
DNT	Darby New Translation (1899)
ESV	English Standard Version (2001)
GB	Geneva Bible (1599)
GW	God's Word
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HNV	Hebrew Names Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
JBP	Phillips' The New Testament in Modern English (1958)
JMT	James Moffatt Translation
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Bible (1917)
LITV	Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (1976, 2001)
MKJV	Modern King James Version (1962, 1998)
MNT	Murdock's New Testament
NIV	New International Version (1973, 1984)
NKJV	New King James Version (1979, 1999)
TCNT	Twentieth Century New Testament (1904)
TSS	The Sacred Scriptures (1981)
TT	Tyndale's Translation (1530)
WAET	Wuest's The New Testament—An Expanded Translation (1961)
WEB	Webster Bible (1833)

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0701

SEPTEMBER 7, 2007

NO OTHER FOUNDATION BUT CHRIST

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3.10-11 NASB)

In constructing any type of building, the most important part of the structure is the foundation, because the whole weight of the building must rest on it. The foundation is everything. If the foundation is not built properly, then the building will not withstand the many forces of nature that might come against it, such as wind, rain, temperature extremes, or violent shaking of the ground due to earthquakes. The type of soil or rock the foundation is set in, the depth of the foundation, and the materials used to construct the foundation determine its strength and the fate of the building. Foundations that are built in sand, are not dug very deep, or are constructed of inferior materials are most vulnerable to all the stresses placed on them. If the foundation is faulty, then the building will not stand. Ultimately, if not built properly and not made of the right materials, the whole building will collapse if the forces of nature shake or stress it sufficiently. Even the best-built foundations, however, are not built to last forever or to stand under every type of extreme environmental stress.

The good news is that God is building a spiritual house, a temple, which has a foundation that not only will stand the test of time but also will stand for all of eternity. It is an everlasting foundation, one without end, one that is a solid Rock.

There is only one foundation that can meet all these demands—it is none other than Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God. The spirit of God is building a spiritual house, a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling of God in spirit (Ephesians 2.21-22). Notice that this building is **in the Lord**, which refers to Christ Jesus our Lord. It is in Him and in Him alone that God is building a holy temple.

Consequently, Jesus is not only the foundation but the entire structure, for it is built of His character and nature, and because of His blood. The temple of God is **Christ all, and in all** (Colossians 3.11). Only that which is of Christ will go into the building of this temple; everything else will be burned up.

All that we do as the Lord's people must be done in Christ, through Christ, and for Christ. We must build upon Him, our solid Rock. However, we must build upon Him with the right materials. Anything that is of man that is placed upon this foundation will be burnt up in the spiritual fire of God's righteous and moral law at the judgment seat of God.

Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3.12-15 NASB)

Only gold, which represents the divine nature or character of God; silver, which represents the glorious redemption of our Lord; and precious stone, which represents the work of the Holy Spirit, will

stand the test of fire. Wood, which is man's fallen nature; hay, which is man's fading and fleeting glory of sin; and straw, which is man's dead works, will be burned up by God's fire of judgment. Only that which is of the life of Christ, that which is born out of the very heart of God will last.

Gold: Gold represents love! The dwelling of God in spirit is being built according to the divine nature of God, which is love, for **God is love** (1 John 4.8, 16). The love of God has been poured out in the hearts of the body of Christ through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5.5), so that the spiritual temple of God can build itself up in love (Ephesians 4.16). That which is built upon Christ, the Son of God's love, through the love of God, will never fail, for **love never fails** (1 Corinthians 13.8).

Silver: Silver represents the marvelous redemptive work of the blood! The dwelling of God has been purchased with the blood of the Lamb, the very blood of God, and brought into the new covenant. **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (Colossians 1.27). We conquer through the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12.11), and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all confessed sin (1 John 1.7).

Precious Stone: The precious stones represent the fruit of the Holy Spirit! The dwelling of God has been given an earnest of the spirit of God (Romans 5.5; Ephesians 1.13-14), so that all called out to the Lord may not only live by the spirit but also walk by the spirit (Galatians 5.22-25). The fruit is the very character of the Son of God formed in the conquerors of Christ who are being transformed from glory to glory. The precious stones are a treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 3.18; 4.7); the glory of Christ that one day will burst forth in the *out-resurrection* of the conquerors of Christ.

If you are truly of God's household, that is, of the family of God, then you are precious in the sight of God, and He is calling you to build on no other foundation but His Son, Jesus. But, you must build upon Christ with the proper materials. If you build with the materials of man that are represented by wood, hay, and straw, even if you are doing this in the name of Jesus, then at the judgment seat of Christ, all that you built will be burned up in the spiritual fire of God's judgment. That which is of man is of no value to God. Only that which is of the Son of God will endure the fire of God, which is God's divine law. All who believe in Jesus are saved, but if their works are like wood, hay, and straw, then they will lose everything at the judgment seat; **saved, yet so as through fire.**

Do not be fooled; many things today are being built in the name of Jesus, but they are merely wood, hay, and straw. They will be consumed at the great white throne of God in the day of judgment. The false prophets, the false apostles, and the many who call themselves pastors and preachers who are lovers of money and merely hirelings will be held accountable for their works of the flesh.

What are we to do in these last days before the coming of our beloved Lord Jesus? First, it is time to ensure that we are building on the only foundation that will last, and that is Christ the Rock. Second, we must build upon Christ with the materials that will last. We must build with the love of God, for we overwhelmingly conquer through Him (Jesus) who loves us (Romans 8.37). We must build with works of holiness and godliness, based on the redemptive power of the blood. We must build with the very character of the Lord Jesus, and this is only done as we walk by the spirit and bear the fruit of the spirit.

Are you doing all according to your own nature, the nature of the fleshly man? Are you building to your own glory and not to the glory of God? Are you building the works of man? If so, your vision of Christ is clouded, for you have been blinded by the god of this age. **It is time to repent and return to Jesus and, by the spirit of God, build with the materials of God.** If you do not, then you will be saved, yet so as through fire, and you will have no reward in that day. In this day of darkness, you need to see Jesus clearly. It is time to clear the foundation of all that is not of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

May the grace and love of God be with you!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0702

SEPTEMBER 14, 2007

A LIVING STONE

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 3.11 NASB)

Paul declared that there is no other foundation that can be laid, which is Jesus Christ, and we must build upon this foundation with that which is of the quality of gold, silver, and precious stones. However, we also must realize that Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews and a devout Pharisee of the nation of Israel (Philippians 3.5). Many of his brethren by blood refused to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. As such, many of his brethren continued to build upon the teaching of Moses and rejected the very One that fulfills all that Moses gave the sons of Israel through the Law of Mount Sinai. Even many among his brethren who did believe in Jesus as Messiah continued to follow the traditions of the fathers, even the animal sacrifices and worship in the temple. In other words, many had not fully converted to Christianity, but rather continued with a mixture of Judaism and Christianity. To release the Hebrew believers from Judaism and its religious ceremony, the Lord called forth the Roman army in 70 AD to destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

Today, some people believe that for the kingdom of God to come to this earth, the state of Israel that occupies land in the Middle East must build a temple in Jerusalem, reinstate the Levitical priesthood, and begin animal sacrifices that ended when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. I once believed this as well but have since repented of such a thought and teaching.

Unfortunately, many Christians believe that Israel of our day is the favored nation of God, and yet, they are a people in unbelief, in apostasy. As a nation, they continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah. When He walked this earth 2,000 years ago, Jesus passed judgment when He declared that **“the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”** (Matthew 21.43 KJV). For over 2,000 years, they have been a barren nation. Today, they are a nation bearing simply leaves but no fruit (Matthew 24.32). Even Jerusalem is no longer the desired place of the Lord. Jeremiah prophesied that the earthly Jerusalem will be broken like a potter’s vessel, which cannot be repaired; it will be buried in Topheth (*gehenna*) because there is no other place for burial (Jeremiah 19.11). Rebuilding the temple in the city of Jerusalem that generates much strife in the earth today is not going to bring forth the kingdom of God on earth. Why? Because it is building on a false foundation! The body of Jesus has been offered for the sin of the world once for all (Hebrews 10.10). There is no longer a need for sacrifice for sin, for Jesus shed His blood for all and has sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10.12-13), waiting for the dawn of the new day. There is no longer a need for the Levitical priesthood because Jesus is of the order of Melchizedek, the King-Priest of Righteousness and Peace (Hebrews 7.1-2), who is bringing forth a new priesthood of the same order.

There is only one foundation upon which to build and bring forth the kingdom of God, and that foundation is none other than God’s beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, let this one great truth sink deep into your heart and never allow it to be diluted or altered by those who seek to return to Judaism or any other form of religion.

Paul was not alone in regard to the one foundation, for Peter sounded a very similar theme.

To whom having approached [as to] a living stone [Christ], on the one hand having been rejected by people, on the other hand chosen [and] precious before God, and you yourselves, as living stones, are being built up [into] a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this reason, it is contained in the Scripture, “Look! I lay in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen, precious [Christ], and the one believing on Him shall by no means be put to shame [or, be disappointed].” (1 Peter 2.4-6 ALT)

Peter quoted Isaiah the prophet.

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.” (Isaiah 28.16 NASB)

Jesus is not only the foundation, but He is also the very cornerstone, which refers to a great stone that holds the building together. However, there is even more, as revealed through Zechariah the prophet.

Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. (Zechariah 4.7 KJV)

Jesus is the headstone, which also is referred to as the capstone or the top stone. This is a reference to the building of the great pyramids; the whole structure meets and culminates in the headstone.

Now, what do the foundation, the cornerstone and the headstone signify? They signify that Jesus is the entire structure, and He alone holds it together. He alone is the kingdom of God. Simply, you cannot remove Jesus from the building work of God and expect the kingdom of God to come to this earth.

The Jews rejected the stone, which became the cornerstone (Matthew 21.42; Mark 12.10; Luke 20.17; Acts 4.11), a rock over which they stumbled (Isaiah 8.14; 1 Peter 2.7-8). They failed to see that the very stone upon which the kingdom of God is built is the one they rejected—Jesus, the Son of God!

The point that I want to impress on your heart is that, according to Peter, Jesus is a living stone, and the building work of God is taking place in hearts of people, not in man-made structures. The one foundation of Jesus Christ is to be laid in **your heart**. This is where the building of the kingdom of God is occurring in our day. Peter tells us to sanctify or to consecrate Christ as Lord in our heart.

But sanctify [consecrate] Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.... (1 Peter 3.15 NASB [WNT])

Jesus must become the Lord of your heart, which means that He must reign supreme over your heart. If you have given your heart over to Jesus, setting Him apart as Lord, then you are on your way to entering the kingdom of God in the eon to come.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20.6 NASB)

THE UPWARD CALL

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but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
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IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0703

SEPTEMBER 21, 2007

YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Corinthians 3.16-17 NASB)

God's purpose is to sum up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and on the earth (Ephesians 1.10), so that one day God may be *All* in all (1 Corinthians 15.28). However, to accomplish this purpose, Christ, the Son of God, must be all, and in all (Colossians 3.11). But how will He do this? Where will He begin? He will begin by raising up a people that will be conformed to His image.

Paul the apostle wrote a letter to the saints in Corinth that were operating according to the gifts of the spirit, and yet, they were mere babes in Christ. They were fleshly like babies, and as such, they had to be fed baby food and not meat that is reserved for adults. He gave them milk to drink, not solid food, for they were unable to digest it (1 Corinthians 3.1-3).

Of course, Paul was not referring to the physical food that we take into our bodies; rather, he was referring to spiritual food, the meat of the word of God. They were acting like children as they divided over men. There was jealousy and strife among them (1 Corinthians 3.3-4). To lead them away from walking like mere men, Paul directed them to Christ, the only foundation and the only answer to all division.

**For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 3.11 NASB)**

Oh, if only God's people would get this one thought indelibly imprinted on their hearts and minds, then there would be a true transformation in the life and testimony of the church of God. We can say the name of Jesus over and over again and do many things in His name; but if He is not the foundation of all that we say and do, then it is merely words and works that will be burned up in the spiritual fire of God's judgment. As a believer, if you conquer through Him who loves you, then you will not have a part in the second death; this is a promise based on the word of God. However, those who do not conquer will be saved, that is, put on immortality; but their works will be burned up in the lake of fire. They will have a part in the second death; saved, yet so as through fire.

Now, it is in this context that Paul introduces us to a most profound truth. Those who are begotten of God, having received the life of Christ by grace through faith, are a temple of God.

During the ancient days of Israel (according to the flesh), God dwelt among them in a tabernacle or temple, a physical structure with walls and a great veil of separation and many things that were symbolic of Christ and His work of redemption. However, God no longer dwells in a building, for He has chosen to take up residence in a people.

It is amazing how many of the Lord's people still think that God dwells in a building that they call a "church," which, to them, is a place to meet God. They have altars to which they plead for people to come to pray and meet God. Others have little boxes that they believe are occupied by Christ. I am

sure that there are many examples of how some of the Lord's people view this; but let it be known that God does not dwell in these places.

Paul declares: **Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

Today, God dwells in a people that have been predestined to be in Christ in this age [eon]. Do you realize that if you believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God dwells in you? You are now the temple of God. Where is the foundation that has been laid, which is Jesus Christ? It is in you who believe. It is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. Do you not know that you have died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God, who is **your** life, and when Christ is revealed, **you** also will be revealed with Him in glory (see Colossians 3.1-4)? How is this possible? Because you are a temple of God!

Anyone who attempts to destroy this temple of God will have to answer to God, for we who have believed on Jesus are a holy temple, a set-apart temple for the living God. We no longer belong to ourselves; we belong to God. This is how God views all who are **in** Christ.

But there is more; for all who are in Christ are being built together into a much greater temple.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2.19-22 NASB)

We are to be built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (or, in some translations, **in spirit**). We are not disconnected from one another but are corporately connected with every single believer on the face of the earth today and with all who are asleep in Jesus, who are awaiting the resurrection from among the dead.

God is not into building great edifices of brick and mortar or any other materials from the soil of this earth. He is not interested in great man-made structures and institutions with His name on them. No; He is interested in building the life of His Son in spiritual, spirit-led people that He, by His spirit, is building together. Do not think that you are an island unto yourself that exists apart from other brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all joined together under one Head, which is Christ (Ephesians 1.22). As Paul wrote: **We are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ** (Ephesians 4.15).

There is much that could be said and needs to be said in this day about the corporate temple of God, which is also the body of Christ; but there is one point that I want to impress upon your heart. If **you** have been given the faith of the Son to believe in Jesus, then you are **to grow** (mature) into a temple of God. You are **to become** like a microcosm, a miniature version, if you will, of the corporate temple of all the believers that are being built together *in* spirit.

Now, here is the most amazing truth, and I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened to it by the Holy Spirit. The new Jerusalem, the city-bride of the Lamb, one day, will come down out of heaven, having the glory of God (Revelation 21.10-11). This city-bride is the temple of God made up of the many microcosms of the temple of God. God is not going to dwell in a structure of brick and mortar or in a structure of golden streets. He is going to dwell forever in a people that have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Beloved in Christ, dwell on this truth until it breaks forth as glory in your heart! This is your destiny!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0704

SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE

For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD. (Psalm 33.4-5 NASB)

Recently, throughout our country, there were protest marches against what some see as an injustice. Many were marching and demanding **equal justice now**. I do not know all the facts surrounding this case and offer no judgment of this outcry. However, it does seem that equal justice in our day is more about what a person *perceives, feels* or *thinks* is equal justice (man's relative justice) and less about God's absolute justice. It should not surprise us that in today's world of relativism, humanism, secularism, and even spiritualism, in which man is placed at the center of the universe, most people do not truly want equal justice for all; they want justice for themselves or their cause, whatever it might be. Consequently, people see things differently, even when faced with the same set of facts. Simply, they see it through their prism, based on a variety of factors such as one's culture, religion, race, sex, world view or life experiences, to name a few.

It is very interesting that during the recent marches, I never heard a cry for righteousness. In fact, in our modern day of enlightenment, the word *righteousness* is almost never used, except perhaps by some Christians. In our everyday language, especially what comes through the news media, *righteousness* is a forgotten word, and yet, righteousness is the only way to true and equal justice. We could say that righteousness is what defines justice. It is the moral foundation for justice.

Although righteousness is not talked about nor demanded much in our day, it appears that deep within the heart of man there is a longing for true righteousness and justice, and a knowing that only God can satisfy this longing. And yet, many reject God's way, preferring to do what is right in their own eyes and not in the eyes of God.

What is *righteousness*? According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* by W.E. Vine, *righteousness* is "the character or quality of being right or just; it was formerly spelled '*rightwiseness*,' which clearly expresses the meaning." According to Jesus' words, it refers to whatever conforms to the revealed will of God, whatever has been appointed by God to be obeyed by man, and the sum total of the requirements of God and man's duty to God. An old version (1956) of *Webster's Dictionary* defines *righteousness* as "moral integrity." We could say that *righteousness* is the morally right way to think or act in accord with God's character, will, and law.

Of course, just as the meaning of justice can be perverted by man, so can the meaning of righteousness. But we should not dwell on this, for of what value is relative justice and righteousness based on man's biases? What matters is absolute justice and righteousness that comes from only one source, and that is God, who shows no bias or partiality (e.g., Deuteronomy 10.17; 2 Chronicles 19.7; Job 34.19; Acts 10.34; Romans 2.11; Galatians 2.6).

There is good news to report for all who seriously desire true justice and righteousness. A new day is coming when all the injustice and unrighteousness of this fallen world will be judged, and a kingdom of

absolute righteousness, justice, peace and lovingkindness will overtake all the kingdoms (nations) of the earth. A marvelous, wonderful change is coming to this world.

Soon a mighty declaration will go forth as great voices in heaven declare: **“The kingdoms of the world did become those of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign to the ages of the ages!”** (Revelation 11.15 YLT).

The kingdoms (nations) of this world are about to be overtaken by a new kingdom, **the Kingdom of Righteousness**. No longer will this world be divided by many kingdoms with many views. No longer will lawlessness be accepted or excused. No longer will injustice and unrighteousness rule the day. The day is coming when there will be one kingdom and one king. This day is when **the reign of the heavens** comes to this earth. It is **the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Heavens** that is coming to this earth, for the King of kings and the Lord of lords is coming, and His name is **JESUS**. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is coming to reign and rule over this earth.

Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns; indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.” Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all it contains; let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness. (Psalm 96.10-13 NASB)

With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout joyfully before the King, the LORD. Let the sea roar and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98.6-9 NASB)

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You. How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all the day, and by Your righteousness they are exalted. (Psalm 89.14-16 NASB)

Today, the nations of the world think they are better off without God ruling in the affairs of men, but it is only when the Lord establishes His throne of righteousness and justice on this earth that mankind will come into true joy and gladness. There will no longer be a need for marches to protest injustice, for the Lord will judge with equity and in His faithfulness. Righteousness and justice will bring peace on earth, and the earth will be full of the lovingkindness of the Lord; something that man has not known since Adam brought death into his race.

But mankind will not be alone in knowing joy and gladness, for all creation will come into it as well. Can you imagine what it will be like when creation itself is set free to rejoice? Today, people worry about global warming, but in that day there will be no more worry, for mankind and creation will live in harmony. The trees will sing. You might wonder how the trees sing for joy, the mountains sing together and the rivers clap their hands. Interestingly, I recently read an article about sand dunes that sing. Scientists are just now unraveling this mystery and discovering that part of it has to do with the wind blowing over the dunes. In the day of the Lord, all creation will sing a harmonious tune as the spirit of God, the wind, blows across the earth. The spirit blowing through the trees and among the mountains will create a beautiful, joyous sound.

