

The Upward Call

[A Periodical]

Volume #05-11

2011

by

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The following contains
The Upward Call periodicals
issued in 2011

ABBREVIATIONS OF SCRIPTURE VERSIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| 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) |
| 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) |

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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)

#05-1101

2011: "We Have Come To Mount Zion"

January 1, 2011

Starting in 2007, I have asked for a word from the Lord to start the year. I was given "**victory**" for 2007, "**love**" for 2008, "**wind blows**" for 2009, and "**I have come**" and "**From your inner most being will flow rivers of living water**" for 2010. As I have explained previously, I believe these words are all connected and build upon one another. See issues #02-0802, #03-0901, #04-1001, and #04-1002.

I should add that these words also **transcend time**; a word the Lord keeps reminding me of as I consider what I hear and see. The Lord taught me this lesson very clearly in the selling of property. See issue #03-0989, August 17, 2009, *Transcend Time. The Deal is Done. Transcend* simply means "to go beyond the limits of." In other words, *transcending time* means "to go beyond the limits of time." It doesn't mean that we are no longer in time but rather that we see things as God sees them.

At the moment, as we reside in mortal bodies, we are stuck in time, but we need to remember that God is not. When the will of heaven is declared, we can be assured that it will take place on earth. What we need to do is line up with the will and **eonian plan and purpose of God**, and then stand and wait until we see it all unfold in time on earth. Our prayer is to be: **Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.** God has set His appointed times, and they will come in God's time, not man's.

On our end, we must live by faith.

(37) For, yet a very little while, and the One coming will come, "and will not delay." Hab.2:3 (38) "But the just shall live by faith;" "and if he draws back," "My soul is not pleased in him." Hab. 2:4; Zeph. 1:6; Mal. 1:10 (Hebrews 10:37-38 LITV)

Just consider the ancient prophets; they were given the word of the Lord and visions and dreams to back up the word, and yet, what they saw and heard was often 100's and even 1,000's of years into the future, things that are being and will yet be manifested in our day and in the eons to come.

There is another aspect to transcending time that speaks to more than just prophetic events; it has to do with **imputation** and **manifestation**. In the Greek, the word translated *impute* is *ellogeo*, which means "to charge someone's account." The word is used exclusively by Paul in only two places (Romans 5:13; Philemon 18). However, the clearest definition of impute comes from Paul in his Roman's epistle when he refers to God as "calling the things that are not as if they were."

(16) On account of this, it is of faith, that it be according to grace, for the promise to be certain to all the seed, not to that of the Law only, but also to that of the faith of Abraham, who is father of us all, (17) according as it has been written, "I have appointed you a father of many nations;" before God, whom he believed, the One making the dead live, and calling the things that are not as if they were. Gen. 17:5 (Romans 4:16-17 LITV)

Because of Christ's death and resurrection, God has imputed to all who believe in His Son both righteousness and life. In other words, when we believe on Jesus, righteousness is reckoned to us or charged to (placed in) our account as if we were actually righteous, and we are given immortal life as if we will never die again. However, the truth of the matter is that as long as we make our abode in mortal bodies, we are not actually righteous, that is, we do not practice righteousness in every thought and action as our Lord did when He came the first time and walked this earth; and we will die unless the

Lord comes again in our lifetime. We are able to stand before God with the righteousness of Christ while in bodies of death, but we are not what could be called *perfected righteousness*. The same must be said about immortal life. When we believe on Jesus, we have immortal life, but we continue to occupy mortal bodies that will die and return to the soil of the earth, awaiting resurrection, either the first or the second. Thus, righteousness and immortal life are imputed to believers in this eon [age]. The Father calls things that are not as if they were.

Today, God sees us as righteous and immortal even though, in the absolute sense, we are neither. We must await their manifestation that only comes through one single event, and that is through resurrection and transfiguration, which is our hope; **Christ in you, the hope of glory**.

It is on the basis of imputation and the hope of manifestation that Paul could declare that God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has **blest us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies [celestials] with Christ** (Ephesians 1:3), and He **raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenlies [celestials] in Christ Jesus** (Ephesians 2:6). He **calls the things that are not as if they were**.

Today, we see these things in part, just as we only touch righteousness and the power of Christ's resurrection life in part; and we only have an earnest of His spirit dwelling within. A day is coming when we will be like our beloved Lord as we make our abode in immortal, celestial, spiritual, and glorified bodies in the image of the Son of God. Creation itself is anxiously longing for this glorious day as it **waits eagerly for the manifestation of the sons of God** (Romans 8:19).

Now, this leads to the word that is on my heart for 2011. In some ways, it is more a theme that I trust, Lord willing, I will be able to develop more fully in the coming months, [perhaps as a book]. The word is: **"We have come to Mount Zion."**

(22) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, (23) to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (24) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24 NASB)

Frankly, I was not sure that this was the word for 2011 until I was awakened in the middle of the night, to be precise, at 1.59 am, and heard: **"Zion is the word."**

I am not going to elaborate on this word in this issue; this will come later. In the interim, see issue #03-0996, May 11, 2009, *New Jerusalem #6. Mount Zion*. At this point, I am more interested in simply putting forth this word, which speaks of God "calling the things that are not as if they were."

We have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the celestial Jerusalem, which is New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). In God's plan, we are there now, but we await its full manifestation when the sons of God are manifested corporately as **a temple in the Lord, a dwelling of God in spirit** (Ephesians 2:21-22), which is called New Jerusalem, the holy city.

In closing, I have one question for you to ponder: If we have come to Mount Zion, which means that we Christians have come to God's holy mount, then why is it that so many Christians, especially those who like to be called evangelicals, embrace the Zionism of the state of Israel and the apparent Jews of our day and as if they are God's chosen people. Need we be reminded that the apparent Jews reject Jesus as Messiah and the Son of God and that the Lord calls them liars! See issues #04-1075 through #04-1094, July-August 2010. God is working along one unified line, not two opposing ones, and we all must be grafted into this one line, which is Christ. The good news is that all mankind will one day, but not all on the same day, be grafted into Christ to the glory of God who calls things that are not as if they were.

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1102

Number 11. Disorder, Disintegration

January 2, 2011

As I have shared in several issues, God speaks to us through numbers, and scripture is filled with examples. A study of numbers in scripture reveals that numbers signify spiritual truths that are repeated over and over again in God's word. For example, we know that the numbers 7, 10, and 12 are numbers of completion and perfection. However, God not only speaks to us through numbers in scripture but also through numbers associated with history and time. It seems even the world-at-large has a sense of numbers signifying certain things, especially catastrophic events. This is why people got excited as dates like 6-6-6, 7-7-7, 8-8-8, 9-9-9, and 10-10-10 approached. I am sure there will be some looking toward 11-11-11 as some sort of prophetic sign as well.

Whether there is any significance to the fact that we have just entered the 11th year of the 21st century remains to be seen. I have something to share on this front, but before doing so, let us consider the meaning of the numbers 10, 11, and 12. There is much that could be said about these three numbers, but I will only touch upon them enough to make my point about the potential for the year 2011.

The number 10 signifies the completion of order or of a cycle, meaning it is the number of divine order. We see divine order in the human body that has ten toes and ten fingers. Further, it signifies the law and responsibility under the law, that is, the works of the law. Thus, there are Ten Commandments. However, as an ordinal number of completion (completing a cycle of things), the number 10 can and does signify the completion of things both good and bad. For example, the Ten Commandments are good for those who follow them, for the law is good (Romans 7:12, 16). On the other hand, 10 devastating plagues of judgment were brought upon Egypt. When one keeps the law of God, there is order and reward. However, when one does not keep the law of God, there is disorder and judgment, which leads to the number 11.

The number 11 signifies disorder, disintegration, and judgment. In the Hebrew language, the number 11 is written with the Hebrew letters *yod*, meaning *hand*, and *aleph*, meaning *strength*. Putting the two meanings together signifies that man working his own way apart from God's way (law) leads to disorder and ultimately disintegration of all that man builds according to his own strength. Is this not the history of man? The history of man is strewn with his failures that have led to innumerable conflicts and breakdowns of societies and nations. No nation, kingdom, or empire has lasted indefinitely. All have failed in time, and generally in relatively short periods of time, due to man shunning God's law and ways for man's law and ways.

In scripture, there are many examples of the number 11. Jacob had twelve sons, but when Joseph was sold to the Midianites by his brothers and presumed dead by his father Jacob, the house of Jacob was left with 11 brothers and it fell into disorder. Look at their history. The climax came when Jacob and his family found themselves at the mercy of a famine in the land. Only when they were reunited with their brother Joseph was order restored in Jacob's household, and they were saved from the famine.

Also, when the sons of Israel were called out of Egypt and they left Horeb for Canaan, it was an 11-day journey. But prior to this, God brought judgment upon Egypt through 10 plagues for their refusal to let God's people go. As if this were not enough, as the sons of Israel passed through the parted Red Sea, Pharaoh decided to bring them back into slavery. This was the Egyptians' 11th offense. They were out of order, and judgment fell upon the Egyptian army.

Further, on their journey to the Promised Land, the Israelites rebelled against God 10 times. Unfortunately for them, they believed the 10 spies about Canaan, not God, and they were banished back to the wilderness for another 38 years. But what happened when this judgment fell upon them? They rebelled an 11th time with their attempt to take Canaan by their own strength. Disorder came in and they utterly failed in their attempt (Numbers 14:39-45).

The number 12 signifies governmental perfection. There were 12 sons of Israel and 12 apostles who will judge the 12 tribes of Israel. There are 12 foundation stones, 12 gates, and 12 pearls associated with New Jerusalem, to name a few examples.

We could say that when man repents of his rebellion against God and His law and returns to God, God's divine government is established and order is restored. Men and their governments of manmade laws, which are nothing but lawlessness, can strive all they want, but ultimately, God alone will prevail; judgment will come upon the governments of men causing disorder and disintegration, leading the way for the kingdom of God to be established among the nations with God's Son as King.

So, I trust that you can see a progression from the number 10 to 11 to 12. When man rebels against God's order, disorder comes in; but when he repents and turns to God's way, God's perfect government is established, ushering in divine order.

Now, the world has just completed its first decade of the new millennium, the 21st century. How would we characterize this decade? Would we call it a decade in which the world embraced God's law and His divine order? If you keep up with world news or you have read much of what I have written, you know that my answer is that we have come through a time of lawlessness resulting in the structures of man teetering as if ready to fall. The world has completed a 10-year cycle of failure and lawlessness. As I have stated previously, Babylonian leaders are smart and they have been doing all they can to keep their lawless Babylonian system from falling. So far they have managed to keep it going, but this is only because God's appointed time for it to fall has not come yet. But be assured, it will come and sooner than most realize. When they say peace and security [safety], then sudden destruction will come (1 Thessalonians 5:3). It will be swift and complete (see Revelation 18).

Thank God; we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a kingdom that will have no end to its increase and no bounds (Hebrews 12:28; Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33). It is **the eonian kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** (2 Peter 1:11 CV).

This leads to the thought I have for 2011. Mind you, I am not stating that the year 2011 will definitely be a year of disorder and judgment, but on the other hand, I would not be surprised if it were. At any rate, it behooves each of us to prepare ourselves spiritually for the days ahead. We must be conquerors through Him who loves us.

Well, this is what I have to share. On 1-1-11, I was awakened by a very strong pain in my back, which was most likely the result of overdoing some physical exercises the day before. When the pain struck, I instantly looked at the clock to see how long I had been asleep. The time was 1.11 am.

What are the odds of so many 1's or, if you will, 11's appearing together? The odds of awakening at 1.11 am, given a 7 or 8-hour sleep cycle, are 1 in 420 or 1 in 480. But what are the odds of this happening on 1-1-11? I don't know, but it caught my attention.

Was this the Lord's way of speaking to me about the coming year? I might add that the pain in my back (upper shoulder area) was not only strong but quite severe, and pain is an indication of disorder or disintegration in the body. The back signifies structure and the shoulder strength. Could this indicate that 2011 is going to be a year of disorder in the very structures and strengths of Mystery Babylon? I don't know, so I am not stating so emphatically. What I am stating is watch and be ready, for we do not know the hour in which our Lord comes. Judgment must and will come upon Babylon one day soon. Let us be dressed in the righteousness of Christ, keeping our lamps lit with the Spirit of God!

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1103

Birds Falling, Fish Floating

January 3, 2011

As 2010 came to an end, we heard that 10 tornadoes hit 5 Midwestern American states killing 7 people and that a massive area in Australia was flooded in what some call a "biblical flood," which continues to affect thousands in northeastern Australia. Eighty percent of one town was submerged by the worst flooding on record, and 1,000 homes were inundated. It was reported that 4,000 homes in the region were flood-affected in some measure.

As if this were not enough, as 2011 began, we heard of birds falling out of the sky and dead fish floating on the water and washing ashore. Here are some of the headlines I just pulled off the Internet:

Thousands of birds fall from the sky in Beebe (Arkansas)

Mass La. bird deaths puzzle investigators (Labarre, Louisiana)

Woman reports dozens of dead birds in her yard (Gilbertsville, Kentucky)

Dead fish cover 20-miles of Arkansas River

Thousands of dead fish wash onto Bay shores (Kent Island, Maryland)

Mysterious killing of fish in coastal area (Parana, Paranagua)

Scientists will be quick to point out that bird and fish kills are not unusual events. US Geological Survey records indicate that, in the last 30 years, there have been 16 events in which at least 1,000 blackbirds have died all at once. Others are saying that this many birds out of millions is not really that many.

Without any doubt, they are correct to make such assertions, but what is unusual to me is that these things are occurring so soon in 2011 and that they are occurring in different places. As I am writing this issue, I just heard that some birds have also fallen out of the sky in Sweden.

In Beebe, Arkansas, an estimated 3,000 red-winged blackbirds fell out of the sky, and then 500 of the same species fell in Labarre, Louisiana. A woman in Kentucky also reported dead birds scattered across her yard. Needless to say, this brought some panic and fear in some people who, undoubtedly, had visions of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds."

Along a 20-mile stretch of the Arkansas River, an estimated 100,000 drum fish washed ashore or were floating in the water. Drum fish could be called detritus or bottom feeders, since they eat debris that settles on the river bottom. Over a period of nearly a week, 100 tons of fish (sardine, croaker, and catfish) have been found dead off the coast of Parana, which is located in the southern part of Brazil.

Now, this poses the question: Are these events harbingers or fulfillments of prophecy?

First, it seems to me that they are all part of the broader shaking that God has promised would come upon the earth and the heaven (Haggai 2:6; Hebrews 12:26). The natural order of both heaven and earth is being shaken. Birds fly in the first heaven or, if you will, air around the earth. They are to fly, not fall. This is a shaking of the air regardless of the cause, whether manmade or natural. Fish are to swim in water, not float on it or end up on land. Death is a common everyday occurrence for God's creatures, but when they fall out of the sky or float on the water in mass, this is not natural; it is a shaking.

I know there are many who will counter this with the argument that events such as this, as well as many others, have been occurring since the beginning of time. I agree. Events occurring here and there across the globe do not necessarily portend the end of our present wicked eon [age].

But we need to be reminded that Jesus spoke of famines and earthquakes, that is, natural events, occurring in **various places** at the end of the age (Matthew 24:3, 7). He did not state that they would be widespread as if to cover the whole earth. He likened them to birth pangs (Matthew 24:8), which, I might add, come in waves. Also, famines and earthquakes are only two examples of what will occur in various places (Luke 21:11), for surely God's shaking of the earth and the heaven includes far more than these two types of events. John's prophetic Patmos vision bears witness to this, as well as to the fact that most of the shaking will be worldwide as the end of the age comes.

Second, these events should remind us of John's Patmos vision and judgment of **Mystery Babylon**.

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. (Revelation 16:3 NASB)

And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. (Revelation 18:2 NASB)

Mind you, I am not stating that these naturally occurring events are fulfillments of these prophecies. Biblically speaking, according to the law, red-winged blackbirds are not unclean birds, for they eat seeds and insects. However, in some cultures, blackbirds are considered bad omens. These events are more an indication that we are living at the end of an age, that is, **Man's Day**. Again, I see the events of our day in the broader perspective of God shaking the earth and the heaven in the last days.

Third, and most importantly, we must go beyond interpreting God's word from a physical perspective to discerning what it spiritually signifies. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the battle is not of flesh and blood (carnal) but of the spirit (Ephesians 6:12). What occurs in the natural realm is merely an indication of what is and will be transpiring in the spiritual realm. For too long, too many of us Christians have been looking at God's word on the physical level with an Old Covenant mentality. It is time for us to move beyond the natural sphere and discern in spirit. John's Patmos vision signifies spiritual things (Revelation 1:1) and, as such, the prophecies must be discerned in spirit. Paul would exhort us to be **taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words** (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Finally, in order to discern in spirit, we must be watchful of the signs of the times. Jesus warned an evil and adulterous generation to discern the times.

"Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:3 NASB)

We must not follow the course of the world (Ephesians 2:2), an evil and adulterous generation that ignores, even rejects, God's hand in history and knows nothing of **God's eonian plan and purpose**. We might be labeled doomsayers, but we are not, for our message is the good news of **the kingdom of our Lord** that is coming to establish righteousness and justice in the governance of the nations.

Discerning the times requires spiritual sight. Those of us in our generation with ears to hear what the Spirit is saying must discern the times and what the events on earth spiritually signify. In the greater plan of God, are the events indications of God's appointed time to judge the nations and usher in the kingdom of the Son of His love, that is, the appointed time of the **Second Coming of Christ** and the revealing of the first fruits of **the sons of God** through resurrection and transfiguration? I believe so!

Based on a word the Lord gave me on January 17, 2010, I believe we are seeing the shaking of the natural realm coming like **waves** that are moving across the globe. We need spiritual sight not only to see the waves but to discern what they mean.

Jesus says to us today: **And what I say to you, I say to all. Watch!** (Mark 13:37 LITV)

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)

#05-1104

Unclean and Hated Birds

January 4, 2011

The last issue reported on birds falling out of the sky in various places. The point was made that we need to discern the times. Jesus was critical of the religious leaders of Judah for not discerning what was spiritually taking place in their midst, even as the King of Judah stood in their midst and spoke words that **"are spirit and life"** (John 6:63). They knew how to discern the weather, that is, things occurring in the natural, but not the things of God. Jesus called them an evil and adulterous generation.

Is our generation any better? Hardly! In a sense, not much has changed; the evil and adulterous generation has continued for the last 2,000 years. Paul called it **our present evil age** (Galatians 1:4).

God has promised that He will shake the earth and the heaven, which **denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain** (Hebrews 12:27).

It is one thing to recognize certain events occurring on earth and in heaven as part of God's shaking, but it is another thing entirely to discern their spiritual meaning or significance.

So, at this point, the question is: Could birds falling from the sky have any spiritual and prophetic significance? If, so, what?

Given that we are in the last hour of the last days, the best place to start is John's Patmos vision, for it is here that we read of a cage or prison of unclean and hated birds.

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!" (Revelation 18:2 NKJV)

Some translations use the word *hold* or *prison* in place of *cage*. Regardless, the implication is that the unclean and hated birds are held captive by Babylon. But what do the birds signify?

The first mention in scripture of birds of the heavens is found in 1 Kings 14:11 in reference to those who die in the field being eaten by birds or, more specifically, birds that prey on and scavenge meat rather than eating seeds and insects. In other words, they literally eat the flesh of men. However, the flesh spiritually speaks of the carnal or sinful nature of fallen man. Thus, on a spiritual level, we could say that the birds dine on the carnal flesh of man.

Turning to Jesus, we discover that He made reference to birds in His parable of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens.

**(3) And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;
(4) and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.**
(Matthew 13:3-4 NASB)

As we read on in the parable, the birds are identified with the evil one who snatches away **the word of the kingdom** that was sown in the heart of some people. At one time, I thought the birds simply referred to **spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials**, but this is only partly correct, for **the world forces of this darkness** influence and work through men in implementing **the schemes of the devil** (Ephesians 6:11-12). In other words, men must be plugged into the schemes of the devil, so to speak. But who are they?

It seems to me that Jesus identified them as **the tares, the sons of the evil one** (Matthew 13:25; 38). Consequently, the tares are planted among the wheat for the purpose of deceiving the wheat and snatching away the word of the kingdom from their hearts. This is not about the promise of immortal life for all who believe, but rather, it is about who will reign on earth with Christ in His kingdom as the first fruits of the sons of the kingdom, that is, the conquerors or overcomers who will rise up in the first resurrection and transfiguration.

The task of the tares is to appeal to the carnal flesh of the wheat in an attempt to deceive them. They are like the birds of the air that eat the flesh of men in the field, which, according to Jesus, refers to the world that He bought and in which He hid His treasure (Matthew 13:38, 44).

Before the kingdom of the heavens comes to earth, the tares must be removed, just as Mystery Babylon must fall before the kingdom of our Lord is established on earth to rule over the nations.

To add to this thought, Jeremiah gives us another reference to wicked men and a cage of birds.

(26) 'For among My people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap; they catch men. (27) As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and grown rich. (Jeremiah 5:26-27 NKJV)

Notice that the wicked men are among the Lord's people and that they set snares to catch them. We could say they make them their disciples. Jeremiah likens it to a cage full of birds and a house of deceit. These wicked men become great among the Lord's people and grow rich, presumably through their deception of the people. Jeremiah identifies these wicked men as false prophets and teachers or pastors who refuse the Headship of Christ; and sadly, the people love it.

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it? (Jeremiah 5:31 NASB)

Returning to Revelation 18 and the harlot city, we discover that these false prophets and teachers themselves become enslaved to Mystery Babylon as a cage of unclean and hated birds. They are enslaved by the seductive harlot just as they attempted to enslave the Lord's people. They fed off the flesh of men as scavengers and became great and rich. It reminds me of the prosperity preachers who love the golden calf and who tell the Lord's people to sow a seed of money to their bank accounts. Also, I imagine that those who preach the false gospel of Christian Zionism and refuse to cast out the bondwoman (Judaism and the present Jerusalem) might be included in this group as well, if they do not repent of such teaching.

Jesus warned His disciples to **beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves** (Matthew 7:15), even warning that **many false prophets will arise and mislead many** (Matthew 24:11). Both Peter and John heeded the warning of their Master and likewise warned the people to beware of **the many false prophets that have gone out into the world** as well as **the false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves** (1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1).

These are the tares that must be removed before the kingdom of our Lord comes. But here is the interesting part: God will remove them from His people by enslaving the tares to Mystery Babylon as a cage of unclean and hated or detestable birds. The Lord's people will be called out of Babylon (Revelation 18:4) before it falls and the tares will remain to be judged as part of the harlot city. These lawless ones will be taken to face the fiery law of God.

So, it is possible that the birds falling from the sky are an indication of the coming downfall of the false prophets and teachers that have deceived the Lord's people with their false messages. The day for gathering out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who commit lawlessness is coming!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1105

Nothing is as it seems.

January 5, 2011

I feel like I am catching up a bit after having hit the pause button on writing back in September. Given this, I have a few thoughts that are carryovers from last year.

In the early morning of November 29, 2010, this thought came to me: "You are waking to a whole new world. It will never be the same. Woes have come." Then, on December 12, 2010, I heard: "The world is in shambles. Nothing is as it seems." This last thought of "nothing is as it seems" is what really caught my attention.

Interestingly, it was on November 29, 2010 that Wikileaks founder Assange released the secret US government documents revealing how much our government lies to us and how diplomacy is truly a bag of lies.

I think it was on this same day that I was listening to some news coverage and commentary on the news. Among a panel of commentators, a columnist, whom I admire for having one of the most brilliant minds among the media pundits was offering his views on Wikileaks. I did not record his exact words, so I can only paraphrase them. They went something like this: "We have always suspected that the government lies to us; this now proves it. But the important thing is...", and he went on to offer a more technical answer.

What caught my attention was how quickly he moved on to another aspect of the leaks after acknowledging that the government lies to us. It was as if he were saying: "So what else is new?" By the way, the rest of the panelists did not make much of the lies either. It was as if lying is an accepted norm and the nature of diplomacy and the business of governing. Why not? We know that the political process itself operates in the realm of lies and twisting of the truth for political advantage, and our government is run by politicians who attempt to drag us around by their lies. It is **the cords of falsehood** (Isaiah 5:18). See issues #02-08125 and #02-08132, September-October 2008.

This is the nature of the failed governments of men that ultimately will fail as the kingdom of God takes root among the nations with God's King, His Son, our Lord Jesus, seated upon the throne.

"But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." (Psalm 2:6 NASB)

In the day when Jesus comes to establish His kingdom on earth, the lawlessness of men will give way to the law of God. The knowledge of God and His ways will be established on earth.

They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9 NASB)

But there is a warning, for no one who lies, that is, makes a practice or vocation of lying, will come to **Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the celestial Jerusalem** (Hebrews 12:22). Speaking of New Jerusalem, the Revelation tells us that all liars will be excluded from the holy city.

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8 NASB)

And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:27 NASB)

This is beyond the scope of this issue, but I must stress that the second death and exclusion from the city are not for eternity nor are they related to being cast into an oven of literal fire, worms, and brimstone (i.e., hell) to be tortured forever and ever. As I have stressed elsewhere, such ones will be judged through the fiery law of God with the purpose of restoration. The second death is a death of their works, not of their physical bodies which will have been raised in the second resurrection.

God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)

He does not desire it, as some translations state; *He wills it*, meaning it shall be done. By the consummation of the eons, all mankind will have been restored to God, so that the Father may be **all in all new** (1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 21:5). This is **the eonian purpose of God** (Ephesians 3:11 CV).

How do we think **the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea** and **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea** (Habakkuk 2:14) if God does not ultimately save all men, not all at the same time, but all eventually? He must and He will because the death and resurrection of His Son was and is and will be an absolute success in **reconciling all things to the Father, things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross** (Colossians 1:20).

Back to my point: we need to wake up and realize that nothing is as it seems. The people of the world are being played like strings on a fiddle. The governments of the world lie to one another and they lie to their citizens. This is the nature of the world system in which we live today. It is called Mystery Babylon, a seductive harlot that deceives every chance it gets, which is often these days.

We are living in the days of lawlessness. Even Jesus warned that one sign of the end of the age will be an increase of lawlessness that will lead to most people's love growing cold, presumably toward one another and toward God Himself (Matthew 24:12).

Do you realize that throughout the US during 2010, over 31,000 new laws were enacted? At first blush, one might think this means we are becoming more lawful. Quite the contrary; it means that we are more lawless.

I want to leave you with one example of "nothing is as it seems." Recently, I was reading an article about the Federal Reserve and all that it has been doing to "save the economy." By their own admission, they are pumping money into the economy, that is, fiat money [money made from thin air], in order to drive down interest rates, to get Americans to consume more, and to drive up the price of stocks. I call this manipulation of Americans to make things appear that they are better or improving when they are not.

But what is achieved by printing money that is not backed by true wealth, or getting Americans to return to their days of self-indulgent spending called **consumerism**, or artificially driving up stock prices whether there is value in the stock or not? Where is the true wealth-building in all this? It is a house of cards that has no solid foundation. It is built on sand. AND, it will fall when Mystery Babylon falls.

Dear brethren, as Christians, we must not be plucked like strings on a fiddle; besides, the fiddle is out of tune. We must guard ourselves from believing everything we hear or read or see, especially from those in power, whether they are in the political, financial, or economic realm. We need to hear what the Spirit of God is saying. We need to discern *in spirit*, not according to the flesh. We need to draw near to the God who calls things that are not as if they were. This is reality; not as it seems but as it is!

THE UPWARD CALL

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1106

Mount Carmel Forest Fire

January 6, 2011

On December 2, 2010, fire broke out on Mount Carmel in northern Israel, south of Haifa. It spread quickly and continued to December 5. When it was over, 12,000 acres had been consumed, 74 buildings destroyed, 17,000 people evacuated, and, tragically, 44 people killed.

Israel prides itself on self-reliance and its preparation and ability to handle anything that comes its way, especially war; however, they found themselves so unprepared for this raging fire that they had to appeal for international assistance. It was as if a chink appeared in their near-invincible armor.

This is not the first time that this chink has been manifested. In the 2006 Lebanon (Hezbollah)-Israeli battle, which some call the July War of 2006, Israel did not seem as invincible as it had in previous wars. Israel was surprised by the depth and range of Hezbollah's missiles, which landed as far south as Haifa, bringing major civilian centers under attack. Further, an Israeli naval ship was crippled.

The point is this: Israel seems to be more vulnerable and less invincible than it has in its entire 62-year history. This poses a question: Is God lifting His hand of protection from Israel? If so, why would He be doing so at this point in time? See issues #04-1091 through #04-1094, August 2010, which deal with Edom and modern Israel.

Could it be that Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the people of Judah and Jerusalem, which foretells of the final destruction of the earthly Jerusalem in order to make way for **New Jerusalem, the heavenly, holy city of God**, is very near to fulfillment?

'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial. (Jeremiah 19:11 NASB)

Paul exhorts us to **cast out the bondwoman and her son**, which **corresponds to the present Jerusalem** (Galatians 4:21-31). See issues #04-1086, August 8, 2010, *Two Jerusalems*, and #04-1087, August 9, 2010, *Cast Out Judaism and Present Jerusalem*. Why? Because God's name is no longer attached to the present Jerusalem; His name is upon New Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12). The present Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt several times in its long history, but the Lord has declared that it will be broken in such a way that it will never be repaired, that is, rebuilt again. Topheth signifies that it will be destroyed by **the gehenna fire**.

Now, returning to the Mount Carmel fire, we are reminded of a great biblical event that occurred on this mountain nearly 2,900 years ago when Elijah the Tishbite was called forth as a prophet to Israel to confront 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah showed up on the scene when Ahab the son of Omri reigned over the northern Samarian kingdom of Israel for 22 years. [Note: For further understanding of the significance of the name *Omri*, see issues #04-10104, August 26, 2010, *Two Distinct Prophetic Histories*, and #04-10108, August 30, 2010, *The Israelite Diaspora*. Also, after Solomon's death, his kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom (Samaria), which took the birthright name of Israel, and the southern kingdom (Judah and Jerusalem), which retained the scepter under the name of Judah. See issues #04-1079, August 1, 2010, *Graftage*, and #04-10103, August 25, 2010, *Solomon's Divided Kingdom*.]

Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all before him (1 Kings 16:30). He married Jezebel and began to serve and worship her god Baal. **So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria and also made the Asherah** (wooden symbol of a female deity). **Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel before him** (1 Kings 16:32-33).

It is most likely that the Baal Elijah confronted on Mount Carmel was *Melqart*, the god of Tyre, Jezebel's home and a place where human sacrifices were offered. This connection is made by Jeremiah as he spoke against what had been similarly going on in Judah.

"They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech..." (Jeremiah 32:35 NASB)

Thus, the condition of Israel in the day of Elijah was deplorable. It wasn't as if the kingdom of Israel had fallen into some minor level of spiritual declension that could be easily reversed, or as if they had accepted some error in their understanding of the Lord and His ways. It wasn't as if Elijah needed to merely show up and speak an exhortation to them to lead them back to the path of righteousness.

No! The condition in the house of Israel was more than very serious; it was deadly. The kingdom was in total apostasy. They not only had turned from the Lord, but they had turned to false gods. But it was even worse than this, for Baal was a wicked, evil god that called for their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, that is, to be sacrificed to the gods.

Elijah, who had a nature like ours (James 5:17), had to be given divine authority, a special anointing or empowering, if you will, to turn the tide for the kingdom of Israel. He had no ability in himself to undertake such a task, and some of his actions proved it, such as running from Jezebel and hiding in a cave. Elijah had to be given authority from God for what he was called to do. It was a sovereign act of God that raised up Elijah and called him to do what he did. Satan and its mighty forces of wickedness were behind what was going on, and Elijah needed special equipping for the battle to confront these unseen forces of darkness.

So, Elijah was called forth to confront the 450 prophets of Baal. The story of what happened on Mount Carmel is so well known that I won't repeat it. What is relevant to our day is what Elijah prayed and what the Lord did after the foolish display of the impotence of the false prophets and their god.

(36) "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. (37) "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." (38) Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. (39) When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God." (1 Kings 18:36-39 NASB)

The fire coming down on the mountain was not to simply display the impotence of Baal and the power of God or even to prove Elijah was right; it had a purpose, and it was to turn the heart of the people back to the Lord God.

Is there a parallel in our day to the condition of ancient Israel? Ancient Israel sacrificed their children. Is present-day Israel sacrificing their children as well? Today, civilized countries do not sacrifice their children to gods by passing them through fire. However, many have legalized abortions, which could be likened to sacrificing children. The US and many countries around the world are guilty in this regard, just as Israel is. In the US, on average, about a million children are legally aborted each year; nearly 50 million have been aborted since 1973. In Israel, about 20,000 legal abortions are performed each year; some estimate that both legal and illegal abortions total around 50,000; about 1.5 million children have been aborted since 1948 in a country with a population of 7.5 million. Will God not judge the nations (i.e., trees, as in trees of the forest), even the US, through **the gehenna of fire** (i.e., metaphorically, as in forest fire) for these sacrifices, just as He did ancient Judah and Israel? Could it be that the Mount Carmel fire is God's way of warning about what is coming to the Middle East, especially to Israel, and perhaps other nations? Is it not time to repent and return to the Lord?

What is the condition of the heart of the people of the state of Israel? As a nation, do they know Yeshua, the Lord and Savior of both the Old and New Testament? Or, have they rejected God's Son, the Messiah? Surely, there are individuals within her borders that know and love Jesus, but, as a nation, at best, they are described as secular. May many turn to the Lord Jesus while there is still time and be kept from the hour that is coming upon Jerusalem as Jeremiah foretold. **Lord, have mercy!**

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1107

Where Was Elijah Taken?

January 7, 2011

As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. (2 Kings 2:11 NASB)

It is often taught that when Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire, he was taken to heaven, the place of God's throne, or, as some call it, the third heaven. Since he was alive when this occurred, it is also taught that he did not see death, that is, he became immortal. In other words, according to this view, Elijah has been alive and well since the 9th century BC, living in heaven with God. With this view, some claim that this proves that when believers die, they too go to heaven to be with the Lord.

One other view that may or not be connected to the above view is that Elijah is a type of the saints who will be raptured to heaven, as presented by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; that is, they are taken to the throne of God at the end of the age. This will be taken up in the next issue dealing with Enoch.

But are these proper biblical views? Are they supported by scripture, or do they conflict with scripture?

About 900 years after Elijah was taken up in a chariot, Jesus made a statement of fact that obviously disputes the view that Elijah ascended into heaven, the place from which the Son of Man descended to earth.

"No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man." (John 3:13 NASB)

Obviously, Elijah had not descended from heaven. Scripture is silent on the origin of Elijah other than he was a Tishbite. However, James (5:17) tells us that he had a nature like ours, which means he possessed the same weaknesses and frailties of the flesh as we all do, and this comes from occupying mortal bodies of flesh and blood as we all do. If he had not descended from heaven, then according to the One who should know, it follows that he had not ascended to heaven either.

Only Jesus, the Son of Man, descended from the Father's throne, and only He was raised from among the dead, according to the spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4), and deemed worthy to ascend back to heaven to be with His Father. Christ entered into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24), that is, all mankind, as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

As further proof, Paul stressed the immortality of Jesus as the King of kings.

Now to the King eternal, immortal [incorruptible], invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17 NASB)

(15) He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords (16) who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. (1 Timothy 6:15-16 NASB)

No mere mortal can stand in the presence of God; only one who is immortal, that is, beyond death, can do so. Keep in mind that Paul wrote to Timothy years after Jesus had ascended back to the throne. Many had died before and after Jesus' resurrection, and, according to Paul, no one possesses immortality, including Elijah and, I might add, Enoch. Only Jesus the King of kings is presently immortal. Further, as the Son of Man, Jesus is the first man born of a woman to possess immortality.

If we accept these two premises as fact, then the question remains as to where Elijah was taken. What does it mean that he went up by a whirlwind to heaven? To answer this, it is important to note that scripture speaks of more than one heaven.

The first is the atmosphere around the earth in which the birds fly and our weather and climate are formed. For example: **Let the birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens** (Genesis 1:20 NASB; also Genesis 7:11-12; Job 35:11; Jeremiah 16:4).

The second heaven is outer space, the place of other planets, the moon, sun, and stars. Scripture speaks of **the stars of heaven** (Genesis 26:4; Deuteronomy 1:10; 28:62; Isaiah 13:10). David wrote: **When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon, and the stars, which thou hast ordained** (Psalm 8:3 KJV).

The third heaven is generally thought to be where Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of the throne in the heavens (Hebrews 8:1). The designation of the third heaven is attributed to Paul who testified that he was **snatched away to the third heaven** (2 Corinthians 12:2 CV). I should add that there is an alternative explanation to the meaning of the third heaven. Paul could have been referring to the third chronological heaven, specifically the one referred to in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1. According to Peter, there was a heaven long ago [the first chronological heaven (2 Peter 3:5)]; there is a present heaven that is reserved for fire [the second chronological heaven (2 Peter 3:7)]; and there will be a future heaven in which righteousness dwells [the third chronological heaven (2 Peter 3:13)]. By the way, the same applies to the earth. I would be remiss if I did not add that I see heaven as the place of God's abode as more of a dimension or realm, as in spirit dimension, than a physical place trillions of light years from earth in the far reaches of the universe. Earth is enveloped by God's realm.

So, into which heaven was Elijah taken? I believe the correct answer is the first heaven, the atmosphere around the earth that gives us life. Most likely, Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind, which is more of a weather phenomenon, like a violent storm, even a tornado, and transported to another region in the Middle East, much like when the Spirit of God snatched away Philip to Azotus after he shared with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39). Having completed his public ministry and passing the mantle to Elisha, Elijah lived out his days and died.

There is one other proof that Elijah remained on earth after his chariot ride in the air. Second Chronicles refers to a writing attributed to Elijah that was sent to Jehoram, king of Israel, perhaps 10 years after Elijah had gone up in the whirlwind, indicating that Elijah was still alive on earth.

And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah... (2 Chronicles 21:12 KJV)

As to be expected, there are some who challenge this conclusion, for it does not fit their template that when we die we go to heaven. In a side note, in *The Companion Bible*, E.W. Bullinger challenges this conclusion: *"Why assume that Elijah then sent it? It might have "come" as Holy Scripture comes to us today, though written in the past. It does not say a "letter," [based on the Hebrew] but any writing written at any time; probably a prophetic writing to be delivered at this particular time."*

I believe this is a bit of a stretch. Scripture does not indicate this, so why assume it? Besides, Bullinger's conclusion leads to a direct contradiction of scripture regarding Christ being the only one who is immortal and who has ascended to heaven.

Finally, some might challenge the idea that Elijah remained alive on earth because he appeared with Jesus and Moses on the mount as Jesus was transfigured (Matthew 17:1-8). It could have been a vision. But most likely, what the disciples witnessed simply transcended time. The Father opened the portal of time and allowed the disciples to see outside of time. I know that this may be difficult to comprehend, for we are so locked into our mindsets of a physical world, but we need to realize that God is spirit, and His realm is not bound by time. After all, there are other examples of transcending time, most notably, Paul who was snatched away to the third heaven and Paradise, and John who, *in* spirit, was given vision of what would transpire for the next 2,000 years from his day. Again, this is the only way to reconcile scripture and avoid obvious contradictions regarding immortality and ascendancy.

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1108

What Happened to Enoch?

January 8, 2011

The last issue addressed the question of where Elijah was taken when he went up by a whirlwind. The answer rests mostly on the fact that no one is immortal and no one has ascended to heaven except Jesus, the Son of Man. In other words, only one Man is in heaven today, who happens to be our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek and who has entered heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24). This should give us great comfort.