Beloved, this is only a taste of what the righteousness, justice, peace and lovingkindness of the Lord will bring to this earth. Our King loves righteousness and justice. May the cry of your heart be for the King to come soon to establish His throne of righteousness and justice upon this earth!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0705

SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

FLEE FROM THESE THINGS

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Timothy 6.10-11 NASB)

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6.33 NASB)

I have written on the one foundation, which is Jesus Christ, and that all who are of the household (family) of God are a temple of God, being built together into a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling of God *in* spirit. Lord willing, through other issues of *The Upward Call*, I will add to this glorious destiny of the body of Christ. However, this issue is presented as a contrast to the building work of the Holy Spirit. Or, another way of stating this is that the following are examples of the building work of man according to the flesh and not the spirit of God. These things will be burned up in the spiritual fire of God at the great white throne judgment. These are the types of things from which we must flee, for they stand opposed to the Kingdom of God.

Recently, I turned on the radio to listen to a local "Christian" station. There was a time when I would have been shocked by what I heard being said and done in the name of Jesus, but I am no longer shocked, just saddened. One who called himself an apostle and a prophet was on the air. He was not preaching or teaching. Instead, he asked people to call him with an offering, and in return, he would give them a prophecy. While he waited for callers, mysterious, eerie-sounding music played in the background. When someone did call, he or the caller would announce how much they were going to send him. With this promise to send him money, he would offer a personal prophecy over their life. On this occasion, a woman called in and stated that she felt the Lord wanted her to send him \$70. Of course, this pleased the so-called "apostle," so he began to give her a prophecy. He stated that he saw a niece or nephew that was in trouble with drugs and that she was helping the person. The woman responded that she was not involved with a niece or nephew in this way. He then asked her if she had nieces and nephews, to which she replied, "Yes." He then asked if she were close to these ones, to which she indicated that she was not. Then the "prophet" said that he saw something "like" nieces or nephews, and when he realized that his prophecy was going nowhere, he concluded by telling her that she was going to help "someone" by the laying on of hands. Can you imagine that this woman paid \$70 for this? As his air time ended, a woman called in with a \$300 pledge, which brought forth a gleeful response from the so-called "apostle" who made a pretty good haul for being on the air for fifteen minutes. He concluded his time by telling the listeners that they could call any time, and *if* they wanted to sponsor him, *then* they (presumably the ones he has answering the phone) would get *the* apostle on the phone. It was made very clear that anyone calling would only get to speak to him if they had money to give to him.

This reminds me of the story of Simon in the book of Acts. When he saw the apostles bestowing the Holy Spirit on others through the laying on of hands, Simon offered them money to receive the authority to do likewise. Peter rebuked the man in the most severe way: **"For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity"** (see Acts 8.14-24).

The next day, I turned on the television to watch the morning worship service of a local church. Again, I should have been shocked, but I was not; I was more appalled this time. From the pulpit of this local church, one of the leaders announced who was co-sponsoring their service that day, that is, paying for the airtime. The co-sponsor was a local law firm that advertises quite a bit on television. The leader even gave out the phone numbers for this company if anyone wanted legal help. By the way, this law firm specializes in suing others in man's court. I have no doubt what Paul the apostle would say to such a thing.

Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? (1 Corinthians 6.1-6 NASB)

This church is very much like the Corinthians that were babes that needed to grow up to be able to spiritually appraise all things (see 1 Corinthians 2.14-3.3). Instead, they are acting like the natural man of the world and not the spiritual man; they are still fleshly. In case you have missed the point, let me state it clearly. This local church sought the world to support it, which willingly obliged by paying a price. This is the way of the world and not the way of God, being led by the Holy Spirit.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2.15-17 NASB)

As if this were not enough, in this same period, we received an email from a missionary friend in Papua New Guinea.

"I'd also like to ask prayer regarding a cult that has arisen among a province in PNG, and includes members of the language group that some friends of mine translated with. A high leader in the area church denomination (which is the primary denomination for much of the province) has started a "**cargo cult.**" This is a term we use when someone is asking others to give them money so they can appease the ancestors and entreat them to send "cargo" to those who are living here on earth. This man and others with him are telling everyone that if they give money, food, etc. to the cause, that in early November their ancestors will return to earth and bring lots of things for them. Basically, life as they know it will change forever. No one in the cult is sending their kids to school because what's the use if everything will change after November? He has gathered 23,000 followers around him! It's sad enough when people are deceived in this way, but even more tragic when Satan is using a church leader to do it. Please pray that God will convict him and change his heart, and that others' eyes will be opened to the truth."

Dear beloved in Christ, the above examples are merely a drop in the ocean of the many worldly and even evil and sinful things that are being done in the name of the Lord. I am sure that you could add to these examples. Don't fall prey to such evil. Flee from such things. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0706

OCTOBER 2, 2007

THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is safe to state that, in our day, Christendom has no lack of people warning of impending doom and gloom coming on the earth, whether it is global warming, terrorist attacks, economic collapse, conspiracy theories that seem to run the full gamut of fear, or the mother of all doom, Armageddon. Unfortunately, some of the fear is stoked by Christians who seem to be totally disconnected from the heart of God for the nations of this earth. They make it seem as if God, who loves the world [John 3.16], does not care about the inhabitants of the world and that all He cares about is the church. After all, according to this thinking, most of mankind has rejected His Son, so God the Father is angry with the world and is determined to take out His anger, as if He is a frustrated god. Many have created a god who is set on destroying or annihilating this world because he is an angry and vengeful god. In my estimation, this is a god in the image of man.

Don't take me wrong: our God must judge this world, and perhaps some of what people see coming will happen; but let us not lose sight of what Scripture reveals about our God.

God is love (1 John 4.8, 16), and He loves this old world created through His Son and loves every person that He has breathed the spirit of life into since Adam was first formed from the soil of the earth. God was in Christ **conciliating the world to Himself**, not reckoning their offenses to them (2 Corinthians 5.19 CV). Through Christ, **God is reconciling all in the heavens and on the earth to Himself**, making peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1.20). God's purpose of the eons is **to save all mankind** because He is **the Savior of all mankind**, especially of believers (1 Timothy 4.10); it does not state *exclusively of believers*, as if to exclude the rest of mankind. God **works all things after the counsel of His will** (Ephesians 1.11 NASB), and He **will have** all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2.4 KJV),

This is only a drop in the bucket of what Scripture reveals to us about the heart of God for mankind. God has purposed through our beloved Lord Jesus to save all mankind, not to save a few and destroy the rest. The judgment of God is for correction and purging, **not** for eternal destruction or eternal torture in a place many call *hell*. Surely, judgment will lead to a second type of death (of works) for many, but even death will be abolished at the consummation of the eons (1 Corinthians 15.26). God has a glorious purpose in His judgments.

Consider what Isaiah tells us of the judgments of God.

The way of the righteous is smooth; O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level. Indeed, while following the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You eagerly; Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls. At night my soul longs for You, indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently; for when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Though the wicked is shown favor, he does not learn righteousness; he deals unjustly in the land of uprightness, and does not perceive the majesty of the LORD. (Isaiah 26.7-10 NASB)

First, Isaiah speaks from the perspective of one seeking the righteousness of God. But take note that the righteous know the way of His judgments, which means that even the righteous must experience

the judgments of the Lord. The righteous have been trained through the Lord's judgments and they have seen the mercy and love of God that leads them to eagerly long and seek for the Lord. They eagerly wait for the coming of the Lord.

Second, the righteous know that the only way to truly learn the righteousness of God is through His judgments, especially judgments that involve the earth itself. Through Haggai the prophet, as well as the writer of the Hebrews epistle, we are told that the Lord will shake the heavens and the earth (Haggai 2.6-9, 21-22; Hebrews 12.26-28) in order to usher in ***the kingdom of the heavens, the kingdom of Christ***, upon the earth (Revelation 11.15). Truly, when the earth is shaken, so are all the kingdoms (or, nations) of the earth, that is, the habitable part of the earth that has been organized by man. There is no doubt that the judgments of God upon the earth can be most severe upon the wicked as they are brought into torment that leads to death. When God judges in such a fashion, Scripture calls it the indignation or the wrath of God, even the fierce wrath. But there is a purpose in it, and it is not to annihilate or to torture people endlessly and without chance of redemption.

Third, it is through these shakings that the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. The Hebrew word for learn is *lâmad*, which, according to Strong's Concordance, means "to goad, that is, (by implication) to teach (the rod being an Oriental incentive)." A *goad* is a sharp-pointed stick used in driving oxen. Consequently, in its general sense, it means to drive or prod into action or to urge on. This is the purpose of the Lord's judgments. It is to prod the unrighteous to learn righteousness. It is like training up a child with the rod. After all, **he who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently** (Proverbs 13.24 NASB). Does the Lord not love all mankind and desire many sons to come unto glory? He most assuredly does!

Notice that Isaiah does not state that the inhabitants of the world will be eternally destroyed or even tortured because they are unrighteous. Our Lord knows the condition of the inhabitants of the world.

As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Romans 3.10-12 KJV)

This is a mighty powerful indictment of all mankind. There is none righteous. Let us all be convinced that we are included in this indictment, and we all need to learn righteousness because it is not in the fiber of man that has come from the loins of Adam. We have inherited death from Adam, and sin reigns in death, and sin is lawlessness, and lawlessness is unrighteousness.

Fourth, take note that the Lord shows favor to even the wicked, but with the favor of the Lord upon them, the wicked still do not learn righteousness nor perceive the majesty of the Lord. In other words, favor alone does not change a heart; it takes the judgment of the Lord to teach the inhabitants of the world His righteousness.

The good news is that the Lord desires all mankind to learn righteousness, and He has a plan to bring it to completion. When the judgments of the Lord go forth, they go forth with a purpose that is glorious. Can you think of anything greater than to see the inhabitants of this earth finally learn what true righteousness is and to begin to live in accord with this righteousness? It is hardly necessary to be reminded that we live in a day of unrighteousness. Praise God, the righteousness of God is coming.

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. (Isaiah 61.11 NASB)

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0707

OCTOBER 5, 2007

YOUR SALVATION AMONG ALL NATIONS

God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him. (Psalm 67.1-7 NASB)

Psalm 67 was written as a song that is to be accompanied with stringed instruments. It is divided into three parts as designated by the word *Selah*, which means a pause or suspension of the music, and we should approach this Psalm in the same manner. We should not ignore the Selahs; but rather, we should stop and meditate on what leads up to each Selah.

The first division begins with a heart cry from a people who know the heart of God; they do not just know of God, they know His heart, at least in some capacity. The phrase ***cause His face to shine upon us*** appears eight times in the Old Testament (Numbers 6.25; Psalm 31.16; 67.1; 80.3, 7, 19; 119.135; Daniel 9.17) and is alluded to once in the New Testament by Paul, the apostle of the nations (2 Corinthians 4.6).

The first mention of this phrase is a blessing spoken by the Lord to Moses.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, ‘Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.’ “So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them.” (Numbers 6.22-27 NASB)

The sons of Israel were commanded to invoke the name of the Lord in order to receive His blessing. But notice that the blessing involves the Lord shining His face and lifting up His countenance on them. When Moses went up on the mountain to receive the law of God, his face literally shone with glory from being in the presence of the Lord; however, the glory faded. But, according to Paul, those who are of the new covenant ***in Christ*** receive a glory that cannot fade. **For if the ministry of condemnation (Moses) has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness (Christ) abound in glory. For if that which fades away was *with* glory, much more that which remains is *in* glory** (see 2 Corinthians 3.7-11).

Those of us who believe on Jesus in this day are to behold the face of Jesus, for **God has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ** (2 Corinthians 4.6). As we behold Him, it is as if we are looking in a mirror and His reflection is shining upon us and we are transformed into His image.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3.18 NASB)

As we behold our beloved Lord Jesus, we are being transformed from glory to glory. **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (Colossians 1.27). We have this treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4.7) that one day will burst forth into glorified bodies in the image of the One from heaven. We will bear the image of the Celestial One (see 1 Corinthians 15.42-49; Philippians 3.21). **Selah!**

The second division of this Psalm reveals that there is a purpose to the heart cry of the Lord's people that are being transformed from glory to glory. It is not for themselves that they desire blessing and the countenance of the Lord. Their hearts are for the nations, that they will know the salvation of the Lord and will be glad and sing for joy. There is no selfishness or self-centeredness in their cry. They desire all the peoples to praise the Lord. After all, they are the ones who will judge (set things right) the world and will teach the nations righteousness in the oncoming eon [age] when Christ takes the scepter of the kingdom of this earth. **Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?** (1 Corinthians 6.2 NASB).

I believe it is a very sad commentary on our day when I hear Christians talk as if the nations [called by most *the lost*] are going to be cast into an eternal oven they call *hell* to be roasted and toasted forever and ever and ever, as if God has no intention of saving or restoring them. It is almost with glee that some speak of the judgment of God upon the nations. But this misrepresents the heart of God. The hearts of the ones knowing the blessing and countenance of the Lord also know the Lord's heart for all the nations and that a glorious day is coming when He will judge them not for eternal destruction but in order to guide them unto righteousness (see Isaiah 26.9), so that they too will know the joy of the Lord and sing with gladness. The judgment of God is a good thing, no matter how severe it might appear. Only good can come from the judging heart of God.

Do you have this heart for all the nations? Do you have a heart that desires the way of the Lord to be known on the earth and His salvation among the nations? Do you have a heart that desires to see all the nations guided by the righteousness of God? If your answer is yes, then you have a heart that is in tune with the heart of the Savior of all mankind who will have all mankind [people] to be saved (1 Timothy 2.4; 4.10).

Oh, let us long to see the nations be glad and sing for joy. It has been a long time since this earth has seen the nations rejoice, but the day will come at the appointed time, all to the glory of God. **Selah!**

Finally, the third division speaks of the desired result of salvation being made known among the nations and the peoples being guided in uprightness; it is so that they too will praise God and see the blessing that He has bestowed on them. How will they see the blessing of God? They will see it in the produce of the earth. In other words, the earth will be fruitful as it is brought into harmony when the sons of God, the sons of glory, are manifested. **For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God** (Romans 8.19 NASB).

When the peoples of the nations see the earth flourishing, they will proclaim that God is blessing them as well. In other words, the nations will finally see and know that God's way is the right way and the only way to true blessing, gladness and joy. In that day, all the ends of the earth will finally fear God in fulfillment of the eonian gospel: **"Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters"** (Revelation 14.7 NASB).

Meditate on Psalms 96, 98 and 100, and may your heart burst with joy over the coming of the Lord's salvation among the nations. **Selah!**

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0708

OCTOBER 9, 2007

HE SHALL MAKE FULL RESTITUTION

“If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution.” (Exodus 22.14 NASB)

Recently, an article appeared in our local newspaper that was entitled **“Webb panel looks at toll of incarceration.”** [1] Senator Jim Webb from Virginia is asking the U.S. Congress to examine the high incarceration (imprisonment) rate in the United States. The article cites statistics from a Joint Economic Committee. Here are a few:

The U.S. has the highest reported incarceration rate in the world, with 750 inmates per 100,000 people, compared with a world average rate of 166 per 100,000 people.

Although crime rates have fallen since 1990, the rate of imprisonment has continued to increase.

States spent \$2 billion to build prisons in 2006. Nationally the combined expenditure for law-enforcement and corrections exceeds \$200 billion annually.

Much of the growth in prison population is due to changing policy, not increased crime, and drug-policy changes have had the greatest impact on criminal-justice policy.

These statistics are staggering and almost beyond belief for a nation in which 90% of the people say they believe in God and that has the highest percentage in the world of ones who call themselves Christians. When one adds to this the fact that our nation was founded by men, many of whom were professed Christians, the response should be a cry for answers: How did we get to this place? What has happened? What is the solution? Senator Webb should at least be commended for raising the issue. But one wonders if the leaders of our day have the wisdom to resolve the matter, especially if they continue to reject God’s law as the absolute answer to dealing with mankind’s lawlessness. Man’s wisdom is foolishness, but God’s wisdom is a winner every time.

Reading this news article reminded me of a book that I read recently entitled *God’s Law on Restitution* by Dr. Stephen E. Jones. [2] If you are interested in a history of our modern prisons and God’s solution, then I recommend that you read this book. In his book, Dr. Jones describes how, under our current system, everyone loses, not only the so-called “criminal” but all of society.

Footnotes:

[1] *Webb panel looks at toll of incarceration*, by Peter Hardin, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Richmond, VA, October 5, 2007.

[2] *God’s Law on Restitution*, by Dr. Stephen Jones, God’s Kingdom Ministries, 6201 University Avenue, NE, Fridley, MN 55432

Here are a few quotes from this book:

“No matter how we build the prison cells, we have not solved the most crucial problem—**Justice**. Instead of a single victim of the crime, we now have three: the original victim, the taxpayer, and the criminal himself. Is there any answer to this horrible situation?”

“It may be hard to believe, but the Bible has the answer. God’s justice restores all losses to the victim of the crime without making the taxpayers liable, and the thief is restored to a productive position of full citizenship with justice and forgiveness to all.”

“In a nutshell, it is a principle of Bible Law that *justice has not been done until full restitution has been made to all the victims of injustice*. In other words, the original lawful order must be restored, rather than creating new injustices to try to balance or patch up the old ones. Whenever the nature of the crime is such that restitution is impossible, or when the thief refuses to make restitution to restore the lawful order, the penalty is death. And finally, the thief must take full responsibility for his actions and is the only one liable for his crime.”

“There is only one true solution. As a nation we must repent of our own way and turn to God’s perfect Law. We must stop teaching that God’s Law is somehow authored by a cruel or unjust God (or Satan). We must search the Scriptures to see what God really has to say about property crime and how to resolve it as a nation. As Bible believers, let us work toward that end.”

God’s law on restitution for property crimes is found in the books of Exodus and Leviticus (e.g., Exodus 21.33-34; 22.3; Leviticus 5.16). The purpose of God’s law is to bring about restitution, which means “compensation” or “amend.” It is not about punishment but about restoration, that is, restoring the loss to the person who was harmed by another, bringing about forgiveness between all parties, and rehabilitating or restoring the thief. Is forgiveness Biblical? Absolutely!

“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matthew 6.14-15 NASB)

Love your enemies is the command (law) of the Lord (Matthew 5.44). How can one love an enemy unless there is forgiveness?

In our day, it is very common to hear families of ones who have suffered loss at the hands of another cry out: “I hope he rots in hell”; or, “I hope he is locked up and the key is thrown away.” This is not the heart of restitution or of forgiveness; it is the heart of bitterness and anger that demands justice through punishment. There is no concern in such a response to see the matter settled to the benefit of all, including the one who caused the hurt in the first place.

Just consider how much would be accomplished if a thief were required to pay back in full or replace whatever it was that was stolen. Often thieves do not have the money to repay the loss, but under the law of restitution, the thief is required to make full restitution by working until the full debt is paid. In some cases, the thief may be required to pay off the debt plus extra, such as 20% more. Jesus reinforced restitution in the parable of the wicked slave.

Then having called him near, his lord said to him, Wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt, since you begged me. Ought you not also to have mercy on your fellow slave, as I also had mercy? And being angry, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors until he pay back all that debt to him. So also My heavenly Father will do to you unless each of you from your hearts forgive his brother their deviations. (Matthew 18.32-35 LITV; also see Matthew 5.26)

The Lord Jesus has forgiven us all our debts, and we must learn, both individually and as a society, to forgive one another. How often are we to forgive? **Seventy times seven!** (Matthew 18.22).