Now, Enoch is the other biblical figure that many are taught never died, for he was taken up to heaven. In other words, according to traditional teaching, Enoch is alive and well before the throne of God.

However, given that scripture cannot contradict itself, we must conclude that, just like Elijah, Enoch was not taken up to heaven either. He remained on earth. This leads to the obvious question: What happened to Enoch?

Of all the men in the Bible, only Enoch and Noah are described as ones who “walked with God” (Genesis 5.24; 6.9). However, Enoch’s life is recorded unlike any other in Scripture.

So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (Genesis 5.23-24 NASB)

All we are told in the book of beginnings is that Enoch was not. God took him, but we are not told where. It is as if he walked before God for 365 years and then his history stopped. He was not! What does this mean? Where was he taken? Everyone assumes it was to heaven, but Scripture does not state this as a fact; we have to assume so to make the statement. However, our saying so does not make it a fact. The next place we read of Enoch is in the Hebrews epistle.

By faith Enoch was transferred [metatithemi], so as not to be acquainted with death, and was not found, because God transfers him. For before his transference he is attested to have pleased God well. (Hebrews 11.5 CV)

The *Concordant Version* reads differently than most translations, but perhaps it gives us a clearer picture of what happened to Enoch. The Greek root word *metatithemi* is translated as *transferred*; implying Enoch was simply transferred from one place to another. The same word is used in reference to bones being transferred to Shechem (Acts 7.16) and one's thinking being transferred to a different evangel or deserting the true gospel for a false gospel (Galatians 1.6). These examples hardly give the impression of one being taken up, especially the reference to transferring dead bones.

The second thing to note about this verse is that Enoch was not acquainted with death. Genesis simply states Enoch was not, but Hebrews states Enoch was transferred so as not to be acquainted with death. The word *acquainted* means “to perceive.” In other words, Enoch did not perceive death. Other translations state that Enoch was translated so that he would not see death. Why did the writer state it this way? Why didn't he just state clearly that Enoch did not die?

Actually, the writer of the Hebrews epistle, in an indirect way, does claim that Enoch died in faith.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13 NASB)

The phrase “*all these*” must refer to all the names that preceded this verse, from Abel to Sarah, which obviously includes Enoch. In other words, Enoch is included in the “*all these died in faith.*”

Based on this verse alone, we must conclude that Enoch died. But to where was he transferred? We are not told, so we are left to speculate a bit. Here are a few options.

First, perhaps there were wicked men who sought Enoch's life, and God transferred him beyond their reach and beyond his immediate family. After all, Enoch preached judgment to his generation, which would have made him a very unpopular preacher in a day in which **the earth was filled with violence and all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth** (Genesis 6:11-13).

(14) And "the seventh from Adam," Enoch, also prophesied to these men, saying, Behold, "the Lord came with" myriads "of His saints," (15) "to do judgment against all, and to rebuke all" the ungodly of them concerning all their ungodly works which they ungodly did, "and concerning all the hard things ungodly sinners spoke against Him." I Enoch 1:9; 5:4; 60:8 (Jude 1:14-15 LITV)

All his family knew was that this righteous man was being sought by evil men, and all of a sudden he was not there. There was no body and no sign of Enoch. So his days were numbered at that point. Like Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Philip (Acts 8:39), Enoch could have been supernaturally transported (transferred) to another place on earth that kept him from evil men.

Second, some have speculated that Enoch was actually murdered by the evil men of his day, for he only lived 365 days, which was a rather early death compared to the longevity of his relatives who lived into their 800's. According to this view, it is speculated that God removed his body and buried it, just as He later did with Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). An offshoot of this view is that Enoch was not murdered but that God simply caused him to fall asleep instantly without experiencing the death process, and then He buried his body. Enoch, like the millions that followed, waits for resurrection.

At any rate, we really do not know for sure what happened to Enoch, but it is safe to state that he is dead and did not go to heaven. He died just as all born of Adam's race have died, for **in Adam all die** (1 Corinthians 15:22). No human has ascended to heaven except Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man (John 3:13), and no human has immortality except **the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords** (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Now, there is one other question regarding both Elijah and Enoch: Are they types of raptured saints? Many teach that they are, but they see them as types being raptured to heaven, never to return to earth. I agree that they could be types of raptured saints but not as ones taken up to heaven to never return to earth. I cannot fully develop this in the space that is left, so I refer you to article #17, January 2009, *Snatched Away [The Rapture]*.

However, Elijah was taken up in the air and transported to another location. I believe the snatching away to meet the Lord in air (1 Thessalonians 4:17) of those asleep in Jesus and those alive and who remain when Jesus comes presents the same picture as Elijah and Philip being transported in air. On the other hand, Enoch was pleasing to God and he was transferred. It could be said of those who will be included in the first resurrection and transfiguration that they too will be pleasing to God, for they more than conquered through Him who loves us, and they will reign with Christ in His kingdom, transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Colossians 1:13).

Finally, I have a thought about Enoch's 365 years. Perhaps it pushes the envelope a bit, but I will give it a try anyway. We know that with God **one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day** (2 Peter 3:8), and that no man has ever lived a full thousand years or one full day of God or **God's day**. The most is attributed to Methuselah at 969 years. However, Enoch lived 365 years. Bear with me for moment. According to scientists, since Adam, the earth has continually rotated around the sun approximately every 365.25 days, thus giving us a 365-day calendar (except leap year). Applying the day-year principle, could we not say that **Man's day** is 365 years, in contrast to God's day of 1,000 years. Enoch lived his life fully before God, or if you will, before the Son (Sun) of God. His life of 365 years rotated around the Son. This is what made him pleasing to God. This is what Man's day was meant to be like. Could we conclude that Enoch being transferred by God at 365 years signifies a life that fully rotates around (given to) the Son and that this is what Man's day is to be like while we live in mortal bodies as we wait for immortality and entrance into God's day? I will leave it for you to decide.

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1109

Is the Thief in Paradise Today?

January 9, 2011

(39) And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" (40) But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? (41) And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." (42) And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (43) And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
(Luke 23:39-43 NASB)

The story of the criminals being crucified along with Jesus is used by many to teach that this is proof positive that when a believer dies, he goes straight to heaven to be in the presence of God.

I once heard a very well-known preacher declare that this story "absolutely proves without any doubt" that the death of a believer leads to instant ascent to heaven. To be sure, this brother in Christ means well in his preaching, but this particular story declares *nothing of the sort*. Let me be more emphatic: this story has nothing whatsoever to do with where a believer goes *in* death.

As stressed in other issues, we need to be reminded of Jesus' words: "**No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man**" (John 3:13 NASB), who Paul declared "alone possesses immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16). Could Jesus or Paul, for that matter, have made it any clearer than this?

Given this, what did Jesus mean when He told the thief he would be with Him in Paradise?

First, the criminal asked Jesus to remember him when He comes in His kingdom. To what kingdom was the criminal referring? In that day, there was only one kingdom that was expected by the Jews. It was the kingdom promised to David; the same one declared to Mary when Gabriel appeared to her pronouncing her favorable before God.

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end." (Luke 1:32-33 NASB; see Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14)

Even if he did not know all the facts surrounding Christ's future kingdom, the criminal surely understood the insults being hurled at Jesus as He hung on the cross.

And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Luke 23:35-38 NASB)

So, it was in this context that the criminal asked Jesus to remember him when He comes in His kingdom.

Did the kingdom of Christ come to rule over the nations in that day or any of the days that followed? If it did come, then according to the prophets, the world should be experiencing righteous and just rule. Can anyone find such a thing throughout the nations today? Is our modern world ruled according to righteousness and justice? Are there kings and lords of Christ ruling over the nations today? Of course, the answer to all these questions is *no*. Consequently, there is only one conclusion to draw: Jesus was not promising the criminal a place in the kingdom upon his death. Jesus' answer to the criminal had to

be in reference to a day that would not commence for at least 2,000 years from Calvary, considering we are still waiting for our Savior to come from heaven.

Second, some might argue that Jesus promised the criminal a place in paradise, not in His kingdom. There are only two other places in the New Testament that refer directly to paradise, and each points to the future kingdom. Paul was snatched away into paradise (2 Corinthians 12:4), which is taken up in the next issue. Then, it is promised to those believers who overcome (the conquerors) that they may eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). It must be added that all of the promises to those who conquer, as recorded in the seven epistles to the ecclesia (Revelation 2-3), refer to entering paradise in some fashion. Of course, John, along with Paul, actually saw paradise.

Third, many preachers place their emphasis on the word *today* as proof that the criminal and Jesus both went to paradise in that day. However, when Jesus died, He went into the tomb (grave) as a dead man, until God raised Him from the dead on the third day. Jesus then ascended to His Father (John 20:17), returned to the earth, and appeared to His disciples over a forty-day period, before finally ascending into a cloud as the disciples watched (Acts 1:9-11; 2:14-36). Today, He is *not* in paradise but seated upon His Father's throne in heaven.

The Hebrew believers were encouraged that Christ entered **into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us** (Hebrews 9:24). Please note that these believers had no expectant hope that they were to go to heaven *in* death. In fact, a few verses later, they were encouraged *to wait* for Christ to come *a second time* for salvation apart from sin (Hebrews 9:28).

Further, the Thessalonian believers were commended because they were waiting for God's Son to come from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10). When they were concerned over their loved ones who had fallen asleep in Jesus, Paul did *not* encourage them that there was no need to be concerned, for they were in heaven already. Rather, he encouraged them that they were asleep in Jesus and would be resurrected (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). They were to comfort one another with these words about the resurrection and snatching away to meet the Lord in the air.

Thus, God's word consistently places the emphasis on waiting for the resurrection, and *not* on death and immediately going to heaven.

Fourth, many cite the use of the word *today* as proof that the thief went to paradise that day when he died. However, we need to understand that the Greek language from which the English versions were translated had no punctuation as do our modern-day versions of the Bible. In other words, punctuation had to be placed in the text by the translators and editors. As such, this alone opens up the door for interpretative bias.

Without punctuation, Luke 23:43 reads: **"Truly I say to you today you shall be with Me in Paradise."** But notice that the meaning of Jesus' words changes, depending on where a comma is placed in relation to the word *today*. If it is placed after *today*, it simply means that Jesus was making a statement of a future promise on that day. He was not promising that the thief would be in paradise with Him on that particular or specific day. Recognizing this as the more likely interpretation, some translations have placed the comma after the word *today*.

"Verily, to you am I saying *today*, with Me shall you be in paradise." (Luke 23:43 CV)

Verily I say unto thee *this day*: with me shalt thou be in Paradise. (Luke 23:43 REB)

Given this rendering, Jesus was merely stating that on *that* particular day (*today*) He made a promise to the criminal that referred to a day many years into the future when He would *be coming* (future) in His kingdom. For the thief, this day was either 2,000 years (first resurrection) or 3,000 years (second resurrection) into the future. We are not given an indication of which one was promised. I suspect the latter, for this is when paradise, New Jerusalem, truly comes into view for all to see and enter into it.

Especially in light of scripture on immortality and ascension into heaven, this appears to be the most plausible understanding of this passage.

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1110

Snatched Away to the Third Heaven & into Paradise

January 10, 2011

(1) Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. (2) I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to [snatched away to] the third heaven. (3) And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—(4) was caught up into [snatched away into] Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. (2 Corinthians 12:1-4 NASB [CV])

This set of scripture is used by some as proof that believers go to the third heaven and paradise upon death. But this cannot be the proper understanding of these verses.

Paul was snatched away, which is the better rendering, but he did not know how this occurred, whether in the body or out of the body. Paul related this experience to defend his apostleship, not to offer some grand teaching on going to heaven. He simply was snatched away and heard things that man is not allowed to speak.

Note that he was snatched away *to* the third heaven and snatched away *into* paradise. Some translations place a bias into these verses by stating that Paul was caught *up*, not *to* or *into*. This has led to the teaching that Paul was caught up from this earth, which for some people refers to either the experience at death or the rapture. However, this cannot be determined from Paul's description of his experience. He did not know if he was in the body or in the spirit. He simply had a powerful experience.

Paul was obviously snatched away to something not of this earth and time. It is most probable that he was snatched away *to* the third heaven, and it was there that he saw paradise. In other words, he was snatched away *to* the third heaven and then snatched away *into* paradise.

Let us look at the third heaven first.

Paul was the only one of all the inspired writers to refer to the third heaven. Most commentators view the third heaven as a third level in the heavens that currently exists and to which believers are taken when they die. It is seen as the place where the throne of God is.

There is some basis for believing that there are three heavens described in scripture. The first heaven refers to the part of the earth's atmosphere from which comes rain and in which the birds fly (Genesis 8:2; Deuteronomy 11:11; 28:24; Isaiah 55:10); the second heaven refers to all the host of heaven or where the sun, moon and stars reside (Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kings 23:5; Isaiah 13:10; Jeremiah 8:2; Revelation 12:1); and the third heaven refers to where God and His throne reside (Psalm 11:4; Isaiah 66:1).

Interestingly, scientists have identified five spheres or "heavens" above our earth: the troposphere (weather, clouds and birds), stratosphere (ozone layer), mesosphere, ionosphere (auroras), and the exosphere, which leads to outer space. Adding outer space where the host of heaven resides and the heaven of God's throne, one could argue that perhaps there are seven heavens, which is the number of perfection of what is in view.

I believe Peter offers us another way to explain the third heaven. In his second epistle, Peter refers to three different chronological heavens and earths, meaning that the heavens and earth pass through three historical phases. This does not mean that each is an entirely new entity, as if the previous one disappears. It means that the nature of each is different; that is, they are constituted differently. Consider the progression presented by Peter.

First heavens and earth: **(5) For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, (6) through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water** (2 Peter 3:5-6 NASB).

Second heavens and earth: **But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men** (2 Peter 3:7 NASB).

Judgment of the second heavens and earth: **(10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (11) Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, (12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!** (2 Peter 3:10-12 NASB).

Third heavens and earth: **But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells** (2 Peter 3:13 NASB).

The third heavens and earth are what John and Paul saw as well: **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first [former] heaven and the first [former] earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea** (Revelation 21:1 NASB). The word *first* can be translated *former*, meaning *previous*.

We have not been given a record of Peter being snatched away as Paul was or called up in spirit as John was, but all three are in agreement, as it should be.

However, Paul and John stand out among the apostles for the revelations that they received. As recorded in Revelation 21-22, John was caught away in spirit to perceive the Lord's day, so was Paul snatched away to see and hear the Lord's day. In other words, Paul saw beyond the coming millennial kingdom to the eon of the eons in which there is a new heaven and new earth, with New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God (Revelation 21:10-11). Just like Paul, John saw the third heaven and paradise that Peter said we should hasten.

Since Paul was snatched away to the third heaven, the paradise that he was snatched away into, most likely, is also in relation to the time of the third heaven, for this coincides with John's vision on the isle of Patmos. When he was caught away to the third chronological heaven, he saw paradise.

Now, what is paradise?

Paradise refers to a park, which is what the garden of Eden was before Adam disobeyed God's one command. In the book of consummation, the Revelation, we discover a garden as well, but it is described as a city-garden (note the trees of life and the river of life), and it is called **New Jerusalem**. As the new heaven and earth came into view, John saw this city coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God. Undoubtedly, Paul saw this same view, but there is a difference in their experiences. John was called "to come up here" to perceive it, but Paul was snatched away to and into it to hear it, but could not write what he saw. I believe Paul, like John, **transcended time** to see well into the future.

He did not directly offer any details of his experience; nevertheless, I believe Paul did indirectly write about what he saw when he wrote of the **New Creation in Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). Paul was snatched away to see the New Creation, when **all things are new** (Revelation 21:5), which I believe is paradise on the new earth. But the New Creation is about people, specifically the sons of God. Thus, Paul saw the destiny of all the saints in Christ. But there was even more, for the New Creation is ultimately about all mankind becoming sons. I believe that when he saw it, it took his breath away. It was inexpressible. It must have been a shock for a Pharisaic Jew to learn that all mankind will one day, but not all on the same day, be part of the New Creation. Glory to God!

THE UPWARD CALL

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1111

When is Immortality Put On?

January 11, 2011

(1) For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven (3) inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. (4) For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. (5) Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 5:1-5 NASB)

These verses are most often quoted by those who hold that believers go to heaven immediately *in* death, and, it should be added, unbelievers go to hell immediately. According to them, Paul wanted to put off his earthly, physical body so he could go to heaven and be with the Lord where he would receive a spiritual body. To be sure, Paul desired to be with the Lord, as we all should desire, but this does not mean that Paul taught that at death a believer immediately goes to heaven. If this were so, which it is not, then all that Paul taught on the resurrection would be meaningless.

Paul made *no such assertion* and placed *no immediacy* between being in the earthly body and receiving the dwelling from heaven, which Paul called the spiritual body.

As surely as there are physical [soulish] bodies, there are spiritual bodies. And our physical bodies will be changed into spiritual bodies. (1 Corinthians 15:44 CEV [CV])

We need to be clear that Paul used the phrase "dwelling from heaven" to identify the source of the dwelling. It is heavenly because it comes from God, and it is spiritual because God is spirit, and God's seed is planted within all who believe (1 John 3:9). However, this does not mean that the spiritual body will be restricted to heaven, for the saints shall **reign upon the earth** (Revelation 5:10). The spiritual body will be like Jesus' body after He was resurrected and revealed Himself to His disciples.

Again, the only way to receive a spiritual body is through resurrection and transfiguration. In fact, the above opening verses must be interpreted in light of Paul's defense of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. The two cannot and must not be separated. Paul was simply expressing what should be the desire of every believer, that is, immortality that comes through resurrection and transfiguration. We must put off corruption and put on incorruption, and we must put off mortality and put on immortality. The earnest (pledge) of the spirit within us groans for the spiritual body. Are you groaning?

It is vital to understand that Paul referred to the dead as being asleep: **God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus** (i.e., **the dead in Christ**) (1 Thessalonians 4:14, 16). Jesus made the same connection between death and sleep: **"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. Lazarus is dead"** (John 11:11, 14). But going back further, the oldest book of the Bible makes the same assertion: **So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep** (Job 14:12). Asaph declared: **Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep** (Psalm 76:6). David wrote: **As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake** (Psalm 17:15). According to Peter, **the patriarch David both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day, for it was not David who ascended into heaven** (Acts 2:29, 34). **Sleep signifies a state of unconsciousness.** Solomon wrote that **the dead do not know anything** (Ecclesiastes 9:5). It is safe to state that the ancient Hebrews held this view of death. Again, Job asked: **"If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes** (Job 14:14 NASB), which only comes through resurrection and transfiguration. According to the testimony of scripture, there is no other way out of the sleep of death, which is an unconscious state.

Again, death is merely a sleep time for all mankind. It is a state of unconsciousness. One day, all will be awakened from their sleep to rise up and meet the Lord, whether at the first or second resurrection. The period of sleep will seem like a night, even though it might be a very long time, as in hundreds or thousands of years. The next moment of consciousness for all the dead will be in the presence of the Lord, even if it is to face the Great White Throne through the second resurrection.

Some people believe that resurrection occurs at the death of the believer. However, this clearly ignores or distorts the fact that the two resurrections are described as major, distinct events at specific points in time (John 5:28-29; 11:24; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4.13-18; Revelation 20:4-6; 11-15). Our expectation is to rise in the first resurrection if we die before the Lord comes. We eagerly wait for our Savior to come from heaven.

There can be no inconsistencies in Paul's writings. The heavenly body comes into view only at the resurrection and snatching away of believers. To the Philippians, he wrote: **For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself** (Philippians 3:20-21 NASB).

Again, 2 Corinthians 5 must be interpreted in light of 1 Corinthians 15.

Because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. (2 Corinthians 5:4 NASB)

(53) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. (1 Corinthians 15:53-54 NASB)

Mortality or death is swallowed up in immortality. According to Paul's evangel, there is no other way!

It is unfortunate, but many Christians believe in the immortality of the soul, and, on this basis, they have fallen into the error of the soul going to heaven upon death. However, this belief comes from Greek philosophers, not scripture, and has long been embraced by pagan religions. The soul is connected to the body and its blood, **for the soul of the flesh is in the blood** (Leviticus 17:11 DNT). When the spirit of life was breathed into Adam, he became a *living soul*. Soul is not given by God; it comes about when life comes into the body. When the body dies, so does the soul, for the soul is the animation (sensations) or consciousness of the body. Pour out the blood of the body, and the body and soul die. Thus, the soul is nothing apart from the body.

Consider this: If the soul were immortal and went to heaven on death, one would go to heaven unclothed because the heavenly clothing, which is spirit, not soul, only comes at the resurrection and transfiguration. This means that the believer would be naked before God, for the soul does not exist apart from the body, which is the way that mankind is constituted.

Some work around this difficulty by teaching that the soul is clothed with some intermediary covering. Their reasoning is based on *the parable* (not a literal story) of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16.19-31). However, this is based on a faulty understanding of this parable. See issue #04-1035, April 5, 2010, *Rich Man and Lazarus*. The pagans believed in the immortality of the soul and, sadly, so do many believers.

Finally, some might argue that it is the spirit that is immortal, not the soul. In speaking of death, Solomon wrote: **Then the dust** [i.e., physical body] **will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it** (Ecclesiastes 12:7 NASB). Ask yourself this question: Do you have any recollection of the spirit prior to your birth? I surely don't! Scripture gives us no reason to believe our spirit retains consciousness in death either. It simply returns to God who gave it in the first place. I suspect, but cannot prove it, that our memory and identity is somehow retained in the spirit just as a computer retains memory after it is shut off; data is retained even with the power turned off. Let us keep in mind that we must be transfigured into a **spiritual body**, not simply some spirit being. As Paul wrote, we are **waiting eagerly for the redemption of our body** (Romans 8:23).

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)

#05-1112

At Home with the Lord.

January 12, 2011

The Much Better – Resurrection

Continuing with Paul's thought as presented in the last issue (#05-1111), the following verses are also used by many to prove that Paul expected and taught that when we die we immediately go to be with the Lord; that is, *in* death, believers go to heaven apart from resurrection and transfiguration. Let us be very clear that Paul did not change his message; he simply elaborated on it.

(6) Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—(7) for we walk by faith, not by sight—(8) we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (9) Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:6-9 NASB)

The first part is very obvious: if we are in the body, which is our earthly home, we are absent or away from home with the Lord. In the meantime, the earnest of the spirit leads us to walk by faith. Faith says that one day we will be with the Lord. On the basis of faith, Paul was encouraged that our preference is rather to be away from these bodies of humiliation and to be at home with the Lord. Notice that Paul in no way stated that death is the way that leads *immediately* to being at home with the Lord. One must read this into Paul's words. Unfortunately, some people do exactly this.

In verse 8, preferring **to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord**, Paul joined the two thoughts with the conjunction *and*. I have heard it preached many times: "Paul taught that to be absent from the body *is* to be with the Lord; therefore, you go to heaven when you die." Listen carefully next time this verse is recited from the pulpit and note if this is how it is stated. The problem is that this is not what Paul wrote. Please note that the verb *is* is not in Paul's words, and by using this verb, the meaning (i.e., timing) of the phrase changes. Paul made no such connection, as if one immediately leads to the other. Absent from our mortal body means we are dead or asleep in Jesus until the resurrection, at which time we will be at home with the Lord in our spiritual body.

Paul's final words of this section refer back to verse 6. We are ambitious, whether at home, that is, *at home in the body*, or away from home, that is, *away from the Lord*, to be well-pleasing to Him. It is merely the same thing expressed from different angles. Being ambitious and well-pleasing can only refer to our current walk of faith and not to life after death.

Now, as further proof, let us consider Paul's heart as expressed to the Philippians.

(21) For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (22) But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. (23) But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; (24) yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. (25) Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, (26) so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again. (Philippians 1:21-26 NASB)

These verses, especially verse 23, are often used as one of the proofs that Paul taught that believers go to heaven upon death and that this was Paul's expectation.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Paul wanted to be with the Lord, but he never stated that he was going to be with Him immediately upon his death; this is what many preachers read into Paul's words,

but this does not make it a correct understanding. Paul's desire to be with the Lord cannot conflict with his desire for the resurrection when all will be changed, and this mortal puts on immortality.

Simply, Paul was contrasting two conditions, both of which would bring glory to Christ. If Paul lived, his life would be gain for the cause and glory of Christ; if he died as a martyr, this too would be gain for the cause of Christ. Throughout his epistles, Paul never wrote of seeking gain for himself; it was always for Christ and His people (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 8:23; 11:23-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:10). Paul died daily and suffered tremendously for the cause of Christ.

In spite of all his trials and even being jailed at the end of his life, Paul remained fruitful in the work of the Lord, and all of us are recipients of that fruit, even after 2,000 years.

We could say that Paul was caught between two outcomes, the better and the much better. He desired that in life or death he would bring glory to Christ; he never desired glory for himself. If he lived, he would be fruitful in Christ's service; if he died as a martyr, this too would bring glory to Christ. Either way, it would be gain to Christ and not to him. However, there was a much better.

Perhaps the Concordant Version's rendering of verse 23 helps to shed more light on this matter.

Yet I am being pressed out of the two, having a yearning for the solution and to be together with Christ, for it, rather, is much better.

Paul was struggling between life in the body or death; but he yearned for the much better solution, or, we could say, the very best solution, which is to be together with Christ. In other words, Paul injected a third option to remaining alive or death. The much better option was to be together with Christ, which according to Paul's teaching only comes at the resurrection, transfiguration, and the snatching away to meet the Lord. Paul's solution was the resurrection, for this was and is the hope of the evangel with which he was entrusted to take to the nations. This is the much better solution with which Paul very clearly encouraged the Thessalonians who were waiting for the Son to come from heaven.

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 NASB)

So we shall always be with the Lord. This is the comfort that Paul gave the saints. It was *not* death and then immediately going to heaven. It was death, resurrection, transfiguration, and glorification in the presence of the Lord. Notice that Paul never mentions "going to heaven." The air is not heaven!

Paul faced his imminent death with triumph and a shout of victory. What greater legacy could he leave to his beloved brethren than to remind them that there is a glorious hope on the horizon? There is "a much better" coming, just as there is *a better resurrection* (Hebrews 11:35), and all should set their hearts on this, as Paul did. Consider Paul's testimony to his beloved son of the faith, Timothy.

(6) For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [dissolution] has come. (7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; (8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8 NASB [CV])

His death was imminent; his dissolution [departure] had come, which simply means he was about to die. Paul knew he would receive a reward in *that day*, which is the future day of Christ, not the day of his death. Paul joined *that day* to *His appearing*, which refers to the return of the Lord. All who love His appearing will be rewarded as Paul will be rewarded in that day.

In closing his last letter to Timothy, Paul brought the expectation into view again: **The Lord will be rescuing me from every wicked work and will be saving me for His celestial kingdom** (2 Timothy 4:18 CV). Paul and all who love the Lord will be saved for His celestial kingdom, which comes at His appearing. This is *the much better* we are encouraged to love and to expect, as Paul did.

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)

#05-1113

Press On Toward The Goal #1

January 13, 2011

The last two issues have been about Paul's longing to be at home with the Lord, which comes about through resurrection. He was hard-pressed from both directions, to live or to die for Christ. Either way, it was gain for Christ, not for Paul. However, rather than desiring to remain alive for the service of the body of Christ or dying for the glory of Christ, Paul sought for the much better, that is, **the day of Christ** (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16) when this mortal puts on immortality through resurrection and transfiguration. Thus, he encouraged the saints in Christ in Philippi to eagerly wait for the Lord to come.

(20) For our citizenship is in heaven [citizens of heaven], from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; (21) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21 NASB)

The *Murdock New Testament* (MNT) states that **our concern is with heaven**. I believe this best captures Paul's thought, for truly our concern is **to wait for His Son from heaven** (1 Thessalonians 1:10). It is not about going to heaven but about the One who comes from heaven exerting His power to transform our mortal body into an immortal body, conformed to the body of His glory. When we have been conformed to the image of Christ, we will be free to traverse both the celestial (heaven, spirit) realm and the physical realm (earth). In other words, we will have access to God's entire creation because we are citizens of heaven. It will be as if we have Kingdom passports that allow us access to all of the Universal Kingdom of God, the heavens and earth, the visible and invisible.

Now, there is one other set of verses in the epistle to the Philippians that proves without a shadow of a doubt that Paul's longing and goal was the resurrection. However, it was not just any resurrection; he sought for the first or better resurrection (Revelation 20:5, 6; Hebrews 11:35) or, as the *Wuest New Testament* calls it, the *out-resurrection* (Philippians 3:11). See issue #03-09148, August 10, 2009, *Exanastasis, the Out-Resurrection*.

Nay, I even reckon all things as pure loss because of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. And for His sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and reckon it all as mere refuse, in order that I may win Christ and be found in union with Him... (Philippians 3:8-9a WNT)

I have chosen to quote from the *Weymouth* paraphrased translation because it seems to best capture Paul's heart in concert with his other epistles.

Paul's one driving passion was to know Christ Jesus his Lord. He used the term *Christ Jesus* because, as the verses reveal, he was referring to the crucified and risen Christ, not *Jesus Christ*, which refers to Christ before the cross. Paul did not know Jesus Christ when He walked the earth; he knew Christ Jesus after He had ascended into glory to sit at the right hand of the throne of God.

For Paul, knowing Christ was more than having knowledge of Him; Paul sought to be in union with Him, that is, to be bound to Him in every way. All that Paul lost in his pursuit of Christ, which was everything, was mere refuse to Paul. Simply, nothing was more important than to be united with Christ, even in His sufferings and in His death. Paul had no greater desire than to gain, to know, and to be found in Christ.

As to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. (Philippians 3:6 NASB)

Not having a righteousness of my own, derived from the Law, but that which arises from faith in Christ—the righteousness which comes from God through faith. (Philippians 3:9 WNT)

When it came to righteousness, Paul could claim that under the Law he was found blameless, meaning that no one could find fault with his practice of the Law and, we could say, his adherence to Judaism, which, as a Pharisee, he had zealously defended to the point of persecuting the ecclesia of God. He truly thought he was doing the work of God and was on the right side, until he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

In that day and the years to follow, Paul came to realize that the Law, which he so vigorously defended, could never justify him before God, **for by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin** (Romans 3:20), **for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law** (Romans 3:28), **through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified** (Galatians 2:16).

He sought for righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith in Christ.

In his Romans epistle, Paul had much to say about righteousness being credited or imputed to those who believe in Christ Jesus. Abraham believed God and **his faith was credited or imputed to him for righteousness** (Romans 4:5, 9-12, 22). In other words, God **calls into being the things that are not as if they were** (Romans 4:17). There is **none righteous, not even one** (Romans 3:10), in the sight of God, and yet, to the account of those who believe in His Son, God reckons or credits righteousness as if they were truly righteous.

(10) I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; (11) in the hope that [if by any means] I may attain to [arrive at] the resurrection [the out-resurrection] from among the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11 WNT [WAET])

Over the years, I have heard it taught that the resurrection Paul sought to attain was a spiritual one while in his mortal body, not the literal resurrection, that is, the redemption of the body (Romans 8:23) unto immortality. However, Paul never spiritualized the word *resurrection*, for the resurrection of Christ and, subsequently, of those who believe in Jesus is foundational to his evangel.

In his longing to know Christ, Paul sought to know the power which was in His resurrection. In other words, Paul wanted to know the power that raised Jesus from among the dead. What is this power? I believe Paul described it in the opening of his Romans epistle.

(3) Concerning His Son... (4) who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord... (Romans 1:3-4 NASB)

Verse 4 is translated a variety of ways and might seem a bit hard to put together; however, it seems to me that the power is associated with the Spirit of holiness. It was the Spirit of holiness that raised Jesus from the dead and declared Him to be the Son of God.

The Greek noun for *holiness* is *hagiosune*, which refers to "sacredness or being set apart unto God for divine service." It is derived from the adjective *hagios* or *holy*, which refers to "the purity of God that separates the Divine from the profane, or persons dedicated to the service of God and partaking of His holiness." Being set apart unto God requires obedience to God, as reflected in holy behavior.

(14) As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, (15) but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; (16) because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1 Peter 1:14-16)

Jesus was **obedient to death, even death on a cross** (Philippians 2:8). This is the Spirit of holiness so that Jesus could not be held in the grave beyond three days. Paul sought to attain to the perfection of this Spirit, for he knew this was the only way to attain to the *out-resurrection*. This is the power of His resurrection; it is the power of holy obedience to the will of God. To be raised from among the dead as Jesus was raised requires a life not only dedicated or consecrated to God but also one that is holy in behavior, one that is obedient even to death. This describes the conquerors (Revelation 12:11); the ones who will have a part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). Paul will be among them.

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)

#05-1114

Press On Toward The Goal #2

January 14, 2011

(10) I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; (11) if by any means I might arrive at the goal, namely, the out-resurrection from among those who are dead. (Philippians 3:10 WNT; 3:11 WAET)

As stressed in the last issue, Paul sought for the power of God that raised Christ, the Son of God, from among the dead. I have often heard that Paul needed the power of His resurrection in order to suffer and die for Christ, but I do not believe this is what Paul is saying in this verse. He sought for the power of the Spirit of holiness that resurrected Jesus, for he knew that to be raised up in the *out*-resurrection requires obedience to the will of God, that is, holy behavior. One must be a conqueror through Christ.

To understand the goal that drove Paul, we need to be mindful that there are two resurrections. I have mentioned them many times in my writings, so I do not intend to go into them here in any detail. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that every believer is promised immortality. The issue is not if a believer will receive immortality but when, in the first or the second resurrection.

The Jews expected to be raised up on the last day in a general resurrection (Revelation 20:11-15), or what Jesus called **the resurrection of life** and **the resurrection of judgment** (John 5:28-29), and what Paul called **a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked** (Acts 24.15). Many assume these are separated by a thousand years, the first (life) and the second (judgment). But this cannot be what Jesus meant, for He said **an hour** is coming when **all** who are in the tombs will hear His voice.

John was given revelation that there is a first or former resurrection reserved for those who will reign with Christ for a thousand years because they overcame or conquered (Revelation 2-3; 20:4-6). They will come to life and reign with Christ. The first resurrection is described as "the resurrection from among the dead," meaning only some of the dead are resurrected when it occurs. Jesus' disciples were puzzled over this description when He first introduced it to them: **They seized upon the statement, discussing with one another what rising from among the dead meant** (Mark 9:10). It was a novel concept to them because the Jews expected only one resurrection.

However, according to the revelation given to John, the rest of the dead, that is, those not raised in the first resurrection, will not come to life until the thousand years are completed (Revelation 20:4-6) when all who are still in the tombs will hear His voice.

Now, returning to Paul, we need to understand that, as a Jew, at one time, he must have had the same understanding as the rest of the disciples about one resurrection, which means that, somewhere along the line, Paul's eyes were opened to this new truth, and this became his goal.

Again, let me stress that every believer will *not* have a part in the first resurrection. In fact, it is probably safe to assume that many will not. They will be **saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15).

With this in mind, Paul was willing to suffer and even die for Christ in order to attain to the resurrection from among the dead. This was Paul's goal, and it should be ours as well. Paul knew that, as a believer, the promise of immortality was his and could not be lost, but he sought for the goal of the prize of a better resurrection.

As if to stress that the first or better resurrection was in view in verse 3:11, Paul used the Greek word *exanastasis*, which is not used any other place in the Greek scriptures. *Exanastasis* is made up of two words. It is comprised of *anastasis*, which means "standing up again." This is the most common Greek word used to refer to the resurrection. However, Paul added the prefix *ex*, which "denotes origin or the

point from whence motion or action proceeds, or out of a place, time, or cause." It can mean "out among," which is the meaning Paul sought to convey. It is the *out*-resurrection.

Thus, Paul sought to stand up again from among the dead. In other words, Paul saw a resurrection in which only some will stand up; others will remain dead (prone in the grave). Obviously, this cannot refer to the general resurrection of the just (life) and the unjust (judgment), for they all will stand up at the same time, in the same hour.

The *exanastasis* was Paul's goal and the very reason for him longing to know the power of His resurrection. The Spirit of holiness raised Jesus, and it will take the same power for all who desire to be in the *out*-resurrection. It demands a life laid down for the service of God; it is the power of an overcoming life. For Paul, it was not simply about believing in Jesus; it was about pursuing with his whole life the very One who broke into his life and laid hold of it.

I do not say that I have already won the race or have already reached perfection. But I am pressing on, striving to lay hold of the prize for which also Christ has laid hold of me. (Philippians 3:12 WNT)

Paul saw himself in a race to the first or *out*-resurrection, and his goal was to win this race to earn the right to stand up from among the dead at the end of our present wicked eon, not to be raised with all the dead one thousand years later. This is the perfection or end that Paul sought.

Christ had laid hold of Paul for the very purpose of him laying hold of the prize. In other words, when Jesus broke into Paul's life on the road to Damascus, He laid hold of Paul so that he would win the race and lay hold of the prize.

Nevertheless, Paul always seemed to be in some level of tension as he was striving for or pursuing the goal. It was as if with every step taken he threw off some baggage that hindered him in the race (Hebrews 12:1). He kept running, pressing on, all the while forgetting what was behind him.

(13) 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, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

It might seem that he was in danger of not making it, but the fact of the matter is that he could not fail, for the Lord had called and chosen him to make it. This is what "Christ has laid hold of me" means. Christ had laid hold of Paul and would not let him go nor allow him to fail to reach the goal for the prize.

Now, what is the prize? Paul tells us in his last testament to his beloved Timothy.

(7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; (8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8 NASB)

Paul testified that he had won the race, the goal of attaining to the future *exanastasis*, at which time, that is, in **the day of Christ** (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16), the prize of **the crown of righteousness** will be awarded to him, **for we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body** (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10). In that glorious day, no longer will he simply have righteousness imputed to him, but he will, in fact, be fully righteous in character, just as his Lord is righteous. I call it **manifested** or **perfected righteousness**. With his long journey of dying daily for the ecclesia coming to an end, Paul could take comfort that he had attained to all that he had pursued. Obviously, the Lord had given him the witness of this achievement.

Again, it must be stressed that his prize will be awarded in the future when the Lord appears. Paul never indicated this would occur in death. It is yet future at the time of the resurrection from among the dead. This is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. It is not the hope of "going to heaven"; it is the hope of standing up from among the rest of the dead, to be raised by the power of the Spirit of holiness.

The upward call is upward out of the grave when the trump of God sounds and the Lord shouts: "Come forth!"

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)

#05-1115

Press On Toward The Goal #3.

January 15, 2011

The Upward Call

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward [ano] call of God in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 3:14 NASB)

The last issue concluded with the thought that the upward call of God in Christ Jesus is not about "going to heaven" but rather about standing up from among the rest of the dead. The upward call is upward out of the grave when the trump of God sounds and the Lord shouts: "Come forth!"

Frankly, I had never thought of it this way until I was writing the last few sentences of the last issue. It sort of just sprung forth from my mind and into print. However, the question is: Was Paul trying to convey this image of rising up when he penned the words *upward call*? Or, was he simply denoting the source of the call as upward or heavenly?

I know I must sound like a broken record, but I want to be clear that I am positive that Paul was not referring to "dying and going to heaven."

Let us consider the term *upward call* by starting with the word *call* or *calling*, as used in some translations.