THE UPWARD CALL

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but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0709

OCTOBER 12, 2007

MADE LOWER THAN ELOHIM

David looked up to the heavens and saw the mighty work of God in the moon and the stars that He ordained, and he was compelled to write a psalm. As he contemplated the awesomeness of the heavens above, David began to meditate on mankind and how God took this being we collectively call *man*, formed from the soil of the earth, and gave him dominion over the works of His hands.

What is man that You remember him? And the son of man that You visit him? Yet You have made him a little less than Elohim, and have crowned him with esteem and splendour. You made him rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, passing through the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8.4-8 The Scriptures '98+)

In answer to his two questions regarding man, David declared that God has made man less than or lower than God. In the Hebrew, the word translated as *God* in many English versions is actually the word *Elohim*. It is the same word that is used in Genesis 1 in reference to the restoration of the earth in six days. On the sixth day, man was formed from the soil of the earth.

And Elohim said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth and over all the creeping creatures that creep on the earth." (Genesis 1.26 The Scriptures '98+)

The explanatory notes of *The Scriptures* by the Institute for Scripture Research (ISR 2003) state: The word "*EI*" is a very ancient Semitic term. Among Semitic languages it is one of the most used terms for greatness, strength or deity. In Hebrew religious usage it does not denote a proper name but is used as a title. Used for the Creator's superiority over all other as a generic term in Daniel 11:36 "...*the EI of elahin...*" *EI, Eloah, Elohim* is used to refer to the Creator, but also applied to rulers, messengers and persons. *Elohim* is the plural of *Eloah*, meaning rulers, messengers.

Although *Elohim* can be used to refer to others such as rulers, judges or messengers (angels or men), it is apparent that David meant *Elohim the Creator*, as declared by Moses in the book of beginnings, Genesis. Notice the connection between Genesis 1.26 and Psalm 8.6: **Let them rule over**, and **You made him (man) rule over the works of Your hands**. Some commentators call this the *dominion mandate*; that is, man was given dominion over the earth.

There is something tremendous in these verses. *First*, *Elohim* made man to be perfected into His image and likeness. Do you realize how tremendous this is? No wonder David marveled as he contemplated the heavens. He saw the magnificence of God's creation and then looked at himself and wondered how it could be. How could *Elohim* take soil from the earth and form man to become His image and likeness and then give him dominion over the earth? *Second*, *Elohim* made man to be a little lower or less than God. One translation declares: **Thou has made him little less than divine** (Psalm 8.5 James Moffatt Translation). In other words, man was not made to be God but to be less

than God, and yet, to possess a likeness to the Creator. The Hebrew words translated *image* and *likeness* refer to *resemblance*. Man is to resemble *Elohim*.

Now, the writer of the Hebrews epistle, whom I believe to be Paul, was led to quote Psalm 8; but the word *Elohim* was changed to *messengers* or *angels* (in most translations), which comes from the Greek word *aggelos*.

But somewhere one has witnessed, saying, “What is man that You remember him, or the son of man that You look after him? “You have made him a little lower than the messengers. ¹ You have crowned him with esteem and respect, and set him over the works of Your hands. “You have put all in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left none that is not subjected to him. But now we do not yet see all subjected to him. (Hebrews 2.6-8 The Scriptures '98+) Footnote: ¹ According to the Greek text. However, this is quoted from Ps. 8:5 which reads *Elohim*, which makes more sense.]

Notice the footnote in this particular translation and how the editors question why it does not read *Elohim*. Perhaps the word *Elohim* does make more sense. After all, man was made to become the likeness and image of *Elohim*. Normally, in translating the sacred text, Hebrew sets the meaning of the Greek words used in the New Testament, especially when the Hebrew text is quoted in the Greek text. The most likely reason for using the word *angels* is due to the seven references to angels in the opening chapters of Hebrews (1.4, 5, 6, 7, 13; 2.2, 5). Perhaps, in translating from the Hebrew to the Greek, the translators could not grasp the thought that Jesus as the Son of Man could have ever been lower than *Elohim*. There is good reason for this thinking, for, speaking of the Son, Hebrews 1.8 and 9 declare: **Your throne, O *Elohim***; and ***Elohim*, Your *Elohim***. But these declarations pertain to Jesus as the begotten Son of God, not the Son of Man. Clearly, Psalm 8 refers to the son of man, and this designation is carried over into Hebrews 2.6 as well. In the context of the son of man, Jesus is made a little lower. But lower than what? *Elohim* or angels?

But we see Jesus, the One having been made only a little lower [or, only for a short while lower] than [the] angels because of the suffering of death, having been awarded the victor's wreath [of] [or, having been crowned with] glory and honor, in order that by [the] grace of God He should taste [fig., experience] death on behalf of all. (Hebrews 2.9 ALT)

Consider this: Jesus, as the Son of Man, was made a little lower than *Elohim*, because the suffering of death and the tasting of death on behalf of all is primarily for the benefit of man, not the angels. Of what value is it for Jesus to be made lower than the angels and suffer death, not for them but for man? However, in taking this lower position, Jesus, as the Son of God, did not relinquish His divinity as *Elohim* the Creator. He took this lower position as the Son of Man. In other words, Jesus came to this earth to be on the same level as all mankind and to die for all mankind in order to restore the *dominion mandate* to what it was intended when first given to Adam and Eve. He fully and unequivocally identified with man as He died for the sin of the world. He had to be made in the form of man in order to redeem all mankind. He emptied Himself of all His privileges and submitted to the will of His heavenly Father (Philippians 2.5-8), and now He is the Victor over death.

Let us recount some facts. All has been subjected under the feet of man, and nothing has been left out of this subjection. This is the *dominion mandate* that was given to man through Adam, and it has not been revoked. However, today we do not see all subjected to man. Think about it; today, we do not see that God has put **all** in dominion under the feet of man. But we see Jesus; and because we see Jesus, we know that a day is coming when we will see **all** placed under man's dominion. Whatever has been placed under Jesus' dominion is what will be placed under the dominion of all His conquerors chosen to reign with Him in the eons to come. Do you know what this dominion is? It is **all, and in all**; all in the heavens and all on the earth! To be lower than but like *Elohim*, and to be in dominion over all! Dear beloved in Christ, this is your destiny.

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0710

OCTOBER 16, 2007

A HOLY KISS

Greet one another with a holy kiss. (Romans 16.16 NASB)

Recently, we were watching the evening news on television, and there was a segment about men not becoming school teachers, so women dominate the profession. The point was that there are very few male role models in our public schools today. But my attention was arrested when they interviewed this young man who loves his job; he loves teaching young children. What caught my attention was that he said he would like to hug the children or put his hand on their shoulders to encourage them, but he knew that he could not for fear that someone would mistake his action for harassment. In our day, there is this great fear of sexual predators, but I wonder if this fear has gone so far that we are dehumanizing ourselves. There are days when we all need a hug or a hand on the shoulder to show that someone cares for us. It is part of being human. Otherwise, we become robots.

As I was thinking about this matter, almost as if on cue, an article appeared in our local newspaper that was entitled "*Banning Hugs — Schools Go for Zero Tolerance on Touching*" by Leonard Pitts, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Richmond, VA, October 6, 2007. According to the article, schools from one end of our country to the other are banning hugs. They have reasons for it, such as it creates congestion in the halls, but I have to wonder if there is not something more onerous behind such action. It is as if, as a society, we are becoming so fearful of all sorts of **potential** offenses that we are moving to ban anything and everything that could be misconstrued to be an offense. The writer of the article asked the rhetorical question: "**Am I the only one who sees businesses, schools, and public institutions moving, inexorably as a Terminator, toward the standardization and regulation of even the most mundane of human interaction?**" He is not the only one, but only the Lord knows how many see it this way.

I think of my aunt, who was born in French Morocco, who hugs and kisses us on each cheek as a sign of affectionate greeting. Can you imagine how this would be received in our public schools? And yet, I can think of countries around the world who greet in this fashion. It is part of the fiber of certain cultures. However, not all countries appreciate public displays of affection or greeting.

I recall some years ago when I visited the country of a good friend and brother in the Lord (whose name and country will remain anonymous). As one who has spent more of his life in the south of the U.S. than in the north where he was born, I have grown fond of southern hospitality. I enjoy greeting people, even saying "hi" to people I pass by in public. Well, as I was walking along the street in my friend's home town, I wanted to greet people, but I noticed that no one ever made eye contact with me. I made a comment to my friend about my observation, and he told me that if I tried to greet people, they would think I was strange. It was not part of their culture to do so. Of course, this does not mean that they do not love one another; it's just that certain public displays of affection (called PDA's by some) are not their norm. However, it was a challenge for me not to greet people.

On another personal level, my dad was not a hugger or a kisser. He was a hand shaker. When I entered college and went home during breaks, my dad would greet me with a handshake, until one year when I went home, I grabbed him and hugged him. Ever since that day, he hugged me.

But the experience that is forever etched in my heart is what occurred about four years ago. My dad's health was deteriorating, and his mind was fading so that he did not know my name. Since my parents lived about 900 miles away and my mother needed help, I traveled to their home frequently to help out. On one of my visits, I had to leave early in the morning to catch a plane home. Dad was still in bed, and my mother woke him to let him know that I was leaving. Without any prompting, he held his arms out to me, so I crawled up on the bed; he put his arms around me and kissed me on the cheek. Never in my life had he ever done this to me. I cry when I think of how good the Lord is to give me such a personal and warm memory of love from my dad, even though his mind was receding into silence. Less than two years later, he was gone; and now he awaits the resurrection.

I recall one night that I was lying awake in bed, and I felt something embrace me as I lay there. It wasn't my wife either, although we do hug. Then, I heard the voice of the Lord. "**I am hugging you.**" Is this too fanciful? I don't think so! I think the Lord was expressing His humanity and His divinity to me. You see, I believe that our human touch with one another should not be based on culture. Our God is a Comforter, and He knows that we need His touch of love and a knowing that we are His children in His care. After all, God is love, and He so loves the world.

Consider a young child who becomes distraught and begins to cry uncontrollably. How does a parent console the child? The good parent often hugs the child and smothers him/her with kisses to make it "all better."

Is there a Biblical example of greeting with a kiss? Absolutely!

Greet one another with a holy kiss. (2 Corinthians 13.12 NASB)

According to one source, a *kiss* is "a natural symbol of affection and reverence, of very ancient date. Early Christians conformed to the custom, and kissed each other during or at the close of public worship. According to some this was generally given by men apart and women apart, before receiving the Lord's supper, to testify peace and brotherly affection" (*Diaglott, Alphabetical Appendix*).

Paul, the apostle who died daily for the ecclesia (church), sent greetings to brethren and asked that it be a holy kiss. Perhaps it is time for those who belong to Christ to greet one another in this way. On second thought, if my friend from the anonymous country kissed me on the cheek, I would most likely have a heart attack on the spot. Even in the U.S., a greeting of this sort is not the public norm and might be too difficult for some of us, but is a hug too difficult? I think not! Let the hugs continue! Think about this: Have you ever been with a group of Christians who are being built together? One sign of their being built up in love (see Ephesians 4.15-16) is that they are always hugging.

As the Lord's people, let us not lose our humanity. Hugs and kisses are a sign of our humanity and our love for one another. After all, we are commanded to love one another.

Let us be willing to display our love for one another in a world that is increasingly becoming dehumanized and in which love is growing cold because lawlessness is increased (Matthew 24.12). If we do, perhaps, the day will come when the world will ask us the reason for our love for one another. But let us not forget that expressing our love for one another is more than PDA's; it is about helping one another in the very practical ways of life.

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. (1 Thessalonians 5.26 NASB)

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0711

OCTOBER 19, 2007

THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS

“We must suffer a lot to enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14.22 GW)

Lately, I have been lamenting why it is that Christians who desire to go on in the Lord and to please Him, and to do His will, seem to have such a hard time and are suffering in these days. We go through times of trial and we think that things will get better, only to discover that once we come through one trial, there is another one right on its heels. We see others around us doing certain legitimate things of life, and it seems to go well for them. Yet, we attempt to do the same things, and it seems like we are trying to push a bolder up a steep hill. It seems like the world looks at us and declares: “You’re all crazy fools!”

We recently received a letter from a beloved brother in Christ who loves the Lord and desires nothing more than to serve the Lord and help people grow to love the Lord with their whole heart, and yet, he has no food on the table to feed his family or money to send his children to school. Why must it be this way?

Let us not be like Job’s friends to our brethren who might be in very severe trials. Unfortunately, some Christians of certain emphasis would say: “Well, brother; you lack faith. You need more faith.” Others might say: “You’re in a spiritual battle; you need to fight the devil. You need to put on the whole armor of God and fight the good fight.” In line with this, others might say: “You need to pray more, even without ceasing.” No doubt we need faith, we need to fight the good fight, and we need to pray, but these do not answer the groaning within of why it is so difficult so often. Why must it be this way for those who love the Lord, especially when all these things are operative in their lives?

We know a family who loves the Lord and they have a severely challenged 16-year old who requires watchful monitoring and care 24/7. They have little help caring for their son, often leaving them emotionally and physically exhausted. Why must it be this way?

We know a couple who lost their daughter to a gunman who ravaged a college campus. This family dearly loves the Lord, and their only daughter loved Jesus and was following Him. Their loss cannot be expressed in words. Why must it be this way?

Or, consider the innumerable martyrs for the cause of Christ over the last two millennia whose blood cries out like that of Abel’s shed blood. Why must it be this way?

I have no doubt that if you have been in the Lord for awhile that you have had a cry in your heart: “Why?” Perhaps deep down you think it but are afraid to verbalize it to the Lord Jesus for fear that He will send a lightning bolt and wipe you out. **Don’t be so superstitious! Be open and honest!** The Lord knows your heart and is never put off by what you are thinking or even saying out loud to Him. We need to be honest with the Lord and open our heart to Him in whatever way expresses the groan, the question or the complaint within us. I have a very dear friend with a sensitive heart for the Lord who, when his trials and sufferings become almost unbearable, speaks to the Lord in terms that would

challenge some, but do you know what happens? The Lord meets him and answers him in special ways. The Lord knows how to meet us, most of all in our moments of despair.

Personally, when I am in my groaning mode, I turn to Jeremiah and read his complaint to the Lord. Here was one who was doing the Lord's will, and yet, all he encountered was severe trial and anguish of soul. **O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me** (Jeremiah 20.7 KJV). Jeremiah even purposed not to mention the Lord again or speak in His name anymore, but His word burned in his heart, and he could not keep quiet. Reading Jeremiah, I sense a man whose soul was like a pendulum going from one emotional extreme to another. **Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers. Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bore me be blessed** (Jeremiah 20.13-14 KJV).

Well, for all who love the Lord Jesus and who are groaning, even complaining to the Lord, take heart; there is a reason behind the afflictions of all who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8.28). Paul, the afflicted apostle who knew many tribulations, gives us the answer.

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations [*thlipsis*] we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14.21-22 NASB)

The word *tribulation* comes from the Greek word *thlipsis*, which means "pressure (literately or figuratively): afflicted, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble."

Jesus said: **In the world you have affliction [*thlipsis*]** (John 16.33 WNT). Paul called it **momentary, light affliction [*thlipsis*]** (2 Corinthians 4.17 NASB). John was exiled to Patmos as **a partner in the affliction [*thlipsis*]** (Revelation 1.9 ALT). Another way of summing up these verses is that in the world, you have pressure. However, often times it does not seem to be momentary and light; rather, it feels like a never-ending pressure cooker that won't release you until you are well-done.

Why do the Lord's people have to be pressurized like this? The reason for all the suffering, the afflictions, the trials, and the tribulations is so that we will be counted worthy to enter the coming kingdom of God in which Christ will reign over this earth and sum up all in the heavens and on the earth. I often turn to Paul's exhortation and encouragement to the ecclesia of the Thessalonians: **So that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2.12 NASB). Another translation reads: **God who is inviting you to share His own Kingship and glory** (WNT).

Only those who conquer (overcome) through Christ while in their bodies of death will be counted worthy to enter the coming kingdom to reign with Christ. The pressure of this world is designed to form Christ in us, to make us into precious, living stones in the spiritual house of God, the dwelling of God *in spirit* (see Ephesians 2.22; 1 Peter 2.5). All who believe on Jesus are temples of God (1 Corinthians 3.16), being joined together into **the celestial Jerusalem** (Hebrews 12.22 CV).

In the physical realm, magma (molten rock) is transformed into precious gems over many years under great pressure, temperature, and upheaval of this earth; likewise, in the spiritual realm, precious stones are being formed under often intense pressure from the world, even during great upheaval of the world system in which we live. God is the great Gemologist, and He is forming His spiritual house, a holy temple in the Lord, through the pressures of life, the many trials, afflictions, and sufferings. Notice that Paul declared that there are **many tribulations**; we must expect many. So when we are being pressurized, and as we cry out to the Lord, perhaps even in complaint and demand to know why, let us remember that it is **through many tribulations or pressures, we must enter the kingdom of God.**

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0712

OCTOBER 26, 2007

THE ONE NEW MAN

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2.14-16 NASB)

Nearly 2,000 years ago, God sent His Son to this earth to take on the form of man and die for the sin of the world. He lived a sinless, perfect life and died for all mankind to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin and death, for **through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned** (Romans 5.12 CV). The first Adam's legacy to his race is death, the enemy of mankind. All born of Adam's race are born to die. Thank God, in the last Adam, all mankind are destined to live, for **in Christ will all** be made alive (1 Corinthians 15.22), for the Son of God will one day abolish death (1 Corinthians 15.26).

At the heart of the cross is salvation by grace through faith. As Paul the apostle testified: **The grace of our Lord overwhelms, with faith and love in Christ Jesus** (1 Timothy 1.14 CV), **for in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast** (Ephesians 2.8-9 CV/NASB).

However, we must not stop at salvation by grace through faith. We must understand God's purpose in forming man from the soil of the earth and breathing the spirit of life into him. We must be born from above in order to reign in the kingdom. God created man to rule or to have dominion over this earth. This is why He has been working for nearly 6,000 years—to bring forth a people (a new man, a new nation) that will rule with His Son over this earth; a heavenly or celestial people with glorified bodies like the body of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3.21). When His saints see Him, they will be like Him (1 John 3.2). They will freely move between the celestial and the terrestrial (earthly) realms, just as Jesus did after His resurrection but before His final ascent to the throne.

Thank God; God found His Man, the Man who is now in glory, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His Son's death on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection and ascension to the throne of God, God brought forth a new man which is neither Jew nor Gentile but is truly a new man, a new creation.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down and 120 believers who were waiting in the upper room were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.4, 5, 15; 2.2-4; Matthew 3.11). On that day, the one new man in Christ was born. Through the Holy Spirit, a people were called out from among the Jews and the Gentiles that are no longer Jew nor Gentile according to the flesh. This is a very important distinction. This was a mystery that was in God's heart. When the nation of Israel according to the flesh was brought forth, all mankind was divided. The nations (Gentiles) were excluded from the promises made to ancient Israel. But in Christ, God opened the door to all the nations that they would be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of the promises in Christ.

That by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles [nations] should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel... (Ephesians 3.3-6 NKJV)

When the one new man came forth, all past distinctions ceased for those who are part of this new man in Christ. This new man is entirely *new*.

...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—{a renewal} in which there is no {distinction between} Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3.10-11 NASB)

This is the one new man. The one new man possesses a positional stand *in* Christ. In this new man, **Christ is all, and in all**. This man is all of Christ, for he is in His image.

In Christ, there is no longer a distinction based on any differences of the flesh.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1.12-13 NASB)

Those who are now part of the one new man are not in this place by the will of the flesh, **but of God** who wills. Prior to Pentecost, the nations outside of Israel were excluded from entering into the kingdom of God. Israel was offered this right, but they rejected it. They were to be fruitful, but instead they were barren, and thus the Lord took the kingdom from them. Upon their rejection, the Lord Jesus offered the kingdom to another nation.

“Therefore I say to you [that is, Israel], the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” (Matthew 21.43 NASB)

The one new man in Christ is the new nation that is to bear fruit. In writing to sojourners and pilgrims (1 Peter. 1.1; 2.11) of like precious faith (2 Peter 1.1), Peter revealed the identity of this new nation.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2.9-10 KJV)

This holy nation is something entirely new. Prior to Calvary, many were not the people of God. The *many* were living in darkness, not in the light of God. They had not received mercy. In other words, they were lost in the world. But because of the mercy of God, many are now a new people, God's people who proclaim His praises as His own special people.

This is the one new man in Christ. If you have been saved by grace through faith, then let your boast be in the Lord who has made you into and part of (collectively, corporately) a new man, a new race, a new creation, and a new nation. You are being conformed into the image of the One who created you. Can you imagine anything greater than being in the image of the Creator Himself? This is the destiny of all who are saved by grace through faith.

Praise God!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0713

NOVEMBER 2, 2007

THE NEW CREATION

I am acquainted with a man in Christ, fourteen years before this, (whether in a body I am not aware, or outside of the body, I am not aware—God is aware) such a one was snatched away to the third heaven. And I am acquainted with such a man (whether in a body or outside of the body I am not aware—God is aware) that he was snatched away into paradise and hears ineffable declarations, which it is not allowed a man to speak. (2 Corinthians 12.2-4 CV)

Paul the apostle was given tremendous visions and revelations of the Lord. Whether in the body or out of the body, he did not know, but he did know that he was snatched away *to* the third heaven and *into* paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. Most people believe that Paul was raptured to the third heaven, where they believe the throne of God is located. However, I believe that this dear apostle, who died daily for the saints, was snatched away into the celestial realm to behold God's purpose for mankind. It was as if the curtain of time was opened and Paul was transported to see a day that would come nearly 3,000 years from his day. He was caught into **God's day** (the day of God) to see the third heaven and the third earth, chronologically speaking. God's day, which is the last eon (age) revealed in Scripture, is characterized by a new heaven and new earth; it is the third heaven and earth presented in Scripture. When this day arrives, there will have been two heavens and earths. It does not necessarily mean that these are entirely new, as if the previous ones were completely eliminated. They will change in character.

The **first** heaven and earth is discovered in Genesis 1.1, when Elohim created the heavens and the earth. However, in Genesis 1.2, we discover that the heavens and the earth went through a cataclysmic upheaval that brought the original earth into ruin; it became a dark wasteland. Then in Genesis 1.3, it is recorded that Elohim began to restore the first heaven and earth, to regenerate it into the **second** heaven and earth. Man was created and given dominion over the restored earth (second earth). The second heaven and earth is destined for 7,000 years (nearly 6,000 years have passed so far), after which the **third** heaven and earth will come forth. Peter wrote of this day, and John saw it as he was in spirit on the isle of Patmos.

At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God's day, because of which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling. (2 Peter 3.11-13 CV)

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away. And the sea is not [any] more [fig., the sea no longer exists]. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having been prepared like a bride having been adorned [for] her husband. (Revelation 21.1-2 ALT)

And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look! I am making all things new!" (Revelation 21.5 ALT)

Peter and John both bear witness to *God's day*. But they were not alone in their view, for Isaiah the prophet saw the day long before they did.

For, lo, I am creating new heavens, and a new earth, and the former things are not remembered, nor do they ascend on the heart. (Isaiah 65.17 YLT)

So, Isaiah, Peter, and John all saw *God's day* in which all is new, not only the heaven and earth but all associated with the new heaven and earth as well. However, how do we know that Paul actually saw this same day? We know it by his use of the term ***new creation***.

Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; the old [things] passed away, Look!, all [things] have become new. (2 Corinthians 5.17 ALT)

For in Christ Jesus neither does circumcision have any power [or, avail anything] nor uncircumcision, but a new creation! (Galatians 6.15 ALT)

Paul's whole perspective was centered on that which is *new*. The old had to be put off and the new put on. But it was more than this, for Paul saw that ***in*** Christ there is something entirely new. Circumcision, the outward privilege of the flesh, was of no value. What mattered was ***a new creation in Christ Jesus***, the exalted and glorified One on high.

As Paul proclaimed: *Look! all have become new!* The emphasis is on the word *new*, which means "other, later, or different." It does not refer to something old or past that is renewed but to something that did not exist before. It is constituted of different material, on different ground, and for a different purpose. It is heavenly or spiritual in character. This is what the new creation is all about. This creation stands out as something unique in the history of mankind and this earth and, we presume, throughout God's entire universe.

When he was snatched away to the third heaven, Paul was snatched away outside of time and *into* paradise, which must have been the holy city, the new Jerusalem. But it was more than seeing a city like we see on earth today or even the city of Jerusalem that Paul knew so well in his day. In fact, Paul saw something that was absolutely nothing like anything on earth then or that ever will be when the 7,000 years of the history of the second earth has concluded.

Paul saw the bride of the Lamb, the very same bride that John saw.

And one of the seven angels came, the one having the seven bowls full of the last seven plagues, and he spoke with me, saying, "Come, I will show to you the wife, the bride of the Lamb." And he carried me away in spirit [or, by [the] Spirit] to a great and high mountain and showed to me the city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. (Revelation 21.9-11 ALT)

If you believe and trust in Jesus, do you realize that you are part of this new creation? You are not only a new creation now, but you are destined to be part of the new creation when all have become new. ***Christ in you, the hope of glory*** (Colossians 1.27), and the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, are one and the same hope. You are destined to be part of the corporate bride of the Lamb. This city is not like an earthly city. It is a bride made up of all the new creations in Christ. The city represents a spiritual people who have been purchased with the blood of God (Acts 20.28) and joined together into a dwelling of God *in* spirit (Ephesians 2.22). The new creation is the building of God, not built of bricks and mortar but of spiritual bodies of redeemed ones conformed to the image of the Son of God, the Creator of all. You will bear the image of the heavenly or celestial One (1 Corinthians 15.49 NASB/CV). The new creation is the dwelling of God *in* spirit that manifests the glory of God *in* Christ! Can you think of anything greater?

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0714

NOVEMBER 6, 2007

Loving Their Own Wives As Their Own Bodies

Recently, a well-known national and international preacher stated to his congregation and television audience that when he gets to heaven, he is going to kick Adam in the pants for what he did to us, and with this grand statement, as if on cue, his audience laughed. I did not find his comment very funny. Frankly, I found it very arrogant. It is as if this preacher were stating that he would have done it differently and perhaps not even have sinned. It lacked love and forgiveness, which is not surprising because, sadly, this brother sees the wrath of God trumping the love of God.

Are we not to forgive Adam? Are we not to love him? After all, we are commanded to forgive and to love, even our enemies, for this is the heart of our God that Scripture says is love (1 John 4.8, 16). Love is God's very nature. It is who He is. Scripture does **not** state that God is wrath.

As for me, when I see Adam, I just might hug him, if this is the affectionate way of greeting one another among the celestials, and thank him for being a type of the last Adam (Romans 5.14). In the account of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis, the book of beginnings, there are many types that point to Christ and His sacrificial love for **all** mankind. As I read the record, I sense the love of God reaching out to His creation. When Adam disobeyed God by following his wife in eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, many see an angry God who cursed the ground and banished Adam and his wife from the garden. But I see a loving and merciful God who reached out His hand of redemption and love to Adam and Eve. They were naked, so what did God do? He made garments of skin and clothed them. Of course, this is a type of the ultimate sacrifice that was to come through God's Son, and yet, on a practical level, it was God's provision for them and His way of saying to Adam and Eve that they too would be redeemed.

We know that things changed in the inner man of Adam and Eve, which was passed on to their entire race that followed. And yes; God made childbirth painful and cursed the ground on account of their transgression, but I believe there was far more compassion and love on the part of God. He was not mean to them in that day. Childbirth pain was probably to curtail the number of births and the cursed ground was probably to reduce the lifespan of man. Even their banishment from the garden was for good reason. It would have been a disaster for mankind if they had been allowed to partake of the tree of life after having partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was not God's desire or His purpose for mankind to live in that condition forever. Death had to enter the picture in order to bring a halt to this condition. Even so, Adam lived a long and fruitful life of 930 years on earth.

We know that through His Son, God the Father has something much greater for mankind. It is called immortal life that will come in Christ through resurrection and transfiguration, which will come at the end of our present wicked eon for the conquerors in Christ.

I believe that something else is often overlooked in this account, and that is the love of Adam for his helpmate Eve. Adam was created in the image and likeness of Elohim, the one who is love. Adam was created with the love of God in his heart. When all the animals were paraded before Adam so that he could name them, his heart of love saw them in pairs; and it must have struck a cord in his heart. He was all alone in a new world filled with life, and he had no counterpart or helpmate. Elohim knew this because this is, as we say, how He wired Adam. Adam was not complete without a suitable

helper. What was Adam's response when he saw his helper fashioned from his body? **"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."** [Literally!] Then Moses recorded: **For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh** (Genesis 2.23-24 NASB).

Paul, in his great circular epistle titled *Ephesians*, quoted these verses as he wrote of a secret that is great. He compared the relationship of a husband and wife to the relationship of Christ and His ecclesia. The secret that was revealed through Paul speaks of the love of Christ for His ecclesia, which is His body. Many look at this as an emphasis on the marriage relationship, but Paul's emphasis was actually on the body relationship. This could be called body love.

Let the wives be subject to their own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife even as Christ is Head of the ecclesia, and He is the Saviour of the body. Nevertheless, as the ecclesia is subject to Christ, thus are the wives also to their husbands in everything. Husbands, be loving your wives according as Christ also loves the ecclesia, and gives Himself up for its sake, that He should be hallowing it, cleansing it in the bath of the water (with His declaration), that He should be presenting to Himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that it may be holy and flawless. Thus, the husbands also ought to be loving their own wives as their own bodies. He who is loving his own wife is loving himself. For no one at any time hates his own flesh, but is nurturing and cherishing it, according as Christ also the ecclesia, for we are members of His body. For this "a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." This secret is great: yet I am saying this as to Christ and as to the ecclesia. (Ephesians 5.22-32 CV)

Christ is the Savior of the body. Why? Because He loves His body! Likewise, husbands ought to love their wives in the same manner because they have been made one flesh with their wives. One cannot hate his own flesh; he must love it and nurture it. Have you ever heard stories in which a husband risks his own life to save his wife whom he loves? There are accounts of men coming between their wives and the danger they face, even if it means sure death for them. Personally, I am always on the lookout for danger that could harm my wife and am ready to protect her. Why? Because it is body love! Why is this so? It is because we have body love inherited from Adam. Did you get that? We inherited it from Adam. I believe that through Paul and his quoting Genesis, we see a principle that was laid down at the very beginning that has not changed because God does not change. Remember, God is love; and love always rules and wins in every situation. **Love does not fail.**

Yes; God had to chastise Adam for his one transgression, but it was all in the plan of God that he would fail on this level. However, he did not fail on the higher command to love. Eve was of Adam's flesh. If he had allowed her to stand on her own in deception, then Adam would have declared that he hated his own body. The Lord knew that Adam loved Eve, for He created him this way. He put it in the heart of Adam to love the woman that came from his side and was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. The Lord expected Adam to disobey because love was in his heart. He would have been incomplete without her. If she had to die, then he would die with her. Adam had no choice but to follow his wife, for if he had not eaten with her, he would have broken a much higher law of God, the law of love. Love trumps all, and God put this love in the heart of Adam, and this same love has been passed on to us. I thank God for the first Adam, who was a type of Him who was to come, and his love for his helpmate. I thank God for the last Adam, Jesus, who stepped between man and the curse of death to redeem a body for Himself. Adam loved Eve as Christ loves the ecclesia, which is His body. So, let us not to be so judgmental of Adam, but let us rejoice in his example of body love.

To all husbands: **Be loving your own wife as your own body!**

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0715

NOVEMBER 9, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 1— *BUT OF GOD*]

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3.3 KJV)

Jesus answered and said to him, “Indeed I assure thee, if any one be not born [begotten] from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3.3 BWD; also JMT/REB/YLT [CV])

This issue is the first in a series on the matter of **born from above** as presented in Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The focus will be on John 3.1-15. In many translations, this phrase appears as **born again**, but as will be shown, **born from above**, or perhaps **begotten from above**, seems to be the more accurate and appropriate way to translate the Greek and to remain consistent with the meaning throughout Scripture.

The term *born again* leaves one in the same position as Nicodemus when he was challenged by Jesus. “**How can a man be born when he is old**” (John 3.4 NASB)? Nicodemus was thinking as a natural man which hindered him from understanding that Jesus was speaking of a **birth from above**, not an earthly birth through a human womb. Being **born from above** is a heavenly matter, not an earthly one. We know this as a fact because Jesus later told Nicodemus: “**If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things**” (John 3.12 NASB)? *Heavenly* means that Jesus was presenting a spiritual principle to this ruler of the Jews. We also know this as a fact because Jesus told him: “**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit**” (John 3.6 NASB). **God is spirit** (John 4.24); consequently, *heavenly* refers to the spirit realm of God or, we could say, the spirit world.

So, right from the start, if one seeks to understand Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus, one must seek for that which is heavenly or spiritual, or as Paul wrote, one must combine **spiritual [ideas] with spiritual [words]**, or **spiritual [thoughts] with spiritual [words]** (1 Corinthians 2.13 ALT/NASB).

Simply, interpretation of Scripture must be based on **spiritual by spiritual**. This point cannot be stressed enough because it appears that many in our day are not doing so. We cannot understand God’s word if we read it through the lens of the natural mind, which sees things from the physical, earthly realm, just as Nicodemus did. As Paul exhorted: **Set your mind on above, not on the earth** (see Colossians 3.2), and **the mind on the spirit is life and peace** (see Romans 8.5-8).

Perhaps the challenge begins with the many translations that use the term *born again*, rather than *born from above*. Some would argue that *born again* conveys the proper thought; however, *born from above* conveys it in greater measure, for it speaks of the source and nature of this birth, as well as a glorious destiny. Although the expression *begotten from above* perhaps is the most accurate rendering, a search of at least thirty translations failed to discover its use. However, the Concordant Version uses the expression *begotten anew*.

Now, before proceeding to the heart of this subject, there is one principle that under girds all other principles, and it is discovered in the expression **but of God**.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born [begotten], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1.12-13 NKJ [ALT, BWD, WNT])

In the beginning of John's gospel, the spirit of God has laid down the unchanging principle that to become a child of God, one must be begotten from God; it takes a special act of God to bring a person into His family. Simply, becoming a child of God is not based on anything of man. One **cannot** make this claim based on being born into a certain household, on having a certain pedigree, or on one's own determination (will). It is only of God that one becomes a child of God and receives the privileges associated with being in the family of God. God alone is the One who begets His family.

This principle is so fundamental that it should hardly be necessary to make the point; nevertheless, it is one of those truths that we need to remind ourselves of in a day in which the world's emphasis is on man as the center of his universe. Even amongst some Christians, there seems to be a lack of understanding in the matter of **but of God**. After all, there are those who declare that unbelievers must apply their own "free will" if they expect God to save them and that God will not and cannot forgive their unbelief. If this were true, which it is not, then no one would ever be saved. The good news is that **but of God**, all mankind eventually will be saved.

Whether speaking of the unbeliever being saved or the believer entering the coming kingdom, the principle does not change. **But of God** the lost are saved. **But of God** the saved are being saved to enter the coming kingdom of Christ. **But of God** the whole creation will be restored. If God is not the initiator or the agent of change, then nothing of any eonian or eternal value will ever happen.

But of God declares that only that which comes from God is of value. God must act in the affairs of mankind. This principle is seen throughout Scripture in the use of a similar expression, **but God**. Only God can raise the dead, demonstrate His love to sinners, cause growth in the believer, and give a believer a new body in the image of His Son. Consider the following verses.

"But God raised Him from the dead...." (Acts 13.30 NASB)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5.8 NASB)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us....
(Ephesians 2.4 NASB)

I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. (1 Corinthians 3.6 NASB)

But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. (1 Corinthians 15.38 NASB)

Perhaps James best sums up the whole matter of **but of God**: **Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.** (James 1.17 NASB)

Everything that is good and perfect must come from the Father. So, as you read this series, please keep in mind **but of God**; for without God, there is no salvation, there is no new birth, and there is no entrance into the kingdom of God.

But of God, we need to be ***born [begotten] from above!***

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0716

NOVEMBER 16, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 2 – *BEGOTTEN, BORN*]

Who were begotten [*gennao*] not of Blood, nor of the Flesh, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God. (John 1.13 BWD [*begotten* in CV])

In part 1 of this series, the point was made that the spirit of God has laid down the unchanging principle that to be a child of God, one must be begotten from God; that is, it takes a special act of God to bring a person into His family. **But of God** sums up the whole matter of being saved and, in fact, everything that follows in the life of a believer in the Lord Jesus. Regardless of how one views this matter, it should be agreed that, according to Scripture, the underlying principle is that all things related to salvation and entering the kingdom of God must be **of God** or **from God**. In other words, God alone is the initiator or, we could say, the change agent.

This series is about the meaning of the expression **born from above** as presented in Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This issue is about the word **born**. The last part of the expression, **from above**, is taken up in the next issue.

The Greek word *gennao* (and its derivatives) is the primary word translated into English as *begotten* or *born*. In the New Testament, it is used nearly 100 times. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, *gennao* (#1080) means "to procreate (properly of the father, but by extension of the mother); figuratively to regenerate: — bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of, gender, make, spring." Young's Analytical Concordance defines *gennao* as "to beget, bring forth." The New Englishman's Greek-English Concordance & Lexicon defines *gennao* (a verb) "to procreate, to father, to beget; figuratively to regenerate, produce." According to Vine's Expository Dictionary, *gennao* means "to beget, in the Passive Voice, to be born, is chiefly used of men begetting children, in Matthew 1:2-6; more rarely of women begetting children, Luke 1:13, 57."

A footnote in Bullinger's Companion Bible, in reference to Matthew 1.2 and, by extension, John 3.3, states: "**begat**. Gr. *gennao*. When used of the father = *to beget or engender*, and when used of the mother it means *to bring forth into the world*."

Abraham begat [*gennao*] Isaac; and Isaac begat [*gennao*] Jacob; and Jacob begat [*gennao*] Judas and his brethren.... (Matthew 1.2 KJV)

Thus, Abraham did not give birth to Isaac; he merely begat or engendered him or, better yet, planted the seed in Sarah's womb; Sarah gave birth. Another example is found in Matthew 1.20 when the angel of the Lord explained to Joseph that "**the Child that has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.**" At this point, Jesus had not been born yet; He had been conceived in the womb of Mary through a divine act of the Holy Spirit. Again, the word *conceived* comes from the same root word *gennao*. The Holy Spirit as the Father begat or engendered Jesus in Mary's womb.