The Greek word translated as *call* is *klesis*, which means "invitation or calling," and appears in the New Testament eleven times as a noun. Here are most of them:

For the gifts and the *calling* of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29 NASB)

For consider your *calling*, brethren... (1 Corinthians 1:26 NASB)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His *calling*, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Ephesians 1:18 NASB)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the *calling* with which you have been called... (Ephesians 4:1 NASB)

To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your *calling* ... (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NASB)

Who has saved us and called us with a holy *calling*, not according to our works... (2 Timothy 1:9 NASB)

Therefore, holy brethren, sharers with others in a heavenly *invitation*... (Hebrews 3:1 WNT)

(10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His *calling* and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble, (11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal [eonian] kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:10-11 NASB [CV])

In particular, take note that Paul and even Peter placed a high value on this calling. We are exhorted to consider it, that is, not take it lightly but to walk in a manner worthy of this calling so that God will count us worthy of it. It is His calling, that is, the Father's holy and heavenly invitation, both of which speak of the character and source of the calling. But what is the Father inviting us to or into? Peter tells us it is the eonian kingdom of our Lord, which refers to the millennial kingdom of Christ in the next eon [age].

I submit that the holy and heavenly invitation is an invitation to reign with Christ as He sits upon Mount Zion (i.e., His throne) and establishes His kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth over the next one thousand years that commences with the conclusion of our present eon. But how do we get there, especially if we die before the Lord comes? The answer is in the upward call.

Now, many translations use the phrase *high calling* rather than *upward call* as do the CEV, NASB, and NKJV. Either phrase seems appropriate; however, when the Lord broke into my life 30 years ago, it was as if the Holy Spirit wrote *upward call* on my heart, and Philippians 3:14 has been my signature verse ever since.

The word *upward* is derived from the Greek word *ano*, which means "above, upward, high." *Ano* comes from the root word *anti*, which denotes contrast, that is, something opposite to something else. In English, the word *upward* denotes "to or toward a higher place or position," or "to or toward the source, center, interior, etc."

The Greek word *ano*, which is an adverb, is used nine times in the New Testament. In case you have forgotten your grammar, an *adverb* is "a word that modifies a verb by expressing time, place, manner, degree, cause, etc." In the case of upward [above], it expresses something about the call of God.

Jesus said: "**You are from beneath; I am from above** [ano]" (John 8:23). Peter quoted Joel: **And I will grant wonders in the sky above** [ano] (Acts 2:19). Paul used it to encourage the saints that **Jerusalem which is above** [ano] **is free** (Galatians 4:26), and that we should **seek those things which are above** [ano], **setting your affection on things above** [ano] (Colossians 3:1, 2).

In these verses, it is clear that *ano* is used to convey the thought of above or heaven where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1; Psalm 110:1).

Given all that is taught in our day about "going to heaven," it is not surprising that many would see these verses as proof that when believers die, they go immediately to heaven, even if in some intermediary state while they wait for a new body. But Paul's emphasis on above always seems to be in light of the fact that we are waiting for the Son to come from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16; Philippians 3:20) and our immortal body or dwelling comes from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2). In this context, the word *above* denotes source, not so much movement. Again, we need to be reminded that the snatching away is to **meet the Lord in air** (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and the kings and priests of God will **reign upon the earth** (Revelation 5:10).

However, there is one place where the word *ano* or *above* is used to denote some type of movement. When Jesus prayed to His Father in the account of Lazarus being raised up from the dead, it is said that He raised or lifted up [ano] His eyes (John 11:41). I find it sort of interesting that the only place the word *ano* is used to denote motion is in reference to a resurrection (not unto immortality, for Lazarus later died again).

Well, I am sure you are wondering where this is leading and what the point is.

Simply, I believe a case could be made for the *upward call* denoting two things, but not about "going to heaven."

First, it denotes both the source and nature of the call. Its source is out of heaven, for it is the call of God, and God is in heaven where Christ is. It is holy, for the Father is the Holy God.

Second, it denotes movement from the earth below to the air above to meet the Lord, which occurs for those who will be counted worthy to attain to the *out*-resurrection. Thus, the upward call refers to the first or better resurrection that Paul sought and fought to gain in the day of Christ. Paul will be raised up from among the dead by the power of the Spirit of holiness.

Let us **walk in a manner worthy of the God who is inviting [calling] you into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2:12)! Paul did!

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)

#05-1116

Press On Toward The Goal #4

January 16, 2011

Before concluding this series, there is one matter that needs to be addressed dealing with the teaching by some that Paul was referring to a spiritual resurrection while he occupied a mortal body, not the bodily resurrection into immortality that comes after the mortal body undergoes corruption in the grave.

According to some, the spiritual resurrection is discovered with Paul's use of the word *perfect*, so let us consider how he used this word. In order to maintain continuity, verses 3:10-15 are presented.

(10) I long to know Christ and the power which is in His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings and die even as He died; (11) if by any means I might arrive at the goal, namely, the out-resurrection from among those who are dead. (Philippians 3:10 WNT; 3:11 WAET)

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect [teleioo], but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12 NASB)

(13) 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, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect [teleios], have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you... (Philippians 3:15 NASB)

In verse 12, Paul claimed that he had not become perfect, and then in verse 15 he claimed that others are perfect. How could this be? After all, if there was anyone in his day that was perfect, one would think that it had to be Paul. Was he being modest? Or, did he view himself less perfect than the other apostles? Reading how he defended himself to the Corinthians, I would say no on both counts.

To answer this seeming contradiction, we need to consider the Greek words used in these verses and how they are used elsewhere. In verse 12, the word *perfect* is the verb *teleioo*, which means "to complete, finish, fulfill, or perfect," or "to make a full end, consummation." In verse 15, the word *perfect* is the adjective *teleios*, which means "perfect, complete, or mature," or "that which has reached its end." It is translated in various ways to indicate "labor, growth, mental, and moral character." Both Greek words come from the root noun *telos*, which means "the end, literally of time or action." Keep in mind, we are dealing with a verb and an adjective and their meanings are very much alike. Context matters in understanding their use in scripture.

Verse 12 must be read in light of verse 11, and, in this context, Paul used *teleioo* to mean that he had not reached the full end of his life that would lead him to attaining to the *out-resurrection* that he sought. In other words, he had not reached his goal to receive the prize. Another way of stating it is that the process of being perfected had not been completed. At this point, he had not finished the course and won the race. He was still on the course, fighting the good fight, and keeping the faith. Simply, he had not reached the end.

He was not stating that he had not reached spiritual maturity or high moral character or some form of spiritual resurrection, as some teach. I do not believe that this is the meaning of verse 12 because it is joined with verse 11 and the goal of the *out-resurrection*: **Not that I have already obtained it.**

In verses 10-11, the word *resurrection* forms two bookends: the power of His resurrection and the *out-resurrection*. To claim that resurrection is some type of spiritual resurrection makes no sense. Paul referred to it as His (Jesus') resurrection, and Jesus did not have a spiritual resurrection; He had a

bodily resurrection. Yes, He was resurrected into a spiritual body, but this is what resurrection is all about: putting off the mortal and putting on immortality. Paul sought a spiritual, glorified, celestial body in the image of his Lord.

To believe that two different types of resurrections are somehow in view for Paul in these verses defies logic and his teaching. Paul was logical in the presentation of his evangel. He pressed on, for his end had not come. He knew that his perfection would come when Jesus transforms **the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory**.

To add a little more proof to this, consider that Jesus said: **"The third day I am perfected [teleioo]"** (Luke 13:32 ASV). Obviously, the third day is an inference to the day of His resurrection, also the day of His perfection. In what is called His priestly prayer to His Father before He went to the cross, Jesus said: **"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished [teleioo; completed, perfected] the work which You have given Me to do"** (John 17:4 NASB). Paul made a similar statement regarding his desire to complete or **finish [teleioo] my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus** (Acts 20:24). Finally, Hebrews 5:9-10 refers to Jesus as **having been made perfect [teleioo] and becoming the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek**. He became the source of salvation because He died for the sin of the world and was **resurrected from among the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness** (Romans 1:4). He was made perfect by learning obedience from the things which He suffered, but He was perfected in His death and resurrection. **For by one offering He has perfected [teleioo] for all time those who are sanctified.** (Hebrews 10:14 NASB)

Let us be clear that there is an ultimate perfection that comes with the *out*-resurrection, but, in verse 15, Paul also referred to being perfect in this life: **Let us therefore, as many as are perfect [teleios], have this attitude**. It is untenable to think that Paul did not include himself in this group, for he went on to tell the Philippians to follow his example.

So, what did Paul mean by his use of the word *perfect* in this verse? He meant maturity, a maturity of character and morals, that is, spiritual maturity. Paul desired that all who are in Christ be **spiritual men**, that is, spiritually mature, not immature infants (1 Corinthians 3:1). Paul made this clear.

We do speak wisdom among those who are mature [among the perfect] [teleios]... (1 Corinthians 2:6 NASB [LITV])

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete [perfect] [teleios] in Christ. (Colossians 1:28 NASB [KJV])

Let us press on to maturity [perfection] [teleiotes; derived from teleios]... (Hebrews 6:1 NASB [KJV])

For this purpose also I labor, striving, according to His power. ... Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man [a perfect man] [teleios] (Colossians 1:29; Ephesians 4:13 NASB [KJV])

Maturity in this life speaks of knowing God's purpose and plan and living an obedient, holy life with this in view. Just as we are exhorted: **"You shall be holy, for I am holy,"** so are we exhorted: **"Therefore you are to be perfect [teleios], as your heavenly Father is perfect [teleios]** (Matthew 5:48 NASB). This speaks of maturity manifested in righteous, moral character.

However, as long we occupy mortal bodies where sin dwells, we will not be fully perfected into the image of our beloved Lord Jesus. We need a new body, but let us seek for it in the better resurrection!

(35) So that they might obtain a better resurrection... (39) And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect [teleios]. (Hebrews 11:35, 39-40 NASB)

Let us strive like Paul and press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus so that we too will be made perfect in the *out*-resurrection.

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)

#05-1117

Kings from the East on the March

January 17, 2011

Is there any doubt that we are living in the last hour of the last days? Only God knows how much time we have left before the final hammer comes down on this wicked and adulterous generation to bring our present evil age [eon] to its rightful and deserved end.

I know when some read things like this, they immediately cry: "Doomsayer!" However, nothing could be further from the truth. The end of this age means the beginning of a new age in which true righteousness, justice, and peace will prevail, **for when the earth experiences Your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness** (Isaiah 26:9 NASB).

God's judgment is to lead people to righteousness. Today, the nations want nothing to do with God and His righteousness. Look at where this ungodly attitude has led the world! The world needs **the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, the kingdom of the Son of His love**, in order to know and experience the love of God manifested through righteous and just government.

Surely, the knowledge and glory of God coming to the nations is something to rejoice over. It is truly the good news of the kingdom, **for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea** (Isaiah 11:9 NASB) and **will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea** (Habakkuk 2:14 NASB).

Well, this is not what this issue is about; nevertheless, as we consider the shaking and uncertainty of our day, we need to keep the kingdom in view. Do not be persuaded otherwise; **the King of kings and Lord of lords** is coming soon.

Now, speaking of kings, in his Patmos vision, John the apostle heard the loud voice from the temple command the seven angels to pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God on the earth (Revelation 16:1). When the sixth angel poured out the sixth bowl of wrath, we read that it involved the Euphrates River and the kings from the east.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. (Revelation 16:12 NASB)

I realize that many have been writing and continue to write on this particular verse as a literal event that will take place in the future with the sounding of the sixth trumpet. As the thinking goes, at this time, China and other Asian nations will come against the state of Israel with a million-man army that will lead to a third of mankind being killed by three plagues.

The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (Revelation 9:16 NASB)

Whether this or some variation of it will occur in the near future, I leave for the speculation of others.

Of interest to me is what Revelation 16:12 might signify. Is it being manifested in some manner in our day, not in the literal sense but in the figurative? I submit that it could be.

First, the **Euphrates River** signifies **fruitfulness**. *The Book of Bible Proper Names* by C.A. Potts (Bible Truth Publishers, 1981) defines the name *Euphrates* as "flowing of waters; the good and abounding river; fruitfulness; inexhaustible."

This abounding river being **dried up** could signify a drying up of fruitfulness or a state of **fruitlessness**. **Kings** signify **leaders of nations**. Since the kings come from the east, the river could also signify the nations that lie beyond to the **west**, which in turn could signify **the kings or leaders of the west**. The west could signify more than just the nations to the immediate west of the Euphrates but, in a much

more general sense, the nations of the west or the **western nations**, as they are called, which include Europe, the UK, Canada, and the US, as well as other developed nations that are aligned with them economically, militarily, culturally, and historically.

All together these things could signify leaders of nations residing to the east of the Euphrates coming against leaders of the nations of the west when the western nations have lost or are losing their fruitfulness, that is, are less productive than they once were. It could even mean that their economies are in shambles or on the brink of bankruptcy and collapse. Does this have a familiar ring to it?

What nations of the east, especially those with nuclear weaponry, might have their sights set on the west? They include China, North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran, which is trying to develop nuclear capability or perhaps acquire it. There are others in the east like India, Japan, and South Korea, but, at this point in time, it appears that they are aligned with the west.

Of the four nations, the most formidable one, economically, financially, and militarily is, without any doubt, China. What should catch our attention is how aggressive China has been and is growingly so on the world front, and they are doing this at a time when the west has been and continues to be struggling economically with huge mounds of debt. It is fair to say that the west is not the driving engine of the world economy as it once was. The fruitfulness of the western nations is drying up.

But consider China of late. As I scan the news, I find it quite amazing how much news is coming out of China. On the financial front, we know that they are the largest creditor of America's debt. In fact, the US has become a debtor to China. We have failed to heed Solomon's wisdom and are now in grave danger of becoming a slave to China: **The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave** (Proverbs 22:7 NASB). The fact of the matter is that we have lost much of our bargaining power with China due to our indebtedness to them. They are striving, along with Russia and others, to replace the US dollar as the **world reserve currency**. Just this last week the Bank of China began allowing US customers to trade the Chinese yuan (renminbi). On January 3, 2011, it was reported that China is going to buy Spanish public debt to help them out of their recession. On January 5, 2011, it was reported that the World Bank issued its first yuan bonds in Hong Kong. The World Bank, which provides low-interest loans and assistance to developing countries, has given voting power to China, making it the third-biggest voting power of the World Bank, behind the US and Japan.

On the military front, on January 5, 2011, it was reported that China has developed a prototype stealth fighter jet. Supposedly, they are also working on high-tech spy technology and weaponry to take out any surface war vessels in the Pacific region. China's Defense Minister stated: "In the coming five years, our military will push forward preparations for military conflict in every strategic direction." News captions stated: **"China prepares for war 'in all directions.'" Why? Why are they doing this when they are such an economic powerhouse? There is only one explanation. The kings of the east are on the march; they have crossed the dried up, fruitless Euphrates, and are seeking to overtake the west on all fronts.** If this trend continues, they will be the world superpower holding many of the cards.

We need to keep in mind the word of the Lord about what will take place at the end of the age. God will send a strong delusion, a working of evil on the lawless, that is, those who reject God's law. They will be deceived into taking a course of action that will ultimately lead to their end.

(8) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; (9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 NASB)

I believe that this day has begun. China and other eastern nations, including Russia, will be deceived into thinking they can rule the world. But be assured; the **Kingdom of our Lord** is right on their heels. **Jesus, the Son of God and the King of kings and Lord of lords, wins!** God declares to the nations: **"I have installed My King, My Son, upon Zion, My holy mountain** (i.e., His throne and kingdom)."

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)

#05-1118

What is Soul?

January 18, 2011

The next issue will answer the question of whether the soul is immortal or not. However, before answering the question, it is necessary to understand what the soul is, and, to do this, it is necessary to understand how it comes about in the first place. Is it some mystical thing that God plants in man, or is it something that man develops once he comes alive? To answer this, we must start at the beginning with the formation of Adam from the soil of the earth.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust [soil] of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7 KJV [CV])

Some translations use the term *living being*, but *living soul* is the more accurate term. In other words, the Lord God took some soil and fashioned Adam, that is, gave him form or, more specifically, a body. However, the body had no life in it, so God then breathed into him the breath of life.

The process by which God made Adam was not much different from how He made all living animals on earth. All had to be formed out of the soil and the breath of life breathed into them. Later, we read that it is called the breath of the spirit of life.

(21) All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; (22) of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath [neshamah] of the spirit [ruach] of life, died. (Genesis 7:21-22 NASB)

In other words, it is the Spirit that gives life (Job 33:4; John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6). After all, God is spirit and life, and, when He breathes into creation, He must breathe that which is of His nature. James confirms this: **For just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead** (James 2:26 NASB).

Having said this, I realize that many make the distinction between breath, as in breathing air in and out to oxygenate the body, and the more mystical concept of spirit, meaning a higher level of existence, even intellect that distinguishes man from animals. I am not going there in this discussion. However, based on Genesis 7:22, I would argue that all flesh living on the land receive the breath of the spirit of life, since this verse uses both *neshamah* for air or wind and *ruach* for spirit, even the spirit of God. Nevertheless, the point I want to stress about the spirit is that it comes from God who is spirit and life. Nothing exists apart from God or, to be very specific, apart from the Son of God. All creation comes forth from the Creator.

So, we can see that the body is from the earth, and the breath of the spirit of life is from God. But this leaves the soul. Where does it come from?

First, let us be clear that the order is first the body, then the spirit, and then the soul. It is not until the body is given the breath of the spirit of life that man becomes a living soul. In other words, the very soul is dependent on the joining of the body and spirit. It is only then that the body becomes a living soul. Thus, it only follows that if the body and spirit are taken away, there is no soul.

So what is the soul?

Studying all references in relation to man, the word *soul* reveals that it is the *consciousness, feelings, sensations, and desires* of man that come about when the breath of life vitalizes the body at birth. The soul consists of the sensations and feelings that man experiences.

As a living soul, Adam began to see, smell, hear, taste, and feel. He was *animated*. Thus, we could say that **the soul is the animation of the body**.

Another way of stating this is that it is simply **the human experience**. One commentator has described the soul as **a phenomenon and a capacity**. In a sense, we do not have a soul but a capacity of soul or capacity to sense or have sensation. **We have soul!**

Man is often described as a soul, referring to life itself, but this is not technically accurate. Although it is intimately connected to life and at times seems synonymous with life in scripture, the soul is not life per se, but **the experience of life as experienced through the sensations and the feelings of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling**. Again, let us be reminded that the spirit gives life (John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6), not the soul.

As a phenomenon, soul is the perception of the senses of the body and encompasses all the sensations of any living, organic body, whether man or any creature with blood flowing through its body.

The soul is not unique to mankind, **for the soul [nephesh] of the flesh is in the blood** (Leviticus 17:11 DNT). Most translations use the word *life* instead of soul, but the Hebrew word is the same one used to describe Adam as a *living soul*.

Thus, the soul is in the blood, and every living creature with blood has a soul or, simply, has soul.

Anyone who has spent any time around animals, particularly domesticated ones, can attest to them having soul. For example, there is little doubt that dogs have soul. They crave food; they desire shelter; they desire warmth and love; and they can be depressed or jubilant, just as humans can and do. In fact, pet dogs often seem to take on some of the character of their owners.

There are many scriptures to support the notion that the soul is connected with the senses. Consider the words of our Lord Jesus: **Because of this, I say to you, do not be anxious for your soul, what you eat and what you drink, nor for your body, what you put on. Is not the soul more than the food and the body than clothing?** (Matthew 6:25 LITV). Or, consider the Lord's invitation to those feeling the pressures and burdens of life: **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls** (Matthew 11:29 WNT). It is the soul that feels these pressures and needs to rest in His yoke.

Further, consider these verses that connect the soul with the senses: **With all the yearning of your soul you may sacrifice and eat flesh** (Deuteronomy 12:15); **you may eat grapes to your soul's desire, to your satisfaction** (Deuteronomy 23:24); **their soul abhorred all food** (Psalm 107:18); **a thief when he steals, in order to fill his soul's needs when he is famishing** (Proverbs 6:30); **The just man knows the soul's needs of even his domestic beast, yet the compassions of the wicked are cruel** (Proverbs 12:10); **eating to his soul's satisfaction** (Proverbs 13:25); **honey of the comb, is sweet to the soul and healing to the bones** (Proverbs 16:24); **if you are a person of soulish appetite** (Proverbs 23:2); **The soul that is surfeited tramples on honeycomb, yet to the famished soul, any bitter thing is sweet** (Proverbs 27:7); **cause his soul to see good from his toil** (Ecclesiastes 2:24); **All of a man's toil is for his mouth, yet even then the soul is never filled** (Ecclesiastes 6:7); **to make the soul of the famished empty** (Isaiah 32:6).