The point of all this is that the Greek word *gennao* does not necessarily refer to one being brought forth into the world through the birth process, that is, through the mother; rather, it refers to the begetting of a child through the father. It is the seed of the father that begins the process that will lead to a new life coming forth into the world from the womb of the mother. When the seed is implanted in

the egg, the embryo begins to take shape and grows in a water sac for nine months until it is ready to enter the world. During the gestation process, the embryo gradually takes on the image of the parents, but it does not start that way; it takes time to look like the parents. It is with this thought in mind that we need to consider Jesus' words to Nicodemus.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born [gennao] again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3.3 KJV)

Jesus answered and said to him, "Verily, verily, I am saying to you, If anyone should not be begotten [gennao] anew, he can not perceive the kingdom of God." (John 3.3 CV)

To see or perceive the kingdom of God, one must be engendered or begotten anew or from above. This means that one must receive the spirit of God, the spirit that comes from God the Father. The spirit of God must take up residence in a person if he or she is ever to see and to enter the kingdom of God. One must be begotten of the spirit. The reason is that God is spirit, and His kingdom is inherently a spiritual kingdom.

The question at hand is this: Does begotten from above mean that one needs to be begotten like an embryo in the womb, or does it mean that one needs to be begotten like a baby outside the womb? Another way of stating this is: Is it a conception in the womb or a birth into the world?

It is probably safe to state that most who preach on this matter of being "born again" look at it as a birth from the womb. It is as if the believer is outside the womb. For the most part, they are told to do good things, even "church things," and to try "to get people saved," as they wait to go to heaven when they die. Of course, I do not believe that Scripture teaches this latter point. I refer you to my book *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, Volume 2, chapters 1, 2, and 7. There may be some emphasis on growth of the believer; but, by and large, it seems to be related more to what it will bring to the "institutional church" than to the individual, especially in relation to the resurrection and transfiguration into spiritual bodies in the oncoming eons. It is as if they have already arrived, and all they are waiting for is either death, since they see life in death, or the so-called "rapture" to take them out of this "old world."

However, I believe the point of Jesus' words to be *begotten from above* is that believers are still in the womb. They have not arrived yet in this life and will not arrive until the resurrection, and hopefully will be counted worthy to attain to what John called the *first* resurrection and Paul called the *out-resurrection*. After all, Jesus said: **"The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection"** (Luke 20.34-36 NASB).

Dear beloved in Christ, we must grow in Christ so that we will be counted worthy of the *out-resurrection*, at which time we will be conformed to the image of His Son by taking on spiritual bodies (Romans 8.29; Philippians 3.20-21; 1 John 3.2). Until then, we must walk by the spirit as Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4.19; 5.16). We must put off the old and put on the new. We are still in the womb going through our gestation into the image of Christ as we await our birth into spiritual bodies. We don't look like the Celestial One yet. We have been born of the flesh and, in many respects, we still look like Adam. We need to be brought forth into spiritual bodies so that we can enter the celestial kingdom. Until then, we groan in our bodies of death as we wait to put on our dwelling from heaven, a spiritual body in the image of the Heavenly or Celestial One, our Lord Jesus (see Romans 8.23; 1 Corinthians 15.44-57; 2 Corinthians 5.1-5). We have the seed of Christ *in* spirit within us, and it must grow in order for us to attain to a full birth in the eon to come.

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0717

NOVEMBER 23, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 3 – FROM ABOVE]

In the last issue of this series, the point was made that the expression *born from above* refers to being begotten from a father as the father's seed impregnates the mother's egg and gestation of an embryo begins. Initially, the embryo does not look like the parents; it must grow in the sac of water until it is ready to emerge from the womb, at which point the mother brings forth the child into the world. Consequently, it is the father who begets the child, that is, conceives the child in the womb, and it is the mother who brings forth the child outside of the womb.

We are to have the same picture of our spiritual birth. But of God we receive His spirit within us. It is the seed of Christ that dwells in us that is to grow as Christ takes shape in us, that is, as Christ is formed in us. This forming is not outward appearance but inner character. We are to be conformed to the very character of Christ. This growth is a moral growth. However, we need to recognize that there are still vestiges of Adam's life in us. We were born of the flesh of Adam. We have not arrived at our glorious destiny in Christ, which is not only to be like Him in moral character and in righteousness, but also to be like Him in His glorified, spiritual, celestial body. We are awaiting our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Romans 8.23).

We have a new life in us (**Christ in you**), and this life must take shape; it must be formed in us until we are fully conformed to this new life, but we will not enter into it in full maturity until we are resurrected to enter the celestial kingdom of Christ. Maturity in this life comes through the implanted word of God being worked into our lives and our walking by the spirit.

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Verily, verily, I say to thee, If any one may not be born from above [*gennao another*], he is not able to see the reign of God.' Nicodemus saith unto him, 'How is a man able to be born [*gennao*], being old? is he able into the womb of his mother a second time to enter, and to be born [*gennao*]?' Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say to thee, If any one may not be born [*gennao*] of water, and the Spirit, he is not able to enter into the reign of God; that which hath been born [*gennao*] of the flesh is flesh, and that which hath been born [*gennao*] of the Spirit is spirit. 'Thou mayest not wonder that I said to thee, It behoveth you to be born from above [*gennao another*]; the Spirit where he willeth doth blow, and his voice thou dost hear, but thou hast not known whence he cometh, and whither he goeth; thus is every one who hath been born [*gennao*] of the Spirit.' (John 3.3-8 YLT)

Now, let us consider the words *from above*. The Greek words have been inserted in the above verses in order to prove that Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born or begotten from above. Clarity is given to the meaning of His words to Nicodemus by the fact that Jesus used the word *gennao* in conjunction with the Greek word *another*, which clearly means "from above," for Jesus later used this same word in reference to Himself: **"You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above [*another*]"** (John 19.11 NASB).

But what does *from above* refer to or mean? It is so obvious that it is hardly necessary to state it, but Scripture clearly identifies above as heaven, where the Father resides and from whence the Son came.

Jesus declared: “**No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man**” (John 3.13 NASB).

John the baptist referred to heaven and also linked it to the word *anohen*.

John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.” (John 3.27 NASB)

“He who comes from above [*anohen*] is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.” (John 3.31 NASB)

James also used the word *anohen* and linked it to all good things, including wisdom, that come from above, that is, come down from the Father.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above [*anohen*], coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1.17 NASB)

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above [*anohen*], but is earthly, natural, demonic. ... But the wisdom from above [*anohen*] is first pure.... (James 3.15, 17 NASB)

Considering its use in the above references and the fact that John, at the beginning of his gospel, laid down the principle of ***but of God*** adds weight to translating Jesus’ words as ***born from above*** rather than *born again*. By the way, John carried this same theme forward to his first epistle as well, where he referred to being ***born of God*** six times (1 John 2.29; 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 18).

Although it is acceptable to translate *anohen* as simply “again,” it seems to lose some of the import of the message given by Jesus. If ***from above*** is an appropriate translation for the word *anohen* in other Scripture, then it should be appropriate, if not required, in Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus as well. Similarly, in 1 Peter 1.3 and 1.23, we discover the use of another word, *anagennao*.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again [*anagennao*] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.... (1 Peter 1.3 NASB)

The prefix *ana* means “up.” Again, although most translations use the phrase *born again*, there seems to be a better way to translate this Greek word. Notice that Peter joined this with a living hope and the resurrection of Christ. To remain consistent in translation throughout the New Testament and to remain true to God’s principle, perhaps the phrase ***born from above*** is the best translation of *anagennao*, as well as ***gennao anohen***.

All the above references should be ample evidence to prove that the better rendering of ***gennao anohen*** is ***born from above***. One might ask: Why make such a big deal over a few words? Because ***born from above*** gives the source and nature of this birth; whereas ***born again*** leaves one asking what it truly means, just as Nicodemus missed the point and asked: *Is he able into the womb of his mother a second time to enter, and to be born?* Take note that Jesus started the conversation with ***gennao anohen***. If Nicodemus had understood what Jesus was stating, he would have used the same expression, but he did not because he approached the matter according to the mindset of a natural man. Nicodemus had to ask: “**How can these things be?**” This is actually quite a profound question that all born of Adam’s race need to ask.

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0718

NOVEMBER 30, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 4 –SEE AND ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD]

Jesus answered and said to him, “Indeed I assure thee, if any one be not born from above [*gennaō anothen*], he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus says to him, “How can a Man be born, being old? Can he a second time enter into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Jesus replied, ‘Truly indeed I say to thee, if any one be not born of Water and Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.’ (John 3.3-5 BWD)

Part 3 of this series concluded with Nicodemus’ question: “**How can these things be?**” How can one be **born from above**? Nicodemus was approaching the matter from the mindset of a Jew according to the flesh. The nation of Israel that came out of Egypt under Moses was given the Law. The Lord made a covenant with the sons of Israel, and if they obeyed His voice and kept His covenant, they would be His own possession among all the peoples, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (see Exodus 19.4-6). They were to be a theocratic kingdom on earth. But they fell in unbelief because they failed to see that the Lord was after circumcision of the heart, not of the flesh.

Paul, the apostle of the nations (uncircumcised [Galatians 2.7]), addressing believers from among the nations (*ethnos*, often translated *gentiles*), wrote: **Wherefore, remember, that ye were once the nations in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that called Circumcision in the flesh made by hands, that ye were at that time apart from Christ, having been alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God, in the world...** (Ephesians 2.11-12 YLT). Paul testified to the Philippians: **Though I also have cause of trust in flesh. If any other one doth think to have trust in flesh, I more; circumcision on the eighth day! of the race of Israel! of the tribe of Benjamin! a Hebrew of Hebrews! according to law a Pharisee!** (Philippians 3.4-5 YLT). In other words, Paul had every reason to brag about his Jewish background according to the flesh. But he came to see that true circumcision relates to those who worship in the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3.3). Paul also wrote: **For he is not a Jew who is so outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in flesh; but a Jew is he who is so inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, of which the praise is not of men, but of God** (Romans 2.28-29 YLT). Paul came to the point that he knew no one according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5.16).

Now, Nicodemus was still looking at things according to the flesh, just as Saul (Paul) had done when he was a zealous Pharisee and before the eyes of his heart were opened to see Christ *in* spirit. At one point, Nicodemus and Saul were in the same condition as they looked at the things of God according to the flesh and not the spirit. In speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus was attempting to lead him to the same place that Saul was led to on the road to Damascus.

So, when Nicodemus heard that he had to be born from above or born again to see the kingdom of God and that he had to be born of water and spirit to enter the kingdom, it must have startled him. By his response to Jesus, it is quite apparent that, although Nicodemus was a learned Pharisee, he had no comprehension of the meaning of Jesus’ words. Consider how ridiculous it is to wonder if a man in old age could reenter his mother’s womb, unless perhaps he was being facetious or questioning Jesus’ own sanity. Personally, I think he was so caught off guard that he was not thinking straight.

The thought of the kingdom being a spiritual matter and not one according to the flesh, that is, his Jewish pedigree, was totally absent from his thoughts or even his teaching.

However, in one fell swoop, Jesus took all of Nicodemus' privileges according to the flesh as an Israelite and, figuratively, swept them off the table. It was as if Jesus said, "Nicodemus, your religion, and even your pedigree, will not lead you into the kingdom; you need something else that you do not currently possess." To be sure, Nicodemus was on the right track, but Jesus declared that there was one thing missing in Nicodemus' life that was essential to seeing and entering the kingdom of God, and it involved receiving a new spirit.

Now, what did Jesus mean by seeing and entering the kingdom?

First, *seeing* and *entering* could be viewed as one and the same thing. In the English language, the word *seeing* can be used not only in the sense of vision, that is, seeing with the eyes, but also of entering into something. For example, it could be said of one who is rewarded for working very diligently that he is seeing the fruit of his labor. Later in chapter 3, John wrote that **he who does not obey the Son will not see life** (John 3.36). Obviously, in this case, *see life* refers to entering into life, for how else does one see life unless he enters into it or experiences it?

According to the Greek text from which the NASB is translated, the word for *see* is *horaō*, which can mean "to discern clearly, to experience or to perceive." This word is used in both verses sighted above (John 3.3: **see [horaō] the kingdom**: John 3.36: **see [horaō] life**). Thus, one could conclude that seeing the kingdom is the same as entering the kingdom. **If any one be not born from above, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

Second, although seeing and entering could be viewed as one and the same thing, they also could be viewed differently. One translation, rather than using the word *see*, uses the word *perceive*, which refers to receiving knowledge through any or all of the senses, including the eyes. *Perceive* pertains to one discerning or receiving understanding of the kingdom. It is not so much about entering into it as it is about perceiving it, which refers to spiritual perception or vision, a vision not through the physical eye but through the spiritual eye, the eye of the heart.

It takes spiritual vision to see the kingdom of God. Have you ever tried to speak to unbelievers about the kingdom of God? It is as if, as we say, their eyes glaze over, and they give you this dull look or blank stare. They cannot see what you are talking about because they are not born from above with the spirit of God to give them spiritual sight. They are blinded by the god of this age, and they simply cannot perceive the kingdom of God for what it truly is. They could even be religious like Nicodemus, and like Nicodemus, they cannot see the kingdom of God.

Third, entering the kingdom of God is only possible if one is born from above of water and spirit. In other words, Nicodemus could not enter the kingdom of God based on his flesh alone. Even though he was a descendant of Jacob, he had no right to this kingdom, for one can only enter it if one is born from above, or out of heaven, or of God, of spirit. It is God's kingdom, and God is spirit, and if one is to enter into God's realm, one must also be born from above by the spirit. **But of God** one enters the kingdom of God.

Consequently, Jesus was declaring that the kingdom of His Father is a spiritual kingdom, and as such, one can only perceive and enter into His kingdom as one is given a new life from above that is a spiritual life, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit that gives life.

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0719

DECEMBER 7, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 5 – *THE KINGDOM OF GOD INSIDE OF YOU*]

“Neither shall they be declaring ‘Lo! here! or ‘Lo! there!’ for lo! the kingdom of God is inside of you.” [Luke 17.21 CV]

This series is about Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus and the need to be born from above in order to enter the kingdom of God. Clearly, Jesus imparted a truth that challenged Nicodemus’ normal mode of thinking. We could say that Jesus challenged his world view as well as his religious view. Part of the challenge to Nicodemus was related to his understanding of the kingdom of God and the expectation of the Jew in that day in light of the kingdom. Therefore, before proceeding with Jesus’ discourse, it is needful at this point to look at the expectation of Nicodemus and his brethren. One could say that Nicodemus represented the Judahite nation at that moment in history.

Who was Nicodemus? He was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, which meant that he was not counted among the gentiles who were outside the commonwealth of Israel. As an Israelite, Nicodemus had applied the blood and continued in the teaching of Moses, including the law given to Moses at Mount Sinai. In other words, he was on the right side of the blood and a seeker of God. After all, when he approached Jesus, he said: **“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”** (John 3.2 NASB).

Nicodemus approached Jesus as a seeker of God who sought to know how to enter *the kingdom of the heavens*. Let us not forget that the Jews were looking for the Messiah to come and establish His kingdom on earth. In fact, many of the leading Jews knew that Jesus was the promised King of Israel, even though they rejected Him (see Matthew 21.38-39; Mark 11.10). So, when Nicodemus sought out Jesus at night so as not to be detected by others, he was seeking the kingdom, even though he did not state so to Jesus. According to Scripture, Jesus knew what was in the heart of man (John 2.25; Luke 9.47), so He knew what Nicodemus sought; and He gave him the answer.

But what kingdom were Nicodemus and his Jewish brethren looking for in that day? Or, to ask it another way: What aspect of the kingdom were they looking for? They were looking for *the kingdom of the heavens* or, according to one translation, *the reign of the heavens* (YLT) to come to the earth with the Messiah seated upon the throne of David ruling over the nation of Israel (Luke 1.32-33). When Peter’s brother Andrew realized that Jesus is the Messiah, he ran to Peter and declared: **“We have found the Messiah! (which is, being translated, Christ)”** (John 1.41 ALT). However, they were looking for a political kingdom with a political leader that would deliver them out of the rule of Rome. This is confirmed in the way that Jesus’ closest disciples responded to certain situations (see Mark 10.37; Luke 9.54; John 18.10). They desired the literal rule of God on earth with all power and observation; however, it is apparent from the discourse with Nicodemus, who was a leader of the Jews, they did not expect a *spiritual* kingdom.

According to Daniel the prophet, **the heavens do rule** (Daniel 4.26 ASV), and their expectation was to see the rule of heaven come to earth. We see this expectation in Jesus’ instruction to His disciples on prayer: **Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven** (Matthew 6.10 KJV).

We need to be clear that their expectation was not a false one. It was real and it was according to Scripture. What they desired will come about one day. As Jesus walked with His disciples, a day

came when He said: **“Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom”** (Matthew 16.28 NASB). Then, he took three of them, Peter, James, and John, up on a high mountain to observe His transfiguration, which was a glimpse of His coming kingdom of glory. In Christ they saw the Messianic kingdom that will rule over the entire earth in the seventh millennium of the second earth.

Seeing the Son of Man coming in His kingdom was a preview of a literal day that was yet future for the three disciples and which is still yet future for us as well; a 1,000-year day, the seventh millennial day, comes after six days or 6,000 years. Jesus was transfigured after six days, and on the seventh (compare Exodus 24.16 with Matthew 17.1-2). God restored a ruined earth that had been brought into disruption in six days, and He rested on the seventh day. In like fashion, after Adam brought death into his race, most likely at the age of 33½, Elohim purposed to restore mankind and this earth in 6 days or 6,000 years, followed by a seventh day or a Sabbatical rest of 1,000 years. Peter reminds us: **But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day** (2 Peter 3.8 NASB). It is a fact that a thousand years is like one day.

Nicodemus, just like Jesus’ disciples, was expecting this aspect of the kingdom to come in his day. They were expecting *the reign of the heavens*, the literal rule of Messiah over Israel and the nations of the earth. After all, Jesus was performing all the signs that would indicate that this kingdom was at the door, or even in their midst. Even after His resurrection, right before His final ascension, the disciples asked Jesus: **“Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”** Instead of the kingdom literally being manifested on the earth at that point, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1.6-8), and this is the key to our understanding of Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus.

Simply, Jesus was referring to the kingdom of God not as the literal kingdom of Christ that is coming to this earth but as the present spiritual kingdom of God that one can only enter into **today** by being **born from above** by the spirit of God.

When He walked amongst His Jewish brethren, Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, and He answered them: **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [entos]** (Luke 17.20-21 KJV). The Greek word translated *within* is *entos*, which means “inside.” One translation removes all doubt by translating this verse: **The kingdom of God is inside you** (CV). In other words, if you are looking for outward signs of the kingdom of God, forget it, for it cannot be observed with the natural eye. Why? Because it is a spiritual kingdom, and one cannot enter it without being born from above with the spirit of God. The kingdom must take root in you in spirit. Further, it is through spiritual sight that one discerns the kingdom of God.

However, there is one challenge to interpreting this verse in this fashion. Jesus said this to those just like Nicodemus, the Pharisees that were not born from above at this point and did not have the kingdom within them. Jesus did not state that they had to have it within them but that it *is within you* [plural *you*]. For this reason, this verse is variously translated *among you*, *here with you*, and *in your midst*, meaning that Jesus, as the representation of the kingdom of God, was in their midst. Undoubtedly, this was true at that time as well.

Nevertheless, the point is this: There is a difference between *the kingdom of God*, which is a present spiritual kingdom that can only be discerned and entered into *in spirit*, and *the kingdom of the heavens*, which is a future kingdom when Christ takes the scepter of the kingdom of this world to rule and reign for 1,000 years. Nicodemus was seeking to enter the latter, but Jesus was showing him the way to enter the former, which, by the way, will lead to entrance into the latter as well.