Many of these verses should help our understanding of the term *soul food* or *comfort food*, that is, food that brings comfort to our soul.

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)

#05-1119

Is the Soul Immortal?

January 19, 2011

The last issue briefly explained the source of the soul and what it means.

First, it comes forth when the breath of the spirit of life is breathed into an inanimate body. When the spirit enters the body, it becomes animated as a living soul.

Second, if the soul only comes into being when the body and spirit are joined, then it only follows that the soul does not exist prior to the body becoming a living soul. It only becomes soul when the breath of the spirit of life enters the body. This is an important point, for it proves that the soul is not immortal, at least on the front end or before life comes into the body. In other words, it does not exist in some mystical state that we have no conscious awareness of prior to our birth. Another way of stating this is that it is not eternal.

Third, the soul or, simply, soul is the animation of the body and its relationship and interaction with the environment in which it lives and partakes. It is not life per se but the human experience of living in a body that sees, touches, tastes, smells, etc. We could define soul as the experience of life in a body as experienced through the sensations and feelings of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling. As such, soul could be likened to a phenomenon and a capacity.

Fourth, **the soul** [nephesh] **of the flesh is in the blood** (Leviticus 17:11 DNT), which means that soul is intimately joined to the blood of the body. Take away the blood, and what happens to the soul? Herein lies the answer to the question of whether the soul is immortal or not.

If the blood is drained out of a body, what happens to the body and the blood? Obviously, the body dies and returns to the soil, and so does the blood, except the blood dries up and is absorbed back into the soil much faster than the bones of the body.

Pour out (drain) the blood, and both the blood and the body die, meaning the living soul dies. So, if the soul of the flesh, that is, of the body, is in the blood, and death ensues when the blood is poured out, then logic dictates that the soul dies too. Death brings an end to the experiences of the body. They are no more. As Solomon wrote: **For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything** (Ecclesiastes 9:5 NASB). If the dead know nothing, then surely their experiences are gone as well.

As I have written many times, death is death, which is a cessation of life; it is not life in what some call afterlife or life in heaven or in death or, for that matter, even in what people call *hell*. You cannot have life in death; it is an oxymoronic statement that requires that death be redefined to include life.

The fact of the matter is that there is no scriptural evidence that the soul departs the body and goes to heaven or into some afterlife *in* death. In other words, there is no evidence that the phenomenon called soul is immortal, for immortality means that one comes into a life that is beyond the reach of death, never to experience it again.

It is safe to state that believing in the immortality of the soul has led to the popular but erroneous belief that when people die, they go to either heaven or hell. However, this concept comes from pagan religion, not scripture, and it can be traced back to ancient Egypt and Babylon and, later, the Greeks.

At the time of Jesus' first advent, the Jews came in contact with Greek philosophy that believed in the immortality of the soul, and this thinking began to infiltrate into Jewish teaching.

It is reported that this error came to them primarily through the philosophy of Plato (428-348 BC) and his student Socrates. Evidently, Plato's thinking was a strange blend of ancient Babylonian and Egyptian thinking. Plato and Socrates taught that the soul was immortal and, at the time of death, the body and soul separate.

Unfortunately, Christians were corrupted by Greek philosophy early on as well. By 200 AD, the belief in the immortality of the soul had become a controversy amongst Christians. Obviously, some knew the truth and were not to be persuaded by error.

Where is the controversy today? There are others who stand against such error and try to offer the truth; however, based on what is heard coming out of large factions of the church, we would have to conclude that there is not much controversy. What I mean is that so many Christians seem to accept the error of dying and going to heaven or hell, based on the immortality of the soul, that there is really not much controversy. Add to this the many movies that portray life in death and souls being tormented in their afterlife as if it all were real, and it is no wonder that there is no controversy today.

I realize there is some scripture that people use to support the error of soul immortality. Some even use Jesus' words to prove their point. Case in point is the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It seems to me that Jesus often exhorted the religious elite by using things they believed even if they were error. In other words, He did not always correct them but, instead, sort of threw their error right back at them.

For example, when the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub, Jesus did not correct them by telling them that the Baal-god, which was known as the god of flies or of dung, was a false god to be ignored. Instead, Jesus asked: **"If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges** (Matthew 12:27). I realize that it is generally taught that Beelzebub is Satan, but Jesus was using the word as a parody, which treats a serious subject in a nonsensical manner, as in ridicule. *Beelzebub* is of Chaldean origin and referred to baal-zebul, which was a special deity of the Ekronites. Notice how Jesus hit them head-on using their own terminology. We could say that He threw dung at them.

We must be careful not to make every word of Jesus' into some deep theological or universal, doctrinal truth. Unfortunately, a lot of this has been done to support doctrines involving heaven, hell, and the immortality of the soul. See #03-0955, April 22, 2009, *Gates of Hades*; #04-1035, April 5, 2010, *Rich Man and Lazarus*; #04-1037, April 8, 2010, *Gehenna, Not Hell*; #04-1038, April 9, 2010, *Gehenna, Divine Judgment*; #04-1039, April 10, 2010, *Lake of Fire*.

Now, there is one verse that some use to support the immortality of the soul and that others use to support the total annihilation of unbelievers in the lake of fire. I reject both views.

'And be not afraid of those killing the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather Him who is able both soul and body to destroy in gehenna.' (Matthew 10:28 YLT)

Frankly, I have struggled over this verse for a number of years until just a few weeks ago, when I realized that Jesus was simply challenging the Greek teaching on the immortality of the soul without directly propounding a doctrine that refuted it. He knew what was taught in that day and what some of the Jews, even His disciples, erroneously believed. They knew the body died but believed the soul went on to some afterlife in death. Jesus cut right to the heart of the matter that the soul and body die.

Actually, the message He conveyed was about fearing God who would judge the Jews in the gehenna of fire, which is divine judgment unto death. We could call it God's capital punishment. Those who are judged in this manner die and their dead bodies are not given a proper burial but are thrown into a fiery garbage dump that burns the refuse. The soul is also there because it too dies with the body. The dead do not know anything. Likewise, in the gehenna of fire, the dead (body and soul) do not know anything either. They have no knowledge because death is the cessation of life; take the body away, and the soul ceases to exist, for it is the experience of the body.

Conclusion: **The soul is not immortal at the point of death or *in* death.**

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1120

Brimstone — Agent of Love

January 20, 2011

It can be stated without much, if any, contradiction that when most people hear the word *brimstone*, they conjure up images of people being tormented (actually, more like tortured) in a fiery place called *hell*. If you have followed my writings, you know that I abhor such a thought, for it maligns the loving and merciful character of God, and, besides, it is not based on scripture but on pagan religion.

In the physical sense, the English word *brimstone* simply refers to sulfur (sulphur). The word is traced to the Old English word *brynstan*, which is made up of *brin*, meaning "to burn," and *stan*, meaning "stone." Taken from the ground, sulfur, which has the atomic number 16, appears as a bright yellow crystalline solid that burns easily; hence, it is called a **burning stone**.

Sulfur is one of the oldest known substances used as a fungicide (kills fungus) and pesticide (kills pests). It is a component in fertilizer, black gun powder, and matches, and is used in the process of manufacturing cellophane, rayon, rubber, bleaching paper, and a host of other products.

Also, it is an essential element of life, being found in two amino acids, cysteine and methionine, and it is used to save lives and fight infections by being formulated into a form of drug called **sulfa drugs**.

As such, in a physical or natural sense, sulfur is not a bad thing, for it has many good uses, especially when it comes to life and its preservation. On the other hand, it can also be used to kill.

However, when it comes to its spiritual meaning or application, the traditions of men have built up quite a bias against the word *brimstone*. Bible dictionaries generally identify *brimstone* as sulfur (sulphur), an inflammable mineral substance found in quantities on the shores of the Dead Sea, which is a most appropriate understanding of the word. However, most go on to define it as denoting destruction or punishment and expressing **the idea of excruciating torment**. This is based on the literal destruction of the ancient cities on the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, and on a literal and torturous lake of fire.

The question is this: Is there a spiritual meaning to *brimstone* that goes beyond physical destruction of the flesh? Of course, I reject the excruciating torment part.

The first mention of *brimstone* is found in the account of the Lord judging Sodom and Gomorrah by totally destroying the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone. There was no torture in this judgment; it was simply a total destruction of the city and its inhabitants. All who died on the plain will be raised up in the second resurrection to face the Great White Throne Judgment.

(24) Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone [gophriyth] and fire from the LORD out of heaven, (25) and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. (Genesis 19:24-25 NASB)

The Hebrew word for *brimstone* is *gophriyth*, which is related to cypress resin and, by analogy, inflammable (burning) sulphur, and is derived from the Hebrew word *gopher*, which is identified with a type of wood, in particular, cypress wood. If you recall, Noah was commanded to make the ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14).

In the New Testament, the first mention of *brimstone* comes from Jesus as He referred to the ancient judgment in Lot's day, and the last mention in scripture is associated with the Great White Throne Judgment and the lake of fire.

But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone [theion] from heaven and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:29 NASB)

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone [theion], which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8 NASB)

The Greek word for *brimstone* is *theion*, which conveys the sense of flashing, as in inflammable sulphur, and is derived from *theios*, which means "**divine, godhead.**"

Now, putting all these notes together, spiritually speaking, I propose that brimstone denotes something good, not bad, for it speaks of God's means of cleansing the flesh of man. In the physical sense, it was used to literally destroy sinful flesh (i.e., death of the body, not torture), but, in the spiritual sense, it signifies (figuratively speaking) the cleansing of man from his sinful nature and works of the flesh. Its ultimate purpose is salvation, not destruction or annihilation. Let us consider a few points.

First, generally, the first mention of a Hebrew word in the Old Testament sets the meaning for the Greek word in the New Testament when the same Hebrew verse is repeated or referenced in the New Testament. As such, in its primal meaning, brimstone refers to gopher wood, which was used to save Noah and his family who were brought safely through the water; in type, baptized into Christ through His resurrection (1 Peter 3:20-21). Salvation!

Second, in the Greek, *brimstone* is also connected to that which is *divine*. Many probably think of it as connected to Satan and hell, but this is not so, for there is a divine meaning attached to brimstone.

Third, brimstone is like **a sulfa drug** used to fight off infection and disease in the mortal body. In the spiritual sense, it signifies the agent by which God cleanses or, if you will, purges unbelievers from the works or deeds of the flesh (Revelation 20:13). All the wicked or unjust will be judged before the Great White Throne and will have a part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. As I have written elsewhere, the **lake of fire signifies the righteous and holy law of God** that will purge (cleanse) the wicked of their works of the flesh, teach them righteousness, make restitution for their evil deeds against others, and, ultimately, reconcile and restore them to God. The second death is the death of their works of sinful flesh, not annihilation of their existence or torture of their body. We could say that brimstone is the treatment of disease (sinful deeds) and the preserver of life.

Fourth, the atomic number for sulfur is **16**, which is the number of **love**. **God is love**, and in His love He mercifully judges, even the unjust, for the purpose of leading all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth through the man Christ Jesus (Anointed, Messiah) who gave Himself a ransom for all, not just some or a few but ALL (1 Timothy 2:4-6). Thus, at the heart of brimstone is *God is love!*

Fifth, the gematria for the Hebrew word for *brimstone* is 693, which is a factor of 9 times 77. The number **9** signifies **judgment**, and the number **7** signifies **divine perfection** or **perfection of what is in view**. The number **77** could signify either a **double witness** or a factor of 7 times 10 with the number **10** signifying **ordinal completion** or **perfection of divine order**, as well as **the fullness of law and responsibility**. As a whole, these numbers all point to God's perfect judgment. Thus, brimstone signifies God bringing about His divine, perfect order that will ultimately include the unjust. At the consummation of the ages, the unrighteous will join the ranks of the righteous company of God.

Sixth, the gematria for *brimstone* in Greek is **144**, which signifies **the first resurrection saints**. 144 is also the multiplication of 12 by 12, and the number **12** signifies **divine government** or the **perfection of divine government**; and is the primary number of **New Jerusalem** (Revelation 21-22). I recognize that brimstone is not associated with the first resurrection; but, what about brimstone being associated with God establishing His divine government on a new earth that has been cleansed from all deeds of sinful flesh (2 Peter 3:10)? However, to bring all mankind into His Kingdom and immortality, He must purge the unjust, those outside New Jerusalem, as well. Thus, fire and brimstone are God's way of establishing His divine government in the hearts of **all** mankind, none excluded.

In conclusion, **brimstone** could be called **the sulfa drug of God** that will cleanse and purge all mankind of sinful deeds, so that by the consummation of the ages, all will be restored to God, so that the Father will be **All in All New** (1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 21:5), proving **love never fails!** **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!** (Romans 11:33 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)

#05-1121

Satan's Destiny is not Hell

January 21, 2011

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8 NASB)

The last issue dealt with what, I believe to be the spiritual or figurative meaning of the word *brimstone* as presented in scripture, especially in reference to the lake of fire, which I have written about previously. I won't cover that ground in this issue, so please see #04-1039, April 10, 2010, *Lake of Fire*. However, I have one more thought about brimstone that I was unable to include in the last issue.

A good friend of mine brought something to my attention that fits with what has been shared, and it deals with the common image people have of Satan and his present abode.

When people are asked to describe Satan's domain, that is, his environment, many, if not most, probably would answer that it is a place of fire and brimstone (burning noxious sulfur), which is how *hell* is often described. You know, a hellhole in the midst of the earth with fire shooting up all over the place with the poor sinners being tortured in these flames as worms are coming out of their ears. Really; this is what some people believe.

By the way, supposedly, the entrance to this hellhole is called **the gates of hell**, which is based on an incorrect understanding of Jesus' words to Peter.

"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Matthew 16:18 NASB)

The King James and other translations incorrectly use the word *hell* instead of Hades, which is simply the unconscious state of the dead, or more specifically, the unseen state of the soul.

Over the years, I have heard it preached many times that "the gates of hell will not prevail against the church," meaning that Satan and his dominion will not overcome the church. The problem is that this is not what Jesus was stating to Peter and the others.

To be balanced in this discussion, there are others who see the gates of hell as simply the authority of Satan and his minions that rule the air. Ones who hold this view do not necessarily see hell as a fiery place at this time. Instead, they see the fiery hell coming into view with a literal lake of fire. Obviously, they hold to two different views of hell that are separated by thousands of years. It is all so very confusing! So, let us see if we can clear up this confusion, based on scripture and not on paganism or the traditions of men.

The gates of Hades are not the gates of hell, that is, the modern-day concept of hell held by so many Christians and non-Christians alike. They are more properly called the gates of death or the grave. For more explanation, please see issue #03-0955, April 22, 2009, *The Gates of Hades*.

When David was being pursued by his enemies, he cried to the Lord: **Be gracious to me, O LORD; See my affliction from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death** (Psalm 9:13 NASB).

When Hezekiah was on the verge of death, he cried out: **I said, In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol [Hades (Gr.) or grave]: I am deprived of the residue of my years.** (Isaiah 38:10 ASV)

Returning to Jesus' word on the gates of Hades: The fact of the matter is Jesus told His disciples that death would not overcome the church because He was about to overcome death, not only for the church but for the whole of mankind. The proof is that, after stating this, Jesus began to tell His disciples that He would be killed and then raised up on the third day (Matthew 16:21).

Now, this is what my good friend brought to my attention.

Here is a question for those who see Satan's present domain as a place of fire and brimstone called *hell*, with all its usual modern-day, hellfire preaching, and movie-hyped characterizations: Why does God cast the Devil into hell at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ?

The Devil, who is leading them astray, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are the beast and the false prophet... (Revelation 20:10 YLT)

How can the hell of today be Satan's abode if he is going to be cast into the supposedly same hell in the future? Why cast the Devil into an abode that is well-suited for him? How will he be tormented if he is in his natural environment? Obviously, the answer is that he would not be tormented in such an environment. He would actually enjoy it. Thus, a *literal* fiery place of fire and brimstone cannot presently be the Devil's environment, nor will it be his *literal* environment in the future [emphasis on *literal*].

As presented in the last issue, fire and brimstone come from God's throne and is of God and not from Satan's domain. *Brimstone* signifies the cleansing and purifying power of divine righteousness that saves. In other words, the fiery law of God and divine brimstone will cleanse and purify Satan in the same way all the unjust will be cleansed and purified until [by] the consummation of the ages [eons].

Yes, you read correctly. I am sure some of you are asking: Do you mean to tell me that God is actually going to redeem Satan, as well, after all the carnage he has brought to mankind? Yes; why not! After all, God is the creator of good and evil, and He created the old crooked serpent to sin and be the father of lies, right from the beginning (1 John 3:8). It was all part of God's plan. See issues #03-09121, May 6, 2009, *Crooked, Ancient Serpent*, and #03-09122, May 8, 2009, *Why God Created Good and Evil*.

By the way, surely, Satan will be tormented in God's fiery law of righteousness but not excruciatingly tortured. Experiencing God's righteousness will be torment, in some measure, for all the unrighteous.

The eonian purpose of God is to be all in all, and, since Adam, God has been implementing His plan to achieve this purpose. Paul tells us God's plan is to subject all things to His Son, so that, ultimately, He, that is, God the Father may be all in all. To do this, all forms of death, the first and the second, must be abolished. No one or thing can remain in the lake of fire, which is the second death, for this to be true.

When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:28 NASB)

Undoubtedly, Satan's place in the lake of fire will last for the full age of God's day, through to the end of the ages of the ages or the eons of the eons (literal rendering). The proper translation of Revelation 20:10 is: **They shall be tormented day and night—to the ages of the ages** (YLT).

At the consummation of the ages, death will be abolished and all will be restored to God so that the Father will be **All in All New** (1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 21:5). Do you think anything will be left out of God's all? How can He be All in all if a literal raging, fiery oven of torment and torture exists and continues for eternity? It is impossible! There is no exclusion in God's all. What part of God's all are we to leave out? God's created beings failed, but **God is love** never fails.

Why? Because **love never fails!** (1 Corinthians 13:8) Thank God!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1122

Souls Under the Altar

January 22, 2011

I thought I was done writing about the soul in order to refute the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; however, I realized that there is one more set of verses that are often used to support this erroneous doctrine. According to this pagan doctrine, the soul does not die when the body dies but goes on to another realm of life.

(9) When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; (10) and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (11) And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. (Revelation 6:9-11 NASB)

What does "the souls under the altar" mean? Are they alive, which would indicate that the soul is immortal? Or, do these souls signify something spiritual or figurative?

I must confess that at one time, I thought and wrote that they are alive in the bowels of the earth, but I have been adjusted on this matter. So, at the outset, I must state that these souls are dead and in the grave, waiting for the first resurrection into immortality. What proof do we have of this conclusion?

First, they have been slain, so they are dead, not alive. If we agree with Solomon that **the dead do not know anything** (Ecclesiastes 9:5), then these souls must not know anything either.

Second, the altar was the place upon which the sacrifices were offered, which indicates that these souls suffered death, meaning their blood was poured out on the altar of the martyrs.

The soul is the seat of sensations or the experience of the body; kill the body, that is, pour out its blood, and the soul ceases as well, for the soul is in the blood.

For the soul of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. (Leviticus 17:11 DNT)

When a sacrifice was made on the altar to make atonement for the souls of the sons of Israel, the blood of the animal flowed through the grating and below the altar. Consequently, the blood of these souls, as martyrs, was poured out, and it is the blood that actually sits under the altar and cries out.

Third, their cry is like the blood of righteous Abel and of all the martyrs' blood (Luke 11:50-51) that cries out from the ground. Abel is not crying out, but the voice (testimony) of his spilt blood is crying out (Genesis 4:10). It is merely figurative language.

Fourth, it is the word of their testimony that cries out, for these martyrs did not love their life when faced with death.