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0720

DECEMBER 14, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 6 – *BORN OF WATER AND SPIRIT*]

Jesus answered and said unto him—Verily, verily I say unto thee: Except one be born from above [*gennao anothēn*] he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him— How can a man be born when he is old? Can he into the womb of his mother a second time enter and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee: Except one be born of water and spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which hath been born of the flesh is flesh; and that which hath been born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to thee: Ye must needs be born from above [*gennao anothēn*]. The spirit where it pleaseth doth breathe, and the sound thereof thou hearest; but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth: Thus is every one who hath been born of the spirit.” (John 3.3-8 REB)

In His discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus was presenting the way into the spiritual kingdom of God, which every believer *in* Christ is to enter. One must be born of water and spirit.

Now, in this part of the series, let us look at the meaning of water and spirit.

Throughout Scripture, water and spirit represent new life. According to Moses, every living creature has **the breath of the spirit of life** (Genesis 7.22 ASV/CV/REB). In the natural realm, water and spirit represent new life or birth. In simple terms, once impregnation occurs, human life begins in a sac of water in the womb of the mother, and growth continues in this sac for nine months. When it is time for the baby to be released from the mother’s womb, the water sac breaks and, shortly thereafter, the baby emerges into the world and takes its first breath of air; the breath of the spirit of life enters the lungs of the baby, and it becomes a living soul. This is the primary meaning of Jesus telling Nicodemus that he must be born of water. Simply, He was referring to the natural birth. In other words, first one must be born of mankind, which would exclude the angels (see Hebrews 2.5-8), and then one must be born of the spirit to enter the kingdom of God.

Of course, not all see it this way, for some see water as representing baptism based on Old Testament types, and others see it as representing the word of God; both views have some merit.

Regardless of one’s view, water and spirit are intimately connected as a symbol of life. After all, water is the universal solvent of life, without which there would be no life on earth. Our physical bodies are mostly water (70% by weight). Also, the spirit gives life (John 6.63; James 2.26). Death ensues with the departure of the spirit. There are many examples in Scripture that illustrate the connection of water and spirit to life. Let us consider eight of them. Obviously, there is much that could be said about each example, but all that is needed is a brief summary to make the point.

First, in the very beginning of Genesis, it is recorded that the earth was a waste land; it was in ruin and darkness with water raging over its surface. Some describe it as having been a watery grave. However, when it came time to bring restoration to this disrupted earth, the spirit of God hovered or brooded over the waters. Then the word went out to bring forth new life on earth, which culminated on

the sixth day with the forming, from the soil of the earth, of a new creation called *man* (see Genesis 1-2). Thus, we find water and spirit operative in bringing forth new life.

Second, about 1600 years later, the moral fiber of man had sunk to such depravity that God determined to wipe out mankind, except for a family of eight. So the Lord opened up heaven and the aquifers underground, and flooded the earth, killing all except Noah and his family. They were saved through the water by living in the ark. When the rains stopped, a dove, which is a symbol of the spirit, was sent forth to see if the water was receding. Finally, the dove came back with a freshly picked olive leaf in its mouth. New life had sprung up on dry ground (see Genesis 7-8).

Third, the sons of Israel were called out of Egypt under Moses by applying the blood of a freshly slain lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. They were then commanded to move out of Egypt by passing through the water of the Red Sea. After they arrived on the eastern shore, they moved on to Mount Sinai. Then for forty years in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud guided them by day, and the pillar of fire lighted their way by night; they were led by the spirit of God (see Exodus 12-14).

Fourth, John the baptist came on the scene of world history preaching “**Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.**” He was a voice crying out in the wilderness, summoning the people to repent and be baptized with water for repentance. Jesus then came on the scene and approached John to be baptized by him. To fulfill all righteousness, Jesus was baptized, and when He came up out of the water, the heavens opened and John saw **the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Jesus** (Matthew 3.16).

Fifth, midway into the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching, which, as usual, stirred up the ire of the Pharisees and chief priests who sought to seize Him. However, they could not lay their hands on Him for His hour had not yet come. On the last day or eighth day of the feast, Jesus cried out, saying: “**If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified** (John 7.37-39 NASB). So we see a very clear connection between water and the spirit, which gives life.

Sixth, when the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus’ broken and dead body as it hung on the cross, John, the apostle of love, with his own eyes, saw blood and water come forth from His side (John 19.34). Later, John would write: **This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement** (1 John 5.6-8 NASB).

Seventh, today, all who believe have received an earnest of the spirit, with a view to the redemption of the purchased possession (Ephesians 1.14), and are called to be water baptized, not as a requirement for initial salvation but as a testimony of their death, burial, and resurrection with Christ, so that they can walk in newness of life, walking by the spirit (Romans 6.4; Galatians 5.25). Baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3.21). Thus, water, resurrection life, and the spirit of God are intimately connected.

Eighth, John was in spirit in the Lord’s day and saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem come down out of heaven, having the glory of God. Many people view this city as a physical city of gold and precious stones, but *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* describes word-pictures that signify things that are spiritual. The city is a picture of the dwelling of God *in* spirit, the spiritual house of God, built with living stones; all who have been glorified with spiritual bodies because they were born from above. Now, John saw a river of the water of life coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22.1). What is this river? It is the spirit of God that gives life (see fifth item above). Thus, according to Scripture, water and spirit speak of life and the kingdom of God. **To be continued....**

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0721

DECEMBER 21, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 7—*BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH*]

Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee: Except one be born of water and spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which hath been born of the flesh is flesh; and that which hath been born of the spirit is spirit.” (John 3.5-6 REB)

In the last issue of this series, it was shown that water and spirit go hand-in-hand to typify life. In type, this is seen in Scripture through the matter of baptism. The earth that was in disruption, that is, in waste, ruin, and darkness, was baptized in water, and it took the spirit of God brooding over the surface of the deep to bring forth life out of the watery grave that ultimately yielded the new creation of mankind. The deluge of the earth 1,656 years later is another type of resurrection life. Peter tells us that the baptism of the believer corresponds to Noah and his family being saved from the flood (water) by riding above it in an ark. Their entombment in the ark typified death, burial, and resurrection. As the water receded, the dove (a type of the spirit) was sent forth and returned with an olive leaf (a type of new life). Then the ark rested on dry land; the family of eight departed the ark and entered a new day on earth. Israel passing through the Red Sea is another type of baptism of the saved. The sons of Israel had applied the blood (saved) and were commanded to leave Egypt (a type of the world) in pursuit of the land of promise (a type of entering the kingdom). They were baptized into the water of the Red Sea as a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection. When they reached the eastern shore of the sea, they entered a new life of being guided by the spirit of God, as typified by the pillar of cloud and fire. Today, the saved are commanded to be water baptized to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The saved have been given an earnest of the spirit as a down payment that, one day, they will literally experience the resurrection of their dead bodies to receive immortal life and inherit the kingdom. Finally, on the eighth day of the feast of the Tabernacles, Jesus cried out: **“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”** John explained what Jesus meant. **But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified** (John 7.38-39 NASB). Therefore, according to Jesus and John, water typifies the spirit that gives life. Again, Scripture links water and life, as revealed through John’s Patmos vision, especially of the new Jerusalem, the dwelling of God in spirit, when he saw the river of the water of life coming forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22.1). All of these types are helpful in understanding the meaning of **born from above**. Water and spirit speak of life, and in the context of born from above, it is spiritual life.

Actually, one commentator has stated that water and spirit should not be viewed as two things but as one. In the Greek, there are no definite articles preceding water and spirit, contrary to many translations, which makes spirit an adjective of water. Thus, one is to be born of **spiritual water**, as opposed to physical water. Given this thought, Jesus was telling Nicodemus that to be born from above, he had to be born not of the physical water of a woman’s womb but of the spiritual water of the spirit of God that truly gives life. Jesus was simply drawing a comparison between what is of the natural realm and what is of the spiritual realm. One needs to enter the womb of the spirit to be brought forth through resurrection into a spiritual body in the celestial kingdom of the coming eons. Now, moving on, Jesus told Nicodemus: **That which hath been born of the flesh is flesh; and that which hath been born of the spirit is spirit.** In other words, Jesus made a very clear distinction between two different, even opposing, sources of life. That which has been born of the flesh is flesh.

Its very source is the flesh, and its very nature is flesh. It is as if Jesus drew a line in the sand and declared that which is of the flesh has no part of that which is of the spirit; it is like mixing oil and water. That which is born of the flesh always remains of the flesh; it cannot be made into spirit because its source is not spirit. There is more to be said about the matter of being born of the spirit, but first we need to be clear about being born of the flesh.

For Nicodemus, the matter of the flesh meant that although he was born of the commonwealth of Israel and was of the bloodline that could be traced back to Jacob, he could not expect to enter the kingdom of God. Circumcision of the flesh was of no value to him or to anyone else, for that matter, in seeing and entering the kingdom. Being born of man or from any bloodline of man will not afford one the privilege of entering the kingdom of God. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus should have immediately related to the promise of the Lord to his forefathers, as recorded by Ezekiel.

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” (Ezekiel 36.25-27 NASB)

Notice that water is for cleansing, which, in the natural sense, is what water does best; the new spirit removes the heart of stone from the flesh. If Nicodemus had considered this prophetic word, then he would have understood that a new spirit, the spirit of God, had to come from above. Through this account with Nicodemus, as well as the long history of the sons of Jacob, we see a clear warning to the Jews that so proudly trust their flesh and assert that they are entitled to the kingdom of God based on their flesh. But what about the rest of mankind? Is it any different? No!

The word *flesh* in the Greek is *sarx*, which, strictly speaking, refers to the meat or body of animals. It also refers to human nature or the natural man. Jesus said: **“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing”** (John 6.63 NASB). According to Paul, **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God** (1 Corinthians 15.50). We need to be clear that all mankind is born of the flesh.

There is an aspect of the flesh of Adam’s race that profits nothing. When Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, all in accord with the purpose and plan of God, death entered into mankind. Mankind became a dying race; all are destined to die as soon as they are born. This is proven through history and the innumerable graves in the earth today. No one is exempt from physical death, even the saved of our day. We all die because this is the legacy of Adam to his race (see 1 Corinthians 15.22).

Most likely, when he was created, Adam was formed with a spiritual, glorified body. However, this changed when he partook of the forbidden fruit. He discovered that he and his helpmate were naked. But there was more to the change, for with the death sentence now upon him and his race, a new nature resided in mankind; it is the sin nature, the carnal nature that is opposed to the spirit. This is what is often referred to as the flesh. For Adam, sin came first and then death; but for his progeny that followed, the process of death is passed on, and in death, sin reigns (Romans 5.21). **Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned** (Romans 5.12 CV). Notice the order: death is passed on first, and on account of this, all sinned. This is the kind of flesh born of the flesh that profits nothing and that cannot inherit the kingdom of God; it is not of the spirit from above.

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0722

DECEMBER 27, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 8—*BORN OF THE SPIRIT IS SPIRIT*]

That which hath been born of the flesh is flesh; and that which hath been born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to thee: Ye must needs be born from above [gennao anothen]. The spirit where it pleaseth doth breathe, and the sound thereof thou hearest; but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth: Thus is every one who hath been born of the spirit.” (John 3.6-8 REB)

As presented in part 7 of this series, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and the flesh cannot inherit or enter into the kingdom of God. This is the Lord's principle that was set forth at the very beginning of Scripture, for only the spirit of God can bring forth life, especially life out of death, which is resurrection life. In fact, this is the specialty of the Holy Spirit.

Now, based on Jesus' words to Nicodemus that one must be born again or, more accurately, **born from above**, many rightfully preach to the lost that they must believe, and when they do, they are born from above by the spirit of God. They are given a new life, a life in Christ, as Christ takes up residence in them and gives them the hope of glory (Colossians 1.27). **Christ in you!**

According to Scripture, when we are given the faith to believe in Jesus and the finished work of His cross, we receive the Holy Spirit, which takes up residence in us, and the love of God is poured out within our hearts (Romans 5.5; 1 Corinthians 6.19; 1 Thessalonians 4.8). According to Paul, we receive **the earnest** of the spirit.

God, who also sealed us, and gave the earnest [arrhabon] of the Spirit in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 1.22 YLT)

God, who also did give to us the earnest [arrhabon] of the Spirit.... (2 Corinthians 5.5 YLT)

The good news of your salvation--in whom also having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is an earnest [arrhabon] of our inheritance, to the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1.13-14 YLT)

The Greek word for *earnest* is *arrhabon*, which, according to Strong's Concordance, is of Hebrew origin and means "a pledge, that is, part of the purchase money or property given in advance as security for the rest: earnest." Searching other translations reveals that it is most often translated as *earnest, pledge, down payment, or guarantee*.

The use of this word adds to our understanding of being *born from above* because it indicates that if we are counted among the saved, we have something of great value within us that is our assurance that not only are we in the spiritual kingdom of God now, but we also have a hope or expectation of entering the kingdom of Christ that is coming. But let us not forget that we have not arrived yet. As Paul forgot what lies behind and reached toward to what lies ahead, so must we (Philippians 3.13). Yes, we are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5.17), and we have an entirely new life residing

in us, but this is only a foretaste of the glory to come when we receive glorified, spiritual bodies in the image of Christ.

When we believe, we receive the spirit of God as a pledge or earnest of what is to come; it is only a part, not the whole of what we are destined to be. In other words, we must wait for a future day to receive the promise of the inheritance. Today, we have a foretaste, which means the full flavor has not yet come, and it is not unusual to groan for more of this taste. Consider how the Weymouth New Testament words it. Receiving the spirit of God is both an earnest and a foretaste of what is to come, a foretaste of the bliss of glory.

And He who formed us with this very end in view is God, who has given us His Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that bliss. (2 Corinthians 5.5 WNT)

Now, what is the inheritance that has been purchased for those who are saved? The inheritance is related to the earnest of the spirit that is received and the adoption as sons, the redemption of the body (Romans 8.23). The inheritance is the new body conformed to the body of His glory. It is the **glorified, immortal, spiritual, and celestial** body in the image of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15.49; Philippians 3.20-21; 1 John 3.2) that comes forth with the transfiguration (complete change of life). In other words, since believers receive a down payment of God's spirit, when the full payment comes, it must be a full measure of Christ, and this requires a full measure of the spirit of God when we are given new, glorified, spiritual bodies.

When do believers receive this new spiritual body? If they have fallen asleep in Christ, they will receive it in resurrection, either the first resurrection of conquerors in Christ at the end of our present eon, or the general resurrection of the just and the unjust 1,000 years later. Regardless of the timing, the result is the same, for only through the resurrection **and** transfiguration can it be proclaimed that one is truly born from above or born again.

Until then, our lives are to continually change for the better as we taste Jesus under the discipline and training of the spirit of God. But we must also be alert to the flesh that still resides within all of us. Remember that which has been born of the flesh is flesh. Paul declared: **For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please** (Galatians 5.17 NASB). Or, consider the exhortation of the one who denied the Lord three times: **Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul** (1 Peter 2.11 NASB). For this reason, we are exhorted in many ways to put off the old self and put on the new self and to walk in a manner worthy of our calling (e.g., Ephesians 4.1, 22-24; 1 Peter 1.14; 2.1), until **Christ be formed in you** (Galatians 4.19). All of this pertains to the process of sanctification or, as some call it, the salvation of the soul (Hebrews 10.39; James 1.21). **For this is the will of God, your sanctification** (1 Thessalonians 4.3 NASB). **For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification** (1 Thessalonians 4.7 NASB). Paul also wrote: **Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God** (2 Corinthians 7.1 NASB).

We need to be mindful of these things, but let us rejoice in the Lord, abiding in Him and trusting Him to lead us by His spirit each day until we are fully conformed to His image. There is nothing greater than to walk with Jesus in this life, but what is to come is even more glorious. As Paul wrote: **Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit** (2 Corinthians 3.17-18 NASB). We have this treasure in earthen vessels that one day will break forth into heavenly vessels, a dwelling not made with hands, reserved in heaven for all who are born from above. Until then, we groan, as Paul groaned, to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven. **Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge** (see 2 Corinthians 4.7; 5.1-5).

To be continued....

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0723

DECEMBER 28, 2007

BORN FROM ABOVE

[PART 9 – *THE SAME WITH EVERYONE WHO IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT*]

Do not wonder at me telling you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it wills; you can hear its sound, but you never know where it has come from or where it goes; it is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3.7-8 JMT)

When we are born from above, we are just like a newborn baby that must grow up. In spirit, we are a new creation in Christ, not based on the flesh, **but of God**. However, this is only the beginning, not the end. I realize that, generally, the term *born from above* or *born again* is viewed strictly as a spiritual birth, which does not include the redemption of the body. However, I see it as all connected. After all, according to Paul, the redemption of the body means that we will receive a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15.44). The spirit comes from above and so will our spiritual body come from above, for it is the dwelling from heaven (2 Corinthians 5.2).

When we first believe, we enter the kingdom of God, which is a spiritual kingdom; however, the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ has not come yet. One must be constituted to reign with Christ in His kingdom, as He sums up all things in the heavens and on the earth (Ephesians 1.10), and this requires a birth that comes from above or, we could say, comes out of heaven or the very realm of God. All of mankind is born of the flesh, which cannot inherit the kingdom. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and simply, this cannot be altered, for it is God’s unchanging principle.

If one hopes to enter the kingdom that Paul called the *celestial* or *heavenly* kingdom (2 Timothy 4.18), then one must be born of the spirit so that one day he can receive a new body—a glorified, immortal, spiritual body in the image of Christ. Writing to the saints, Peter said that this new body is reserved in heaven for us who believe (1 Peter 1.4), and Paul said that our hope is laid up for us in heaven (Colossians 1.5). This does not mean that when believers die, they go to heaven (**the dead know nothing whatsoever** [Ecclesiastes 9.5]); it means that when they are resurrected, they will receive their glorified body that is heavenly and constituted in such a way that it can traverse the earthly or physical realm, as well as the celestial or heavenly realm. The inheritance of the saints is not a piece of real estate in heaven but a body that comes out of heaven, a body born from above, born of the spirit. The saints are to possess an immortal body. **Heaven is not our goal or our hope; immortality is our hope.** What is immortality? It is a life beyond death; a life that is no longer subject to death and, consequently, is no longer subject to sin, which reigns in death.

Paul’s heart was to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3.14 NASB). Paul was pressing on toward the goal of the *out-resurrection* from among the dead that will afford him and all the other conquerors (overcomers) in Christ the privilege of being counted worthy to enter the coming celestial kingdom of Christ, being clothed with a dwelling from heaven, a building from God, a house not made with hands (see 2 Corinthians 5.1-2). Consequently, being born from above leads to a glorious consummation, or, to put it in terms of human growth, it leads to full maturity. When we first believe and are given a new life in the spirit, this life begins to grow in us as Christ is formed in us, until one day, we become like our Lord in full measure, lacking in no area of life, full of the life of Jesus. What bliss!

What I am proposing is this: The whole matter of being born from above starts with a new life in the spirit that continues to advance in us until we receive a new body from above. I believe that this can be discerned in Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus.

“The wind blows where it wills; you can hear its sound, but you never know where it has come from or where it goes; it is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

After He was resurrected but before He ascended for the final time to sit at the right hand of God, Jesus appeared to His disciples, but not as any of us could appear. He appeared in ways that His disciples did not recognize Him. He appeared and disappeared from rooms that had closed doors. In other words, no one knew where He came from and where He went during that time. He simply appeared and then disappeared, unhindered by locked doors and walls. He was like wind!

But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ... Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples ventured to question Him, “Who are You?” knowing that it was the Lord. (John 21.4, 12 NASB)

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be to you.” But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. (Luke 24.36-37 NASB)

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (John 20.19-20 NASB)

This is a picture of one born of the spirit. The disciples could hear Jesus and even see Him at times, but they did not know where He came from or where He was going. What needs to be understood is that after He was resurrected on Sunday, April 5, 33 AD, later that day, Jesus ascended to heaven and presented Himself alive as the wave sheaf offering in the heavenly temple. He then returned to earth and appeared to His disciples over a forty-day period leading up to Pentecost, during which time He spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God (see Acts 1.3). Jesus had been glorified and had taken on an immortal, spiritual, celestial body. But obviously, His appearance changed as He met with His disciples. Also, He could move through time and space unhindered. At one moment, He could be in the physical realm, even eating with His disciples, and the next moment, He could disappear into the spiritual realm. In other words, time and space did not hinder Him.

Dear beloved in Christ, this is what it means to be born from above and to take on a spiritual body in the image of Christ. This is the hope of those who are considered worthy to attain to that age (eon) to come and the resurrection from among the dead. They will be like the angels. They will be the sons of God, the sons of the resurrection (see Luke 20.35-36). No longer will they be hindered by bodies of death or by the physical realm. Their realm will be both the spiritual, celestial realm and the earthly, physical realm. They will move freely between these realms to minister to the Lord and to judge and reign over the world and the angels as Christ heads up all in the heavens and on the earth.

In case some of what has been presented has come across as merely things to which we are to attain, let us be reminded that being born from above is all about our Lord Jesus. Being born from above is being intimately joined with the One who came down out of heaven for us. In that day, we will not only be like Jesus, but we will see Jesus, not only the love of our life but the very source of our life. **When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Christ in you, the hope of glory!** This is the very heart of being born from above. Praise God!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0724

NOVEMBER 13, 2007

No One Has Greater Love Than This

In issue #01-0714 [November 6, 2007], I wrote about the love that Adam had for Eve that led him to follow her in eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I call it body love as revealed through the secret of God given to Paul and written in his Ephesians epistle. Today, it seems that many preachers give Adam a lot of bad press, so to speak. They place all the blame on Adam for the condition that mankind finds itself in, even in our day. Many see Adam as having had a choice in the matter, and he made the wrong choice, so God became very angry with him. But I see it much differently; Adam had no choice in the matter, for Adam actually followed the great command to love. I will explain this in a moment. God did not overlook Adam's sin. He said Adam would die, and he surely did die after 930 years; all mankind has suffered in this way as well. However, it could have been worse. After all, Elohim was compassionate and loving in clothing them and sending them forth from the garden, barring their way in that day to the tree of life so that they would not live forever in that condition. A greater Adam was on the horizon; and one day, they will be partakers of His love as they too enter immortal life with the rest of their progeny.

Personally, after I see Jesus, the love of my life, I want to meet Adam and express my love for him.

It is undeniable that God had to chastise Adam for his one transgression, but it was all in the plan of God that he would fail on this level. I realize that much of the theology of our day stands against such a thought; but then again, much of the theology of our day is nothing more than the collective thought of tradition.

According to the record and Adam's own words, Eve was literally of Adam's flesh.

“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2.23 NASB)

If he had allowed his helper to stand on her own in deception, then Adam would have declared that he hated his own body, according to the very words of Paul that looked back at the record of Adam and his body and brought it forward to Christ and His body. It is all about love!

Thus, the husbands also ought to be loving their own wives as their own bodies. He who is loving his own wife is loving himself. For no one at any time hates his own flesh, but is nurturing and cherishing it, according as Christ also the ecclesia, for we are members of His body. (Ephesians 5.28-30 CV)

Now, why do I state that Adam had no choice in the matter? I believe that Elohim placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden with full expectation that Adam and Eve would partake of the tree. It was no accident that the tree was placed in full view of mankind's parents and that the serpent of old was waiting for his moment to deceive. After all, if we accept that God is Supreme and Sovereign, and all things come through Him, then we must conclude that the whole drama played out in the garden was written and directed by God.

Some proclaim that prior to his fall, Adam was in the age of innocence, and he had to be tested to see if he would obey God's one command. If this is true, then it sure sounds like a formula for failure.

Adam was the new kid on the block. Satan, the old serpent, had been around awhile and was not ignorant of God's ways. The eternal God knows all and sees all, and He knew that in their current state, Adam, and especially Eve, were no match for the old devil. Besides, God put Adam and Eve in the garden with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil staring them in the face, as if to say, "Go ahead and eat!" Adam had no experience with death, so how was he to know what it meant to die? Adam was simply outgunned and destined to fail. For further understanding of this, I recommend you read my book *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, especially Volume 1, chapters 4, 5, and 8.

Others state that Adam and Eve were created perfect and that they were in the image of God right from the start. I have written in my book that they were not created perfect; they had to be *perfected*, as all of us do, and that requires failure. However, as I have meditated on this whole matter of love, I have come to a new conclusion, if not a new revelation for me personally. Before I state this revelation, let me assure you that the one transgression of Adam was a colossal sin that has brought untold pain upon the human race. Death, both in the physical and spiritual sense, is ugly. However, I firmly believe that this was all in the will of God; it was according to the purpose of the eons, and it was for life, not death.

Now, I believe that Adam, in saving the love of his life, did exactly what perfect love demanded. There was no greater love than to lay down his life for his wife.

This is my commandment to you, to love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this—a man laying down his life for his friends. (John 15.12-13 WNT)

Surely, Eve was more than a friend to Adam; she was part of him; she was his love. He was fulfilling the divine law of loving his wife as his own body. This law requires that a man nurture and cherish his own flesh. Adam had perfect love when he was disobedient to God's command. He had no fear at that moment. He knew what he had to do, and he did it without reservation.

Love has in it no element of fear; but perfect love drives away fear, because fear involves pain, and if a man gives way to fear, there is something imperfect in his love. (1 John 4.18 WNT)

Adam loved his wife over any fear of the repercussions of disobedience. He knew that he would die, and so would his wife. So he took the only action that he could for one with perfect love. He had to die along with his wife. Love led to death in the hope that God, in His divine love, would redeem them and give them life. Are these thoughts so outlandish that one is to reject them because they do not fit the theology of the day? I do not think so. After all, Adam was a type of Christ, the last Adam.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3.16 NASB)

Our Lord Jesus laid down His life for the love of His life, His body, and, in fact, for all mankind. He laid down His life by dying for the sin of the world, even the very sin of Adam. Love led to death. But the big difference between the first Adam's action and the last Adam's action is that Jesus' death led to life, not only for Himself but for His body, His wife, and not only for her but ultimately for all mankind.

God is love. The first Adam was created in the image of God. Love was the very nature of Adam. He was a prototype of what was to come. Love is the very nature of the last Adam, the *perfect* Man, the Son of God, the visible image of God, who came out of heaven not only to reveal that God is love but to express the depths of the love of God in a way that cannot be denied. One day, Adam's hope of redemptive life will be realized along with his entire race. Praise God for the last Adam!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0725

NOVEMBER 20, 2007

EFFECTIVE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. (James 5.16-18 NASB)

According to a newspaper article, on November 13, 2007, the governor of the state of Georgia led several hundred people in prayer for rain for his drought-stricken state. The prayer was simple: "God, we need you. We need rain." True to form and right on cue, the demonstrators came out to protest a public official holding what they saw as "a religious observance at the seat of state government." After all, these detractors see the very Creator of all authority as having no business in the governance of mankind, especially in the United States. They know not what they are doing or saying.

For by Him, that is, Christ, the image of the invisible God, **all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him** (see Colossians 1.15, 16). On the cross, Jesus, the Son of God, **disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him** (Colossians 2:15 NASB). When the consummation of the eons comes, and Christ hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, **He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet** (1 Corinthians 15.24-25 NASB). A day will come when, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2.10-11).

Now, many areas of the southeast United States need rain so badly that if none comes soon, they will run out of drinking water. Even nuclear power plants could be forced to shut down. If this were to happen, it would be a disaster of monumental proportions. Our society depends on a plentiful supply of water that is piped to our homes and businesses. Without it, we would be immobilized.

The United States has seen its share of major, natural disasters from devastating fires, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and droughts. At this point, what is missing is a major earthquake or perhaps a volcanic eruption. Of course, we have not been alone, since many parts of the world have experienced severe natural disasters as well, but very few regions of the world experience the variety that we do. It is not uncommon to hear many people crying out to God when disaster strikes. After September 11, 2001, it was not uncommon to hear public officials praying for God to bless America. But what we do not see in public officials or even in many Christians is a heart of confession of sins and turning from our ways (repentance). It seems that when the dust settles, many go back to business as usual, even institutional church business.

As I see it, God has blessed America over and over again and abundantly, if not lavishly. Responsibility to do good always goes along with blessing. **From everyone who has been given much, much will be required** (Luke 12.48 NASB). Perhaps, as a nation, we are not living up to our full responsibility and are sick. After all, sickness comes in many forms, and nations can become sick. Consider how Isaiah diagnosed the Judahite nation that was in rebellion against the Holy One of

Israel. They had become a sinful nation that was sick; the whole head was sick and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot even to the head. Even the land was desolate. They were exhorted to make themselves clean, cease doing evil, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow (Isaiah 1.4-20).

When the Lord wants to get people's attention, He is not bashful about using the natural realm to make a statement. After all, He flooded this earth twice. Consider how the Lord dealt with the Judahite nation in the time of Haggai. He sent blasting wind, mildew, and hail, and kept them from becoming too prosperous (Haggai 2.13-17). Sure does sound like a hurricane or a tornado! Or consider how the Lord dealt with the Israelite nation in the time of Amos. He withheld rain from one city or a part of a city and sent rain to another city or part of it. Two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water (Amos 4.7-8). Sure does sound like a pretty bad drought! And let us not forget that the Lord sent fire to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Finally, a prophetic word pertaining to Christ's kingdom on earth in the next eon tells us that rain will be withheld from nations that do not celebrate the feast of booths and worship the King (Zechariah 14.16-19). So, historically and prophetically, it is quite clear that the Lord does judge nations through natural disasters, as well as through enemies, such as happened on 9/11/01.

I do not know how God views our nation, but I do know that much good has come from America. Perhaps we are sick, but only the Lord knows how sick. Many proclaim judgment has come to America, and some say it is too late, for we have a terminal illness that cannot be cured. I will leave it to the Judge who is standing at the door (James 5.9). Perhaps we have a head cold that, if not treated, will lead to a much more serious sickness that will require more drastic measures on the part of the Lord to heal us. Rather than debate the matter, there is a righteous way for us as a nation, especially the millions in our country who are becoming the righteousness of God *in* Christ (2 Corinthians 5.21), through faith *in* Jesus (Philippians 3.9). Rather than asking God to continue blessing us, we should follow the advice of James and confess our sins as a nation and seek God for healing. We need to be reminded that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. After all, **He hears the prayer of the righteous** (Proverb 15.29 NASB). Consider Abraham when he negotiated with the Lord to withhold judgment if there were at least ten righteous in Sodom (Genesis 18.32); unfortunately, there were not even ten. Surely we have that many in our nation. Consider how effective Elijah was, and we are told that he had a nature like ours, which, by the way, included doubts and fears. Elijah asked that the Lord would take his life; and yet, he was used of the Lord to withhold rain for over three years and then to release the rain. We are not much different. When the heat is turned up, we begin to cry out to God for help. We have this very same nature of fears and doubts, and yet, we are commanded to pray. Christ is our righteousness. Are we not being made the righteousness of God in Christ? It is time to pray as if we truly believe this.

The leaders of our great nation have lost sight of the Almighty God who gives them authority to rule. **For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God** (Romans 13.1b NASB). As a nation, we need to stop asking for blessing and start confessing our sin, starting with the Lord's people, the church that has lost its moral compass, and progressing to the leaders of our nation that have no righteous compass and that seek power that is God's alone. It is time for the leaders of our nation to stand together and confess their sin, to acknowledge that they have no authority apart from God, and to seek the righteousness of God.

So, the next time we, as a nation (or any nation), find ourselves in a difficult place, rather than asking God to bless us, let us confess our sins before the Almighty. Perhaps He will send healing to our nation.

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. (Proverbs 14.34 NASB)

THE UPWARD CALL

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but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0726

NOVEMBER 27, 2007

PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE

I recall when I was a child standing on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean one perfectly clear night, far from the lights of any city. With no lights around for miles, I looked up at the sky and saw a glorious array of stars, beyond measure. I was fascinated by the heavenly beauty that night. My dad was with me, and I inquired of him the meaning of all those lights flickering far above, as if they were calling us upward. My dad could not explain it to me, but I never lost the intrigue that set in my heart that night.

Over forty years later, I found myself looking up into the heavens on a clear night away from any city lights. Only this time, I was standing on ground in the West African country of Ghana. By the grace of God, my wife and I had traveled to Ghana to share Christ with the brethren. We had the privilege and joy of visiting a village in the bush called Kudeha. As I was sharing one night with the brethren in this village, I looked up and was awe-struck by the heavenly view; star after star, all arranged as if by design, all shining and flickering as if to say something to us on earth. There seemed to be far more stars than I recall even as a child. I even saw a huge meteorite with its long fiery tail go blazing through the night sky.

The message that I know was placed on my heart for the brethren in this seemingly-forgotten village was *How Beautiful is the Body of Christ*. As I reflect on this time with these brethren, I realize how fitting it was for me to share this message and to be awe-struck with a glorious view of the heavens, for it speaks of Christ's love for His body, and the destiny that awaits the love of His life.

There are two camps of teaching on the matter of the destiny of the body of Christ. One camp places all the emphasis on "going to heaven." The other camp places all the emphasis on "remaining on the earth." Of course, there are variations within each camp and a lot of variation in between. The one thing that I see in common with both camps is a lack of vision of the purpose of God in relation to Christ and His body. This lack is especially acute with many who are in the "going to heaven when I die" camp. Seldom do I hear going to heaven being connected with the purpose of God *in Christ*. Those holding to an earthly destiny at least see that God has purposed that mankind is to have dominion over the earth in the eons to come.

However, to hold either view, one must see a heavenly and an earthly destiny as mutually *exclusive*. In other words, both cannot exist together; one must win over the other. I find this unfortunate, for, according to Scripture, heaven and earth are mutually *inclusive* in regard to the destiny of the body of Christ. We discover this truth in the very purpose of God worked out *in Christ through His body*.

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us **the secret of His will** (in accord with His delight, **which He purposed in Him**) to have an administration of the complement of the eras [the dispensation of the fullness of times], **to head up all** [gather together in one all things; the summing up of all things] **in the Christ — both that in the heavens and that on the earth — in Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand** [predestinated] **according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will, that we should be for the laud of His glory....** (Ephesians 1.8b-12 CV [KJV, NASB])

It is God's will that was held in secret but now revealed through Paul, and this secret pertains to the purpose *in Christ*, which speaks of destiny. What is the purpose? What has God purposed *in Christ* for those who are called and chosen *in Christ*? There is really only one purpose. God has purposed to

head up, or to gather together, or to sum up all in *the* Christ, both that in the heavens and that on the earth. But notice how Paul connects this purpose and destiny to the body of Christ: **In Whom our lot was cast, being designated beforehand according to the purpose of God!** God has purposed to head up all *in* Christ, and He has predestined a people to be part of this gathering into one. This means that the body of Christ is joined to the very purpose of God in gathering together in one all things in heaven and on earth. This was such a tremendous revelation to Paul that he prayed that the eyes of the heart of the saints would be opened to see it. Paul knew that spiritual sight or, we could say, spiritual vision was required to comprehend it.

Therefore, I do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength, which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all. (Ephesians 1.16-23 CV)

What are we to perceive (see)? The expectation or hope of God's calling! What is this calling? It is the calling into the destiny of Christ, not only in this eon but in the impending one. What is the destiny of Christ? It is the summing up or gathering together of all things in the heavens and on the earth. But notice how Paul brings this thought together. The body of Christ is the complement of the One who fills all in all. *Complement* refers to that which fills up. In other words, the body of Christ completes Christ; the body is the fullness of Christ. A Head without a body is incomplete, just as Adam without Eve was incomplete. It is the counsel of God's will to join the body to the Head so that the body is joined to the purpose of God and the destiny of *the* Christ. Consequently, the body of Christ is joined to the living Head who is gathering together all things in heaven and on earth. The destiny of the body of Christ has to do with *both* heaven and earth. It is a mutually *inclusive* destiny.

The Father has made Christ Head over all, and in this capacity as Head over all, He has given Him to the ecclesia, which is His body, His very complement, the complement of the One who is completing the all in all for God the Father to be *All* in all (1 Corinthians 15.28). Do you comprehend what this means to those who are called forth into the body of Christ? It means that the body is the very image or likeness of Christ, and in His likeness, the body is joined with the One who is summing up, gathering up, or heading up all things in the heavens and on the earth.

How do you think Christ the Head is going to gather together all things in one? Is He just going to say a word? Is He just going to pass His hand over creation? Hardly! He is going to do it through His vessel called His body, the corporate body of Christ. The Head of All intimately joined to His body will bring about the purpose of God in the eons to come. Think about it!

Now, here is my conclusion as to the two camps mentioned at the beginning. As I see Scripture, the destiny of the body of Christ is heavenly **and** earthly, celestial **and** terrestrial, spiritual **and** physical (material). All together these groupings speak of all things in the heavens and on the earth, and this includes the visible and the invisible. **For by Him all things were created, in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible** (Colossians 1.16 NASB). This is to whom the body is joined.

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0727

DECEMBER 4, 2007

THY KINGDOM COME

Recently, an editorial appeared in our local newspaper that read **Religion and Politics — Kingdom on Earth**. The article quoted a candidate who is running for his party's nomination for President of the US. The editorial was about "the role of religion in the public sphere," and the use of religion by those who are on the political right and left. During our national elections, it is not uncommon for politicians to be invited to speak from the pulpit of what many would call Christian churches. It seems a bit early in the process for such a thing, but then again, we have turned into a country that markets everything way before its season.

This candidate told a congregation: ***"I am confident we can create a Kingdom right here on Earth."***

I can only surmise that what this candidate meant was that Christians or perhaps the religious can create a kingdom on earth through the political process; that is, we can have a political kingdom. Although this might make for good politics to woo a certain vote, there is one big challenge to such a notion: The United States is a republic of elected officials and laws set by Congress, not a kingdom with a king who is the law. There is no kingdom without a king, and the last time I checked our constitution, which was a few moments ago, we do not elect a king to govern us. Of course, I am trying to be facetious, and I trust that this candidate knows the difference between a kingdom and a republic. But then again, one never knows! At any rate, this is a good springboard for discussing the kingdom that is coming that will end the silly politics of our era and usher in true righteousness and justice.

The word *kingdom*, as translated from the Greek word *basileia*, means "reign." It most often refers to the reign of a king, or "the realm ruled by a king or the territory, people, or sovereign power pertaining to it." By dividing the word into its two components, we see that it is made up of *king* and *dom*, which is the abbreviation for *dominion*, which means "rule or power to rule; sovereign authority; sovereignty." Thus, the word *kingdom* means that a king rules over a realm. There can be no kingdom without a king. Years ago, there were many kingdoms on earth, but many have been replaced with other forms of sovereignty in which the people rule through elections and set their own laws, rather than a king who is sovereign, ruling without equal in his realm. Generally, in a kingdom, the king is the law.

Reading this candidate's remarks should remind us of something that took place over 2,000 years ago when Jesus appeared on this earth and preached ***the evangel of the kingdom of the heavens***, ***"Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand"*** (Matthew 4.17, 23 NASB). The Jews according to the flesh heard this good news and figured that it was time for a political kingdom to come on earth with the Messiah, the King of Israel, seated on the throne of David. They were not looking for a Savior to die for their sins, nor were they looking for a spiritual kingdom; rather, they were looking for a king to deliver them from the rule of Rome and to establish the kingdom or reign of God on earth. They were looking for and expecting a political king. This is evident even in the reaction of the twelve disciples to their Master.

When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9.54 NASB)

And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. (Matthew 26.51 NASB)

In fact, they, along with others, thought they could take the kingdom by force, which prompted Jesus to declare: **“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force”** (Matthew 11.12 NASB).

There is a difference between *the kingdom of the heavens* and *the kingdom of God*. *The kingdom of the heavens* will come to this earth with full observation; all the nations of the earth will know that the rule of the heavens has come to this earth as Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, takes the scepter of the kingdom of this world. *The kingdom of God* is a present spiritual reality that resides in the hearts of believers; it is not to be observed on earth as a political empire, and definitely not to be observed as a great institution that many call the “church.”

When He walked amongst His Jewish brethren, Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, and He answered them: **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [entos]** (Luke 17.20b-21 KJV). The Greek word translated *within* is *entos*, which means “inside.” In other words, if you are looking for outward signs of the kingdom of God, forget it, for it cannot be observed with the natural eye. Why? Because it is a spiritual kingdom and one cannot enter it without being begotten from above with the spirit of God. The kingdom must take root in you in spirit.

But the good news is this: A kingdom is coming to this earth. We pray that very soon the great voices in heaven will proclaim: **“The kingdoms of the world did become those of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign to the ages of the ages!”** (Revelation 11.15 YLT). I like the way another translation states it: **“The sovereignty of the world now belongs to our Lord and His Christ; and He will be King until the Ages of the Ages”** (Revelation 11.15 WNT).

A day is coming when this earth will have one king who rules supreme over the affairs of this earth. **And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one** (Zechariah 14.9 KJV). **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne** (Psalm 97.2). No longer will the politicians of the world pervert justice and law for their own gain. No longer will it be rule by the opinion of the populace. Thank God, political polls will cease. God’s divine law will rule the day.

But there is more good news: Jesus is the King of **kings** and the Lord of **lords**, which means that He will have a company of people who will reign with Him. A day is coming when a new song will go forth: **“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth”** (Revelation 5.9-10 NASB). Heaven will proclaim: **Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years** (Revelation 20.6 NASB).

We can be absolutely assured that a kingdom is coming to this earth, but it will not come through the political process of the United States or through any candidate who proclaims he or she will bring it to this earth. It will come when Jesus, the Savior of the world, comes out of heaven to this earth to take the scepter of His kingdom. God Himself has set the time for this day. May it come soon, to the glory of God the Father and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! **May Thy Kingdom come!**

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0728

DECEMBER 11, 2007

STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate [encourage, promote, provoke] one another to love [to show love] and good deeds [to do good things, good works], not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10.23-25 NASB [GW, HCSB, KJV])

Recently, I read an article about a rather well-known and influential “church” that, frankly, I never heard of, so they were not that well known or influential to me. After reading the article, I concluded that it was a good thing for us that we had not been influenced by them. I don’t care to mention their name because it is not my intent to bring attention to them or to be directly critical of them. My purpose is to use this article as an illustration or, if you will, a springboard for what Scripture tells us about assembling together.

Evidently, this influential church had a vision of what the “church” should look like that was modeled after the methods of secular business. Their vision was “big, programmatic, and comprehensive.” To me, it sounds like they practiced what I would call “cafeteria-style church”; that is, they tried to have a little something for everyone and attempted to get as many people as possible involved in as many programs or activities as possible. They were driven by programs and measured their success by participation in these things, thinking that the more people participated in the programs, the more spiritual or the more of a disciple of Christ they would become. As any good business would do to measure their success, they did some qualitative research, and lo and behold, as if it were some great revelation, they discovered that their programs did not necessarily produce or predict whether people would love more or be better disciples. They also discovered that the things that they sunk millions of dollars into (that’s right, millions!) were not much help, and the things that they didn’t put much into were actually the things for which the people were crying. Their conclusion: they need to go back to some of the basics, like reading the Bible and developing relationships; they need to fundamentally change the way they “do church” and replace their old assumptions with “new insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture.” I am all in favor of Bible reading and relationships, but I am not so sure about the research thing. I find it sad that they needed a research study to discover something that the word of God could have told them. It sounds like the business model may still be part of their thinking. Well, may the spirit of God lead them in all truth and change hearts to be willing to give it all up for the sake of Christ and one another.

This leads to the point of this issue, and that is the purpose in our assembling together as the Lord’s people. To me, it is amazing that the church of our day places so much emphasis on meetings and “doing church”, and, yet, the very reason for meeting has been lost. If you do not regularly attend or are not a “member” of a “church,” you are branded as “unchurched,” a term that is unscriptural and very misleading. If I had any doubts about this term *unchurched*, they have vanished, for as I was editing this issue, I took a break to read the daily newspaper and, as if right on cue, there was an article staring me in the face. It started with these words: “Reaching 4.5 million unchurched.” It then went on to define the *unchurched* as “those who say they don’t belong to any church.” Notice that it has nothing to do with believing, but everything to do with membership.

What is going on? Why do so many Christians think this way? Part of the answer lies in the fact that what many call *church* has become nothing more than an institution or an organization patterned after the businesses of the world. Salvation itself has been linked to being part of this institutional church. The very essence of the *ecclesia*, which is the body of Christ, a spiritual body of love that nurtures and cherishes itself and builds itself up in love, has been replaced with activities, programs, committees, and a myriad of things to propagate a distorted vision of Christ's vision of His *ecclesia* (church) that He is building.

At its core, the body of Christ is a vessel of love (Ephesians 5.22-32), and assembling together is all about love as discovered in the epistle to the Hebrews that is quoted above. The exhortation not to forsake assembling is nestled between the hope and the day that is approaching. The hope and the day speak of the coming of our Lord to assemble all His people unto Himself. It is this hope and day that we are to have set before us that will stimulate us to love. The so-called church of our day is out of focus and has lost the vision that was held by the embryonic *ecclesia*. Some have lost sight of the very purpose and plan of God that kicks into high gear when our beloved Lord Jesus comes to assemble His body. In fact, this is the very assembling together that is spoken of in Hebrews 10.25.

According to Scripture, the reason for assembling together is to encourage, promote, provoke, or stimulate one another to love and good deeds. The success of anything that we do is to be measured by how much love is manifested toward one another in fulfillment of the Lord's command to love one another. This is to be the measure of all assembling together, whether it is for worship, prayer, singing, fellowship, meals, or whatever we do when together. Assembling together is not for the purpose of meeting for the sake of meeting, but it is for the purpose of stimulating one another to love and good deeds outside of the meetings. Loving one another is to be so integral in our daily lives that it is like breathing. This is really where the love and good works are to take place. We must be **love-centered**, not meeting-centered. When we gather together, we must be stimulants of love to one another. When we depart from one another, we should be encouraged in our hearts to do the good deeds or works that we were created for *in* Christ. In fact, our hearts should be filled with love and ready to walk in love. Paul wrote: **And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor** (Ephesians 5.2 KJV). **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them** (Ephesians 2.10 KJV).

We are to walk in love and in good works, and this is done because we love as Christ first loved us and continues to love us. Again, Paul wrote: **Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13.8-10 NASB). **Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality** (Romans 12.9-13 NASB). **And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased** (Hebrews 13.16 NASB).

We need to examine ourselves to see if we are living up to the command to love. Many seem to emphasize meetings almost in a superstitious way, as if they are required of the Lord to bring Him pleasure. But how can they please Him if love is absent? Let us begin to encourage one another and throw out all these programs, strategies, and business-like plans. Perhaps the spirit of God will do a new thing that transcends the institutional meetings, and true sacrificial love will fill the *ecclesia* in such a way that it will flow daily throughout our communities in living, practical ways.

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds! Let us walk in love!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0729

DECEMBER 18, 2007

SHARED IN THEIR SPIRITUAL THINGS

But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles [nations] have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. (Romans 15.25-27 NASB [CV])

Recently, I heard a well-known pastor-teacher use these verses to justify Christians giving money to Jews who do not believe in Jesus. In other words, Christians are to support Jewish people, especially ones who are seeking to return to the ancient land of Israel, just because they lay claim to being a Jew according to the flesh. Admittedly, this brother uses other Scripture to make his claim, as do many others who make opposite claims. However, those of us who teach and preach must guard ourselves from using, or rather abusing, Scripture to make a point. Unfortunately, this is what this pastor-teacher did, for Paul was not speaking of unsaved Jews but of the saved.

Paul was speaking of the saints in Jerusalem, the Jews who had come out of their ignorance and unbelief, just as Paul had done, who had the eyes of their heart opened to see who Jesus is and to believe on Him. Paul was not speaking of unsaved Jews in his day. He was speaking not only of Jewish believers but of poor Jewish believers that needed help from other members of the body of Christ. Paul, along with the original disciples, was eager to remember the poor (Galatians 2.10). There was a need, and Paul sought to meet that need, as did the saints in Macedonia and Achaia. The brethren were not coerced to give help but were pleased to make a contribution. They wanted to do it. After all, this is as it should be because we are commanded to love one another. John the apostle of love wrote: **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 John 3.16-17 NASB).** As believers, we are to share our material things with our brethren in need. This is in accord with His command to love one another.

This pastor-teacher also used another one of Paul's epistles to support his view that Christians owe their material things (specifically, money) to the unsaved Jews of our day.

Wherefore, remember that once you, the nations in flesh—who are termed 'Uncircumcision' by those termed 'Circumcision,' in flesh, made by hands—that you were, in that era, apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and without God in the world. Yet now, in Christ Jesus, you, who once are far off, are become near by the blood of Christ. For He is our Peace, Who makes both one, and razes the central wall of the barrier (the enmity in His flesh), nullifying the law of precepts in decrees, that He should be creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace; and should be reconciling both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in it. And, coming, He brings the evangel of peace to you, those afar, and peace to those near, for through Him we both have had access, in one spirit, to the Father. Consequently, then, no longer are you guests and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to God's family, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the capstone of the corner

being Christ Jesus Himself, in Whom the entire building, being connected together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord: in Whom you, also, are being built together for God's dwelling place, in spirit. (Ephesians 2.11-22 CV)

It is true that the nations were alienated from the citizenship of Israel, but the truth of the matter is that those of the nations who have believed and those of ancient Israel that have believed are now one *in Christ*—a new creation, the one new man. There is no longer Jew or Gentile. All who believe are of one body, with one spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4.4-6). We are being built together for God's dwelling place, *in spirit*. Do you touch anything earthly in these words? *In Christ* there is a new humanity that is not based on Jew or Gentile according to the flesh. This new humanity is *in spirit*, for *God is spirit*. As Paul told the Romans, the true Jew is one who is circumcised of the heart (Romans 2.29); consequently, one could make the argument that all who believe are true Jews in the mind and heart of God. The true Jew and even the true Israel that God is after is not of the realm of this earth but of the spiritual and heavenly or celestial realm.

T. Austin-Sparks, perhaps one of the great spiritual giants of his time, saw beyond the earthly realm and into the spiritual realm in ways that few contemporaries have done. I believe it is quite instructive to quote him directly from his series titled *God's New Israel*, as found in chapter 4.

At the commencement of these messages we made one statement which was to cover all that follows. That declaration was that the New Testament is built upon the ground of the Old Testament; that is, that what God was doing in a temporal and earthly way then, He is doing in a heavenly and spiritual way now. There is no change in His purpose, nor in His principles: the change is in His method. His one purpose is to take out of the nations a people for His name (Acts 15:14). In this part of the world's history God is working to secure out of the nations a new spiritual Israel (*Galatians 6:16 and the whole context of 1 Peter 2:4-10 – note verse 10*). He is constituting this spiritual Israel upon the principles of the old Israel. The first Israel failed Him, violated all His spiritual principles, and broke His covenant (Hebrews 8:9). (*Note the whole nature and purpose of the Letter to the Hebrews!*) This is the nation to which Christ referred when He said to 'official' Israel: "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof", i.e. the fruits of the Kingdom of heaven, a phrase which always related to the Gospel to all the nations. This is a nation out of all the nations. I am fully aware that there is a large body of Bible students standing at my elbow – so to speak – feverishly wanting to challenge me regarding the future of the Jewish nation with all the questions about Palestine and present developments there. This whole matter has divided Bible readers and their respective followers into two main schools. Dr. Schofield leads the one school, i.e. the "Suspended Kingdom" school with a definite future for the Jewish nation. Dr. Campbell Morgan (*pre-eminent as a Bible teacher in his generation*) categorically denied the future for Israel (*as such*) teaching. We refuse to be drawn into a contention for either view. What we are saying with emphasis is that for this dispensation, "upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11), "Once at the end of the ages..." (Hebrews 9:26), the earthly Israel is in rejection, and the new heavenly Israel – the Church – is in the forefront of God's work. Touch this earth and world in any way and you touch confusion, frustration, and death! So we say with Nehemiah: "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down".

No one will think for a moment that what we have said implies that we have no concern for the Jews. Jews are to contribute as much to the New Israel as are the Gentiles, but not as Jews or Gentiles, but a New Creation. We are as much concerned for the salvation of Jews as we are for anybody!

Amen!

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#01-0730

DECEMBER 25, 2007

THROUGH WHOM HE ALSO MAKES THE EONS

By many portions and many modes, of old, God, speaking to the fathers in the prophets, in the last of these days speaks to us in a Son, Whom He appoints enjoyer of the allotment of all, through Whom He also makes the eons.... (Hebrews 1.1-2 CV)

Recently, I was having some fellowship over a meal with an elderly brother in Christ. I appreciate our times together because he is not a “pew-sitting, get all his spiritual food from the pulpit sort of guy.” Actually, I tell him that he is a maverick because he often does not buy into the orthodox or traditional theological thought of the day. After all, I should know a maverick when I see one since I don’t buy into much of it, either. So at times, I relate to some, not all, of his musings over the meaning of Scripture. Well, during this particular time with him, he made one of his declarative statements, and it was about time. He said, “God is not in time. Time is an invention of man.” My ears perked up! Now, this is not a new thought to me. Actually, some time ago, I heard that some brother had the same view and that he was writing a book on the subject to prove, according to Scripture, that God does not care much about time. Simply, He is not in it. I imagine that such thinking comes from the concepts of an eternal God and eternal life. In fact, most believers place a lot of emphasis on eternal life as our hope while I see Scripture emphasizing eonian life (life in the coming eons) and immortality or life beyond death.

As much as I enjoy considering off-the-wall thoughts, this is one for which I must draw the line and not cross. Scripture is abundantly clear that God works in time, and that He alone, through His Son, set time in motion. God is the mathematical genius of the universe, and His word is filled with numbers, many of which refer to time. Time is based on numbers (60 seconds, 60 minutes, 24 hours, 7 days, 52 weeks, 12 months). The Bible is a numeric wonder that, when studied diligently, begins to unlock the timing of God’s purpose and plan that is to be accomplished through *the eons*.

Now, I use the word *eon* quite a bit in my writings, and explanation is given in my book titled *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, in particular, Volume 1, chapter 1. The word *eon* is an Anglicized word of the transliterated Greek word *aiōn*, which means a long segment or period of time that has a beginning and an end. There is also another Greek word, *aiōnion*, which is the adjective form of the noun *aiōn*. The English equivalent of *aiōnion* is *eonian*. Generally, Greek-English Lexicons acknowledge that *aiōn* [*eon*] is an indefinite, long period of time—an age. However, many have stretched the meaning of the word to make it mean *forever*, *evermore*, *everlasting*, or *eternal*, and in some cases, *world* or *universe*. This is not justified, for it injects interpretative bias into Scripture.

Note:

Anglicized means the item in question has been changed to an English idiom, pronunciation, custom, manner, word, etc. Thus, *eon* is the Anglicized word for *aiōn*. Notice how the two words are similar in spelling and pronunciation.

Transliterated means to write or spell words, etc. in the characters of another alphabet that represents the same sound or sounds. Thus, *aiōn* is the transliterated word for the Greek word *aiōn*, pronounced *ahee-ohn*.

Interpretative bias means that in translating Scripture from the original languages into another language, the translators used words based on tradition and interpretation of what they believe to be the meaning behind the words. The term is not meant to question the

integrity or honesty of any translators. It seems that a certain amount of interpretation is inevitable.

With a proper understanding of the word *eon*, one can clearly see that Scripture itself declares that through His Son, God makes the eons.

God, speaking to the fathers in the prophets, in the last of these days speaks to us in a Son, Whom He appoints enjoyer of the allotment of all, through Whom He also makes the eons [aiōns].... (Hebrews 1.1-2 CV)

Strong's Concordance states that the word *aiōn* properly means an *age* and, by implication, the *world*. Consequently, in the above verse, many translations use the word *worlds* instead of *eons*, which obviously biases the meaning. It is quite true that the Son makes the world, for He is the Creator of all things, both visible and invisible (Colossians 1.16); however, this must include time as well. Translators of Greek Scripture that purpose to be as literal as possible use the word *ages* (LITV, REB, WNT, YLT). In other words, Jesus, the Son of God, makes the eons; He created time.

Consider the sun, the moon, and the stars, which have been fixed or set by the Lord: **Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD of hosts is His name"** (Jeremiah 31.35 NASB). The earth is part of this fixed order and rotates around the sun in 24-hour cycles, during which time the entire earth is bathed in the sun's light that gives us life as we know it. Consider this: The number *six* is the number of man, and the earth orbits around the sun at the speed of 66,600 mph. The number 666 refers to man's authority over God's creation.

The Son of God came into this world and was born in time. Jesus was born on a very specific date, which some have shown to be September 29, 2 BC, at the time of Israel's Feast of Trumpets. As an aside, most scholars acknowledge that December 25 is not the date of His birth. His birth was most likely exactly 4,000 years from the creation of Adam and 1,000 years from David's rule in Jerusalem. Jesus' birth on this day and year was no happenstance. It was in accord with the preordained purpose and plan of God. **But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law** (Galatians 4.4 NASB).

Genesis, the book of beginnings, lays down the truth of time based on six days for man to rule over the earth (Man's day), followed by a seventh day for God's Son to rule over the earth (Lord's day), which leads to an eighth day (God's day). *Elohim* restored our earth that was in waste and ruin in six days and rested on the seventh day. This is time. These restorative days are prophetic of the time or eons set by God for our present earth. Peter wrote: **But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day** (2 Peter 3.8 NASB). Time is a matter of perception. To us on earth living in time, 1,000 years seems like an eternity, but to God, 1,000 years is like one day. Consequently, there are 6,000 years for man to rule and 1,000 years for God's Son, the King of kings, to rule over our current earth. Scripture is very clear that there will be a period of 1,000 years (a millennium) following our present wicked age in which Christ will rule with a rod of iron (Revelation 20.4-6). Through Moses, the Lord commanded that the Israelites work six days and have a sabbatical rest on the seventh. This is time. The Israelites were commanded to celebrate feasts that were set for precise times of the year, which are prophetic of the first and second coming of Christ. In other words, they foretell precisely when the Lord Jesus came to die for the sin of the world and when He will come again to establish the kingdom of God on this earth and to reign over the earth. The world unknowingly awaits the Feast of Tabernacles when the rivers of living water will flow forth from the innermost being of the conquerors of Christ that will ultimately extend to all mankind as the new Jerusalem, the dwelling of God in spirit, envelopes or engulfs the new earth (John 7.37-39; Revelation 22.1, 17).

God is in time because His Son created time, came into time, and is coming again to reign over this earth in time. We wait for the Son to come from heaven to establish His kingdom over this earth, the kingdom of Christ that will usher in the eighth day of God in which righteousness will truly dwell (2 Peter 3.13). We wait for the One through whom God makes the eons.