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death." (Revelation 12:11 NASB)

The souls under the altar are ones who will surely gain their life or **eonian life** in the coming kingdom of Christ, for they were willing to literally lose their soul life for the sake of gaining the Kingdom of Christ in the age to come.

(25) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. (Matthew 16:25-27 NASB)

They are in the camp of the great cloud of witnesses, ones who died without receiving the promises and who await *in* death the better resurrection, not only to immortal life but to eonian life, a life in the age to come.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us... (Hebrews 12:1 NASB)

They are also in the camp of the ecclesia in Smyrna who were told to be faithful until death and who did not fail.

'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.' (Revelation 2:10 NASB)

Finally, they are in the camp of the beheaded souls that will reign with Christ for a thousand years.

(4) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. (6) 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 20:4-6 NASB)

Consequently, there is no reason to view these martyrs as being alive under an altar. Can you imagine the scene if this were taken literally? It is simply a figurative statement indicating that their blood will be avenged by God. It is stated that more martyrs will follow, and it will be an encouragement to them to endure even unto death.

Only the Lord knows, but some of us may yet be called upon to die for the Lord Jesus before His kingdom comes. If so, may we take comfort knowing that our blood will cry out along with all those faithful servants that preceded us! It will be like a sleep. Our next conscious moment will be looking into the face of the love of our life, the very **Author and Perfecter of faith** (Hebrews 12:2).

Let us be ever mindful that **Christ alone has immortality** (1 Timothy 6:16), for **no one has ascended into heaven except He Who descended out of heaven** (John 3:13), and His name is **Jesus the Anointed One, the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Son of God, and the Son of Man.**

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1123

Great Cloud of Witnesses

January 23, 2011

The New Testament contains several references to clouds. The Greek word for *cloud* is *nephele*, which denotes a cloudy, shapeless mass covering the heavens that, metaphorically speaking, refers to a dense multitude. The origin of the word indicates that it could refer to a mass of rock, signifying a mass of anything. Thus, it conveys the picture of a dense mass.

A study of the cloud references reveals that clouds refer to the witness of the faithful conquerors in Christ, whether dead or alive. Let us start with the dead.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud [nephele] of witnesses surrounding [encompassing] us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.... (Hebrews 12:1 NASB [CV])

It is fascinating how often this verse is presented as if the faithful dead are not really dead but alive in heaven, as if it were a big stadium, and all these dead but alive *in death* ones [oxymoronic concept] are in the bleachers of this heavenly stadium, looking down, and literally cheering us on. This might help to bolster the erroneous view that there are dead ones in heaven today, but this is not what the writer of the Hebrews epistle meant, nor is it the teaching of scripture. The witnesses are all those mentioned in the previous chapter of the epistle from Abel on down to the wanderers in the caves. All gained approval through their faith, but not one of them received what was promised. These saints are dead and awaiting the *better resurrection* (Hebrews 11:13, 35); none of them is watching from heaven.

The English Sublinear of the Concordant Greek Text uses the phrase *about-lying* for the translated word *encompassing* or *surrounding*. A cloud is lying about; meaning they are dead in the grave.

First, in this context, a cloud is merely a figure of speech for a mass of witnesses that has gone before us. A witness is one who testifies. Their testimony is the testimony of their lives of faith. This is what encompasses us or lies about us in the graves today. It is the witness of their faith that conquered or, we could say, of their conquering life. It is like Abel's blood that cries to God from the ground.

Second, clouds are mentioned in the snatching away in clouds of the saints at the *parousia* of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The conquerors in Christ who hold to the testimony of Jesus are the ones who are snatched away. When all are snatched away, they are like a cloud (a mass) of witnesses. Whether actual physical clouds are involved is not the issue. The fact of the matter is that this great mass of people is a witness based on their faith exercised during their lives. The clouds are symbolic of their witness.

Third, the same thing is seen with our Lord Jesus as He was taken up and received in a cloud.

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud [nephele] received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11 NASB)

The fact that a cloud received Him indicates something of importance. He is the faithful and true Witness (Revelation 3:14), and the cloud that took Him up signified this fact.

Fourth, there are two more verses that deal with the coming of the Lord and clouds. The first one records Jesus being brought before the whole Council as He was about to face the cross (Matthew 26:59). They demanded to know whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, to which He responded:

Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven [ouranos] (Matthew 26:64 KJV).

This was a rather strange thing to say to the men that accused Him and, ultimately, demanded His death as they rejected Him as the King of Israel. How could they have seen Him coming in the clouds of heaven? After all, Jesus spoke as if in that day they would see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. Shortly after, He would be seated at the right of God the Father, but how would they see this? When these rejecters of Christ stoned Stephen to death, surely, they did not see heaven opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right of God (Acts 7:55-57) as Stephen saw.

In the days that followed, there was only one way for them to see Him coming in the clouds, and that was by seeing the witness of His faithful disciples that had followed Him and that, after Calvary, at Pentecost, had received an earnest of the spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14). The ecclesia in that day was the cloud of witnesses, many of whom were later martyred for their testimony. Consequently, the ones that rejected Christ saw Him in the dense mass, the cloud of witnesses born from above that were alive on earth at that time. These were the ones who were of the Way and later called Christians; a mass of little rocks or living stones built upon the Rock or the living, precious Stone.

But how did these rejecters of Christ see Him seated at the right hand of power? Again, they saw it in the faithful cloud of witnesses who were spiritually seated together with Christ Jesus among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6 CV). In other words, when they looked at Christians, the body of Christ, they saw the Head, figuratively speaking, sitting on the right hand of power. While He walked the earth, Jesus stated in various ways that if anyone saw Him, they saw the Father. In like fashion, in that day, as well as today, when one saw (sees) His body, he saw (sees) the Lord, the Head of His body.

If we put aside the ones that rejected Christ in that day and fast forward to our day, we discover that there are still a people who claim to be Jews, but they are not (Revelation 2:9), for they too reject Christ. A day is coming, and I believe soon, that these, who Jesus calls liars, will see Christ, the One they reject, come to this earth as His life is manifested in the sons of glory. This will be a prophetic fulfillment of Jesus' words to the Council over 2,000 years ago.

There is more to be gleaned from Jesus' words, for the word *heaven* comes from the Greek word *ouranos*, which is similar to the Greek word *oros*, which means "to rise; a mountain (as lifting itself above the plain)." The word *mountain* often refers to *kingdom*. Consequently, one could say that **He is coming in the glory (clouds) of His kingdom (of heaven).**

How will this glory be manifested? The answer lies in another verse about His coming.

Behold, he cometh with [nephele] clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1:7 KJV)

Most translations state "with the clouds." However, the article *the* is not in the Greek, so it seems that the KJV is a bit more accurate. The Greek word translated *with* is *meta*, which is a preposition that means "accompaniment or amid." Thus, the Lord will come amid clouds. If we take clouds to mean a witness [i.e., a mass rock (living stones) of witnesses], then perhaps a better way of stating it is: **Behold, a witness will accompany Him!** Or, yet another way of stating it is: **Behold, He will accompany a witness!** This witness is the company of conquerors that is glorified as He is glorified, the sons of glory (Romans 8:21; Hebrews 2:10).

Thus, we can conclude that, figuratively and spiritually, clouds refer to the witness of the faithful, either past (dead) or present (alive). A loud voice in heaven attests to this great cloud of witnesses **who hold to the testimony of Jesus** (Revelation 19:10).

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death." (Revelation 12:11 NASB)

May we be a great cloud, a massive rock, of witnesses in the days leading up to the coming of the Kingdom of our Lord!

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)*

#05-1124

Passed Out of Death into Life

January 24, 2011

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life [eonian life; Life of the Ages; age-during life], and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24 NASB [CV; WNT; YLT])

This is a very interesting verse, especially the phrase *passed out of death into life*, that can be, and probably is, misinterpreted to support the doctrine of an afterlife *in* death, as if one will never truly die even though the body does, or even a spiritual resurrection when one first believes, as if one will not require a physical resurrection of the body. Neither of these interpretations is correct.

So, the question is posed: What did Jesus mean by *passed out of death into life*? When does one not come into judgment, but passes out of death into life? I will give the answer, then explain it.

The answer is discovered in the verses that follow (5:25-29) that speak of the second or general resurrection. Simply, Jesus was not referring to the first resurrection that will occur at the end of our present eon, but to the second resurrection of the rest of the dead that will be raised up to appear before the **Great White Throne** judgment at least one-thousand years from now (Revelation 20:5; 11). Thus, verse 24 is explained by verses 25-29.

(25) "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (26) "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (27) and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (28) "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, (29) and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (John 5:25-29 NASB)

We need to be clear that Jesus was presenting the Jewish view of one resurrection (i.e., **a** resurrection) of the dead, not **the** resurrection from among the dead of which Jesus is the firstborn (Colossians 1:18). As you might recall, Jesus' disciples were puzzled when He first mentioned the phrase *rising from the dead* (Mark 9:9-10). They were puzzled because they had been taught that there was only one general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. This view is supported by Paul when Ananias the high priest, along with some elders and an attorney, brought charges against Paul before Felix the governor.

(14) "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; (15) having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Acts 24:14-15 NASB)

Notice that *these men* refer to the Jews that brought the charges against him. Paul clearly acknowledged that their hope was **a** (i.e., one) resurrection that will include two groups of people. This resurrection will occur in *an hour*, that is, at one moment in time, when the dead, all those in the tombs, will hear the voice of the Son of Man who has been given the authority to execute judgment. There is only one judgment that fits this description; it is the Great White Throne judgment of John's Patmos vision (Revelation 20:11-15), at which time the righteous will be **saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15), and the wicked will face judgment that leads to the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death [of deeds] (Revelation 20:14; 21:8). The righteous are the believers who will receive the promise of immortal life but who are disqualified from participating in the *out*-resurrection because they did not conquer while in mortal bodies. The wicked are the unbelievers.

Now, let us return to verse 24 and explain it based on the second resurrection.

The first thing to note is that Jesus did not state that one had to believe in Him but rather had to believe Him, God the Father, who sent Him. Prior to this, it is recorded that the Jews sought to kill Jesus for claiming equality with God (John 5:18).

In response to His claim that God is His Father, Jesus told the Jews that were listening: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner** (John 5:19 NASB).

Notice how Jesus did not try to defend His position; He simply stated the fact of His relationship with His Father. We could say that, when Jesus told them to believe Him who sent Him, it was His way of stating: Believe God the Father who said: **This is My beloved Son, in whom I well-pleased, listen to Him** (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35).

The second thing to note is that *eonian life* is given to all who believe in the Father's declaration and identification of His Son. I realize that most translations use the term *eternal* life, but, as I have stressed many times in previous writings, concordantly speaking, the word *eonian* is more accurate. As noted above, other translations use the word *age*, which has the same meaning as *eon* or *eonian*. See issues #03-09131, June 15, 2009, *Eon (Age), Not Eternal or World*, and #03-0982, November 23, 2009, *Immortal Life & Eonian Life*.

All of us who believe in this age have the promise of immortality or, if you will, an immortal life, that is, the promise of a new body that is no longer subject to death and in which sin has no place. Eonian life speaks of having immortal life in an age. The question is in which age one will come into immortality. Will it be at the end of our present wicked age, meaning one's immortality will come through the first or **out-resurrection and transfiguration**, or will it come through the second resurrection to appear before the **Great White Throne** judgment that follows the completion of the **Kingdom Age**?

In light of verses 25-29, Jesus was not referring to eonian life during His coming Kingdom Age but to life in the age after this in what Peter called **God's Day** or **the Day of God**, when righteousness dwells on a new earth (2 Peter 3:12), which I believe is either a series of ages or one long age that ends with what Paul called **the consummation of the ages** [eons] (1 Corinthians 10:11 CV). Contextually, in John 5:24, *eonian life* refers to the promise of immortal life that comes through the second resurrection at the Great White Throne and not the *out-resurrection* that Paul sought (Philippians 3:11).

The third thing to note is that one who has eonian life will not come into judgment. For those who know their Bibles, this should cause at least a pause. After all, according to Paul, **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:10), which he also calls **the judgment seat of God** (Romans 14:10). Do Jesus and Paul contradict each other? No; they are in complete agreement. Paul spoke in general terms without specifying which judgment; however, Jesus specified the judgment as the Great White Throne that leads to the second death, without naming it directly.

There is more than one judgment, just as there is more than one resurrection; the question is in which judgment one will be. Actually, there are three judgments: 1) the judgment of the conquerors at the *out-resurrection* that leads to reigning with Christ in the coming Kingdom Age; 2) the judgment of the righteous believers at the Great White Throne that leads to life in God's Day; and 3) the judgment of the wicked at the Great White Throne that leads to cleansing in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

Finally, this leads to the phrase *passed out of death into life*. In a general sense, this hope applies to all mankind, but especially to believers. However, in the context of John 5:25-29, there is only one group in view, that is, the righteous believers who received the righteousness of Christ and the promise of immortal life when they first believed. They are excluded from the *out-resurrection*; nevertheless, they are saved, yet so as through fire. They will not have a part in the second death but will pass out of death of all kinds and into the life of the Son of God, **for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable** (Romans 11:29).

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)

#05-1125

Silly Talk

January 25, 2011

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. (Romans 13:1 NASB)

At the outset, I must state that I agree with Paul's exhortation that we must subject ourselves to the governing authorities, for all authority comes from God, without exception. However, we need to understand that not all authority is exercised in a good, righteous, and just fashion. History itself records that there have been many bad and ungodly governing authorities that go back as far as Nimrod and his kingdom of Babel. God alone builds up nations and their governing authorities and tears them down; what He plants He also uproots (Jeremiah 45:4). The Lord has made this very clear through the word spoken through Jeremiah.

(5) Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, (6) "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. (7) "At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; (8) if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. (9) "Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; (10) if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. (Jeremiah 18:5-10 NASB)

In addition, to accomplish His plan, the Lord hardens hearts of governing authorities, as in the case of Pharaoh (Exodus 9:12), and even takes ones that do not acknowledge Him as their God and makes them His servant, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6; 43:10), or makes them His shepherd and anointed, as in the case of Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

In other words, the Lord works through good, believing governing authorities just as easily as He does through bad or evil, unbelieving governing authorities, even raising them up, in order to accomplish His plan that will lead to the fulfillment of His eonian purpose. It is called **the sovereignty of God**.

Of course, biblical history reveals that it is not uncommon for bad or unrighteous governing authorities to be God's judgment upon the people for their sin, as in the case of King Saul. History also reveals that governing authorities that start out on a good foundation can end up on a bad one, leading the Lord to either destroy or divide a kingdom, as in the case of King Solomon and his United Kingdom of Israel.

This leads to what is on my mind for this issue.

There is little doubt that during 2010 and now into 2011, the US governing authorities, represented by our executive and legislative branches of government and the two political parties that continually vie for power to run them, have been spewing out venomous and wicked attacks on one another that makes them look like immature school boys and girls getting into food fights and name calling. We could say that there is much **pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness** (Isaiah 58:9). The disingenuous part about all this is that as they fling their mud, pointing their finger, as if in righteous indignation, they stress that their sole purpose is to protect and help the American people.

To make matters worse, the media, of all types, continually (24/7) fuels these food fights with their non-stop analyses and opinions that, unfortunately, sway the views of the American public as evidenced by daily and weekly polls that, frankly, I find foolish and a waste of time. Who cares what the polls say? After all, they are only a reflection of the tone of the dialogue of the governing authorities and how and what the media is presenting. As I have stated previously, Americans are being played like strings on a fiddle. It is time to stop listening to all this garbage and listen for the voice of the Spirit of God.

Now, as if things are not bad enough, tonight is the **State of the Union** address by the president, and the governing authorities have gone from foolish to silly. It is hard to imagine that they are adults. It has been big news of late that some members of the two parties are going to sit together tonight rather than sit together as a party, like they have traditionally done. Personally, I am all in favor of breaking with tradition, but is this truly what this is about?

On the surface, this might appear to be a good thing. After all, they are talking about being civil to one another and making an effort at bipartisanship. Really! Do we honestly believe the rhetoric and the play for power is going to change? Do they believe it themselves? Do they even want it? How long did it last after 9/11? Weeks! Months!

The question is: Does bipartisanship lead to righteous government, or is bipartisanship by definition righteous government? No, on both counts; at least as it pertains to God's righteousness!

It has been the same old story down through the history of governments that place a high premium on appearance, outward show, and symbolism, as if to hide their true motive and drive from the people. Most, if not all, governments of the world today place a much lower premium, if at all, on God's righteousness. How do we know when God's righteousness is in play? We know it when the authorities seek to govern according to God's divine law and not man's law. When was the last time you heard any US politician state that we must return to God's law and seek first His righteousness?

Stating it in reverse; following God's law is seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Or, yet, stated another way; God's law is His righteousness. If governments ignore God's law in favor of man's law, then they are on the ground of man's self-righteousness, bolstered by haughty eyes and a proud heart. It is every man's way, not the Lord's way.

(2) Every man's way is right in his own eyes [self-righteous], but the LORD weighs the hearts. (3) To do righteousness and justice is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice. (4) Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin. (Proverbs 21:2-4 NASB)

The unrighteous and proud governing authorities want us to look at their appearance, their words, even their silly actions, for they know that this is how man sees things. But how does God see things?

For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7 NASB)

As Christians, most of us know that it is all about the heart and not outward appearance; but do we know that God's law must be written on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10) so that we are governed by it every moment of our day? At Mount Horeb, the sons of Israel heard the Ten Commandments and had an opportunity for the whole law of God to be written on their hearts, but they rejected the offer and instead told Moses to go up on the mountain, who alone had the law written on his heart. Instead of God's law taking root in their hearts, it remained something external that later was more about appearance than about righteous judgment (John 7:24). As Christians, have we fallen into the same trap?

Before we go pointing the finger at our elected officials that we put in office in the first place, we need to consider our own hearts and the heart of the church of God. When was the last time you heard a cry go up from the pulpit that we must return to the whole of God's law as seen through the New Covenant and the Holy Spirit? To be sure, many in the church call for seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, but how many are seeking for God's spiritual and holy law? The fact of the matter is that the church has rejected God's law just as much as the governing authorities have.

Dear brethren, we are living in a day of proud hearts that have rejected God's law. I believe our governing authorities are an indication of the condition of our own hearts and of God's judgment of us, especially of the church of God that has rejected His divine law in favor of church law and has been engaged in its own version of silly talk and the pointing of the finger. Judgment begins with the house of God, and, I believe, all the silliness of our elected officials is an indictment of the church. We need to look in the mirror! Have you heard some of the silly talk coming from some pulpits and Christian media? **There must be no silly talk** (Ephesians 5:4), and we must cease pointing of the finger. It is time to repent and cry out to God on behalf of the church and our nation.

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)

#05-1126

All Things – The All

February 7, 2011

The word **all** is a very small word, but it is a mighty comprehensive word that sums up the purpose of God, for He has purposed that His Son, our Lord Jesus, shall be **all in all** so that He, that is, God the Father shall be **all in all**.

In the New Testament, the word *all* and the expression *all things* (appearing about 110 times), are most often translated from the Greek word *panta*, which is a neuter plural form that refers to “wholly, together, in all ways, in all things” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary*). In other words, *panta* is a very comprehensive word, just as the word *all* is in English, which, as an adjective, refers to “the whole extent or quantity of or number of,” “every one of,” or “the greatest possible; as much as possible.” For example, Paul declared: **God our Savior, Who will have all [panta] men to be saved** (1 Timothy 2:3-4 KJV). By the way, is anyone excluded from God’s all? No!

In the New Testament, the Greek expression *ta panta* appears about 34 times, depending on the particular Greek version. The word *ta* is most often translated as the definite article *the*. *Ta panta* is generally translated as *all things*, but it could be equally translated as **the all**. We could say that God’s purpose is **the all**. It might sound like a strange expression, but really it is not because it intensifies the word *all* to include everything and exclude nothing.

Rather than offer detailed explanation of **the all** verses, I am simply going to present them and allow them to speak for themselves to prove that God’s purpose encompasses **the all**.

The administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things [*ta panta, the all*]... (Ephesians 3:9 NASB)

For by Him all things [*ta panta, the all*] **were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things** [*ta panta, the all*] **have been created through Him and for Him.** (Colossians 1:16 NASB)

For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things [*ta panta, the all*] **is God.** (Hebrews 3:4 NASB)

“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things [*ta panta, the all*], **and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”** (Revelation 4:11 NASB)

As if this is not enough, Paul tells us that **the all** is from, by, through, and for God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, God is not merely the Creator of **the all**, but God and His Son are intimately joined to **the all**.

Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things [*ta panta, the all*] **and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things** [*ta panta, the all*], **and we exist through Him.** (1 Corinthians 8:6 NASB)

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things [*ta panta, the all*]. (Romans 11:36 NASB)

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things [ta panta, the all], and through whom are all things [ta panta, the all], in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10 NASB)

Not only is God the Creator, but He is the life-giver of **the all**.

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things [ta panta, the all].... (1 Timothy 6:13 NASB)

Also, He not only creates and gives life, but His purpose is and will be worked out in **the all**.

Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things [ta panta, the all] after the counsel of His will.... (Ephesians 1:11 NASB)

Turning specifically to Christ, Paul declares that He existed before all things came into being. After all, He is the Creator and in Him **the all** holds together, that is, by the word of His power He keeps **the all** together. We could say that He keeps, sustains, and preserves **the all**.

He is before all things [panton], and in Him all things [ta panta, the all] hold together. (Colossians 1:17 NASB)

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things [ta panta, the all] by the word of His power. (Hebrews 1:3 NASB)

In a most amazing statement, Paul declares to all who have an ear to hear that Christ who created **the all** will also fill **the all** with His very life, and He will begin with the ecclesia, which is His spiritual, glorified body.

He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things [ta panta, the all]. (Ephesians 4:10 NASB)

And He put all things [kai panta] in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church [ecclesia], which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all [ta panta, the all] in all [pasin]. (Ephesians 1:22-23 NASB)

How will He do this? Through reconciliation; **the all** has been shut up under sin so that **the all** will be reconciled back to God through the One who fills **the all**. Oh, the glory of God's purpose and plan!

But the Scripture has shut up everyone [ta panta, the all] under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Galatians 3:22 NASB)

Through Him to reconcile all things [ta panta, the all] to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:20 NASB)

How will Christ complete this great plan? He will sum up or gather up **the all** in Himself.

An administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things [ta panta, the all] in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. (Ephesians 1:10 NASB)

Paul actually defines **the all** for us. **The all** is everything in the heavens and on the earth. In other words, **the all** is God's entire creation as we know it and, most likely, as we don't know it, for it includes the unseen as well. There is nothing left out of **the all** of God's purpose. Nothing! 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)

#05-1127

Free Will or God's Will?

February 8, 2011

I recently posted an article on *free will* titled *The Deception of Free Will* (article #33, January 2011). For those who might not want to wade through 24 pages of explanation, I offer the following brief explanation of why I see the whole concept of *free will* as not only deceptive but also very dangerous, especially when it is interwoven into Christian doctrine pertaining to individual salvation. If you want more detail, then I suggest you read the article.

I build my conclusion upon seven definitional proofs. As I state in the article, some of these definitions come from *A Christian Manifesto* by Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984).

First, one of the dictionary definitions of the word **will** is “**the power of conscious and deliberate action or choice: as, freedom of the will.**”

Second, the dictionary definition of **free will** is “**able to choose for itself; not restricted by anything except its own limitation or nature.**”

Third, **humanism** is defined as “**the placing of man at the center of all things and making him the measure of all things,**” which means that man needs no external influence in the exercise of his will. He needs no other knowledge except what he himself can discover and absence any standards outside himself. Simply, man is the measure of all things, and all answers are within man and nowhere else.

Fourth, **humanism** finds its genesis in the **evolutionist or material-energy, pure-chance worldview** that is based upon the idea that impersonal matter or energy shaped into its present form by impersonal chance. Consequently, what we see with our human eyes, including our own physical bodies, came about by pure chance and evolved from chaos to order. Material and energy that make up the universe came together or took shape into some form purely by chance. Thus, we have the theory of evolution and mankind evolving from some primordial ooze. There is no personal God who loves and creates or even saves out of His love.

Fifth, **humanistic free will** (my term) refers to man's will being truly free, that is, free from any and all external influence. According to humanism, **free will** is absolute, meaning that man has the first and last say on any matter in his life, and all reference points are entirely within man. The word **absolute** means “**perfect, pure, not limited, not conditional, unrestricted, not dependent on anything, considered without reference to anything else.**”

Sixth, **affected [free] will** (my term) refers to man's will being exercised or acted upon based on external influences. I propose that once the word **affected** is attached to **free will**, the word **free** loses much of its meaning, if not validity, especially in light of the above definition of **free will**. Once external influences come to bear on the will, the exercise of the will is no longer entirely free, for now restrictions come to bear before action is taken or not taken. It is simply **affected will**.

Seventh, there is an opposing worldview called the **creationist worldview** in which all things start and end with the living God, the Creator of all things. All things that are in existence came forth from a personal God who is the **Creator of all things**. Nothing that came into existence came into being apart from God. There is a personal God who loves and creates and even saves out of His love. God alone is ultimately, intimately, and absolutely responsible for everything in and of His creation.

Following the logic of these seven definitional proofs leads to a few conclusions.

First, there can be only one type of *free will*, and it is humanistic *free will*, for it is the only type that is truly free in every sense of the word. It is free of any and all external influence, and it is free of God. Simply, the exercise of the human will is based entirely and absolutely on what and how man sees things; nothing else matters, not even if one believes in God.

Second, if we accept this first conclusion, then we must also agree that the Christian doctrine, which says individual salvation is dependent on exercising one's *free will*, is based on the material-energy, pure-chance worldview and not on the creationist worldview. It matters not if one holds the creationist worldview as the basis for reality. It means that those who hold to *free will* have bought into humanism and its lie that says man is the center of all things, at least as far as individual salvation goes.

Third, the fact of the matter is that no one really has *free will*, meaning a will that is independent of any and all external influence. As much as the humanists would like to think that they are the center of the universe and are *free-will* agents, they are no such thing; they believe and espouse a lie. There is no such thing as *free will*, humanistic or otherwise.

At the very most, we all exercise what I call *affected will*, which means that we exercise our will based on a variety of external influences. Simply, our will is not absolutely free of any and all external influence to do whatever it wants, whenever it wants, yielding whatever outcome it wants.

We make choices for ourselves and others each and every day of our lives. We could even say that we often have the freedom to make these choices, but not always, since we can also be wooed, steered, nudged, coerced, restricted, and even forced or mandated into these choices or actions. Of course, we also have the choice to fight external influence or submit to it.

Our wills are influenced all day long by our spouses, our children, our parents, our society/community, and, most of all, by our government and its laws under which we live. Not one of us lives in some protected bubble free of external influence. We don't live in a vacuum!

Fourth, and this is the heart of my reason for this issue, I contend that individual salvation is **not** dependent on man exercising his so-called *free will*, as if he must make the choice to believe; and, if he never makes the choice, then he is forever doomed to an eternal existence in a living *hell* of literal fire, burning sulfur, and worms. I have heard it said many times that God did not create man to be a robot; therefore, He will not interfere with man's will in the matter of salvation. I have news for you; if God did (does) not interfere with man's will, then no one would (will) ever be saved. We had no choice in the matter when death passed through into all mankind (Romans 5:12), then why do we think that we have a choice in coming into immortal life? **As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive, but each in his own order** (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

John said that becoming a child of God does not depend on **the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God** (John 1:13). Paul, who had been **set apart from his mother's womb and called through His grace** (Galatians 1:15), was **apprehended or seized of Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:12) and **shown mercy** as he was acting **ignorantly in unbelief** (1 Timothy 1:13).

For Paul, the concept of *free will* was not part of his personal testimony and never entered into his teaching on individual salvation: 1) **For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all** (Romans 11:32); 2) **For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast** (Ephesians 2:8-9); 3) **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth** (1 Timothy 2:3-4). **So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy** (Romans 9:16), **for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things** (Romans 11:36).

There is only one conclusion to be made: Individual salvation comes about when, in His mercy and in His timing, God's will comes to bear on man's will to save him. **But on God who has mercy!**

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)

#05-1128

All Things From Him, Through Him, To Him

February 11, 2011

In chapter 5 of his Romans epistle, Paul presented the glorious truth of the justification and restoration of all mankind, meaning that everyone born of flesh and blood from Adam to the last man or woman standing, no matter how evil or wicked they were in life, will be reconciled (returned, restored) to God, not all at the same time but all eventually, **for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive** (1 Corinthians 15:22).

(18) So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19 NASB)

Paul contrasted two men and their acts, the first man Adam and the second Man or last Adam, Jesus (Yeshua) the Christ or Messiah, the Anointed One. The first Adam transgressed (sinned) against God's command and brought condemnation to all men, for **through sin death passed through into all mankind** (Romans 5:12 CV). There are no exceptions to the condemnation that brought death unto all mankind, for all humans die as evidenced by the countless number of graves throughout the earth. The expression *all mankind* is fully and absolutely comprehensive.

However, the good news is that the one act of righteousness of God's Son resulted in justification of life to all men. In other words, all men, none excluded, are justified before God through His Son. We could say that what the first Adam brought upon his race is overturned by the last Adam. Whereas the first Adam brought death to all, the last Adam brought life to all.

Don't water down the word *all*. Paul uses it in the fullest sense of the word. See issue #05-1126, February 7, 2011, *All Things – The All*.

Paul refers to all mankind or all men as *the many*.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. (Romans 5:15 NASB; also 5:19)

This is a vital point in understanding Paul's thought and, I might add, his logic. He singled out two men, **the first Man, Adam**, who **became a living soul** and **is a type of Him who was to come**, and Jesus, **the second Man, the last Adam** who **became a life-giving spirit** and is the antitype of the first Adam (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47).

These two men stand apart from the rest of mankind. It is Adam plus the many and Christ plus the many.

I stress this point because Christians are erroneously taught that "many are going to hell," and the temptation is to read Paul's *many* as referring only to believers, as if they are the only ones to receive the justification of life while the rest of mankind gets to toast in hell. Let us not be deceived; Paul taught that all shall be made alive in Christ, not all together but **every man in his own order** or **troop**. Ultimately, all things shall be subjected to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23-28).

As he was concluding his section on the national salvation of all of Israel (Romans 9-11), Paul summed up God's plan for mankind.

For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. (Romans 11:32 NASB)

Here is that pesky little word **all** that so many seem to ignore. Paul's logic demands that we see **all** mankind is locked up so that God Himself may show His mercy to **all** mankind. Is it merciful to throw billions upon billions into a torture chamber of literal fire and burning sulfur?

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. (Romans 9:16 NASB)

Born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:13 NASB)

Surely, as he contemplated these truths, Paul got caught up in the glory of God's plan for all mankind. He quoted both Isaiah and Job.

(33) O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (34) "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who became His counselor?" Isa. 40:13 (35) 'Or who first gave to Him, and it will be repaid to him?' Job 41:11 (Romans 11:33-35 LITV)

Who of us mere mortals truly has known the mind of the Lord? We see things through a glass darkly or a cloudy mirror, and then we paint over it with the traditions of men until we create a God in our own image that is full of rage and anger, hell-bent on torturing most of mankind forever and ever. Let us never be persuaded from the truth: **God is love and full of mercy!** His heart will win All.

Now, Paul concludes Romans 11 with what I believe to be the summation of all scripture. It is the ultimate purpose of God. Four different translations are presented to get the full picture.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. (Romans 11:36 NASB)

For everything comes from Him and exists by His power and is intended for His glory. (Romans 11:36 NLT)

For the universe owes its origin to Him, was created by Him, and has its aim and purpose in Him. (Romans 11:36 WNT)

Everything comes from the Lord. All things were made because of him and will return to him. (Romans 11:36 CEV)

In Hebrews 11:3, Paul stated **that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible**, meaning that matter is made out of things that we cannot see with our naked eye. God did not make things out of nothing; rather, He made them out of what some physicists call **God particles**. I explain this in issue #03-09120, May 4, 2009, *In the Beginning God*. The point is that all things come from God, which is the tenet of the **creationist worldview**.

Next, all things go through Him. Paul began Hebrews (1:2, 3) by declaring that God made the eons (ages, time) through His Son who upholds all things. The *eons* speak of the history of mankind and God's divine plan being worked out through His Son, even as most of mankind has been and continues to be blinded to His plan and ultimate purpose.

Finally, all things are to Him, meaning it is His full intent to restore and reconcile all things to Himself until He is **All in all new** (1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 21:5). Simply, every God particle must find its way back into the love and will of God; it all must return to **God is love**, including every single human being ever born of Adam's race and everything in all creation. Think about it; how can all things be to Him if one single particle of His creation is outside of His love and will? Where is the glory in man's evil concept of hell? Where is the glory in the false doctrine of an eternal separation from God?

Is it any wonder that Paul declared: **To Him be the glory throughout the Ages! Amen** (WNT).

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1129

Prophetic Events: Little by Little

February 11, 2011

Some months back, I made a notation on my calendar to pay attention to events on February 10-11, 2011. There is a reason why. It seems that the Lord either speaks to me on these days, or some significant event occurs someplace in the world on them. I have come to realize that these dates are a prophetic window into God's divine plan to usher in the Kingdom of the Son of His love.

Ten years ago, on February 10, 2001, I heard "**Little by little**," which is based on the Lord's promise to the sons of Israel that He would take the land of Canaan gradually and not all at once, until they became fruitful and they took possession of the land.

(29) "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. (30) "I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. (Exodus 23:29-30 NASB)

Eight years later on February 10, 2009, I was given a word in three parts: 1) "**There will be no more cancer in My conquerors.**" 2) "**Thus saith the Lord: 'I have lifted up a hammer over the United States, and I am about to strike at the very heart of the nation.'**" 3) "**A death is coming the likes of which no one has ever seen.**"

I realize the tendency to take prophetic words at face value as if they are literal events, but we must spiritually discern them. The removal of cancer could refer to the removal of all sin, or even the first resurrection and transfiguration of the Lord's conquerors or overcomers that commences the Tabernacles Age.

The hammer refers to the word of the Lord: "**Is not My word like fire?**" **declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"** (Jeremiah 23:29 NASB). Thus, the Lord is going to speak a word that will touch the heart of the nation, which most likely refers to our capital, Washington DC, and the Federal government that emanates from there.

The death that is coming could refer to any one of a number of things. In addition to the obvious, it could be a spiritual death of sorts or the demise of Mystery Babylon or the end of a nation or dramatic change in the Middle East. We just do not know, so we must wait to see how things unfold and seek for spiritual discernment.

To add to this, one year later, on February 10, 2010, I did not hear a word, but the news of the day was rather telling. Chicago, Illinois, the hometown of President Obama, had a 4.3 quake in the midst of a big snowstorm that was blasting Washington DC as well. It was the worst snowstorm in DC since 1899, and it literally shut down the capital city on the 11th.

At the same time, Iran announced that it had enriched uranium, in defiance of the demand not to by the US and other nations. This occurred on the 31st anniversary of the **Iranian Revolution**. On February 11, 1979, the regime of the Shah of Iran completely collapsed.

Now, we come to February 10-11, 2011. For the last 17-18 days, the events unfolding in Egypt have captivated the news. It has been interesting, if not exasperating, to listen to all the so-called experts, pundits, politicians, and commentators analyze the situation and what they think it means to the Egyptian people, to the West, and to Israel. At this point, the best answer is that no one knows, especially now that Hosni Mubarak has stepped down and handed power over to the military.

Also, again, today (the 11th) is the 32nd anniversary of the Iranian Revolution.

But there is more, for Chile just experienced 6.8 and 5.3 quakes near **Concepcion**, almost the exact same spot that it experienced a devastating 8.8 quake nearly a year ago on February 27, 2010. I wrote about this quake and Concepcion. Please see issue #04-1021, March 2, 2010, *Chile Quake*.

Do you see, as I do, a pattern building in relation to the date of February 10-11? I do not believe this is a coincidence; rather, it is the hand of God as He shakes heaven and earth in order to **remove those things which can be shaken so that those things which cannot be shaken will remain**. He is shaking all things because His conquerors **receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken** (Hebrews 12:27-28).

When I heard "little by little" ten years ago, I had some idea what it meant prophetically. After all, it is about taking possession of the land, which signifies the conquering sons of God taking possession of their glorified, celestial, spiritual, immortal bodies in the image of the Son of God. It is not about possessing some piece of real estate on earth. It is about possessing our heavenly abode or tent that Paul longed for, as recorded in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. See issues #05-111, January 11, 2011, *When is Immortality Put On?*, and #05-1112, January 12, 2011, *At Home with the Lord*.

To state it another way, it is about taking possession of the kingdom.

(21) "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them (22) until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. (Daniel 7:21-22 NASB)

'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' (Daniel 7:27 NASB)

The events of our day, especially in the last ten years, are all part of God's divine plan to bring our present age to an end and to usher in the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. The Stone Kingdom is shaking and crushing the kingdoms of men that have defied His divine law and have been blinded to His divine plan. This is why we are seeing national and global events occurring alongside of natural shakings, both in the heavens (climate, weather) and of the earth (quakes, tsunamis).

Many people are stating that the fall of the 30-year Mubarak regime is an historic event. On one level, this is so obvious that it is not even necessary that it be said. However, on another level, this is a gross understatement.

Frankly, as I have listened to all the commentary on this event, I feel that no one has a clue, for they, without exception, are failing to discern that this is all part of God's divine plan and the coming of His Kingdom of righteousness as the King of kings ascends the throne over the nations and rules through His conquerors. I find much of the commentary very naïve, even from the ones who seem to have a clear understanding of the danger that the Egyptian people now face. Some are saying that this is a great step toward democracy, and others are saying that this is heading toward an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law.

People can postulate all they want, but there is One who is seated on the throne of heaven who has the first and last say in the matter, and He is working it all out according to His plan. There might be very difficult days ahead for the Egyptian people, as well as the entire Middle East, but we can be assured of one thing: God is working all things toward good, according to His purpose (Romans 8:28) as He establishes His kingdom on earth **little by little**.

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1130

February 10-11— Prophetic Dates

February 12, 2011

In the last issue (#05-1129), I noted that the dates of February 10-11 have prophetic significance in the unfolding of God's divine plan that will lead to the establishment of the kingdom of His Son on the earth.

Zechariah declared: **And the LORD will be king over all the earth: in that day will there be one LORD, and his name one** (Zechariah 14:9 WEB). This glorious day is the longing of all who love the appearing of the Lord (2 Timothy 4:8) and have set their hearts on seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness.

Why God has chosen February 10-11 as significant dates in His divine plan, I am not entirely clear, but what I do know is that they are in His plan and need to be marked on our calendars for the upcoming years.

One thought that has come to me is that the number of days (exclusive of the last date) between February 10 and September 8 is 210 days, which is a number associated with Jacob's trouble. By the way, calculating the days starting with February 11 (inclusive of the last date) is 210 days, so the number 210 appears in whichever combination one chooses. See issue #03-09126, May 28, 2009, *Jacob's Distress: 21 & 210-Year Cycles*.

I chose the date of September 8 because this appeared in a dream I had on June 26, 2003 that seemed to be of the Lord. I have mentioned it frequently in my writings, so I won't repeat it here. See issue #04-10118, September 8, 2010, *September 8, Wednesday – Dream*.

But, I will state that the year 2021 is the next year in which September 8 appears on a Wednesday. Further, September 8, 2021 will be 20 years and 7 months (nearly 21 years) from when I first heard "**little by little**" on February 10, 2001. I am intrigued by how the number 21 seems to be interwoven into what the Lord has spoken to me.

Did the nations enter into a period of Jacob's distress starting in 2000-2001? After all, 2001 was marked by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which led to major wars on two fronts (Iraq and Afghanistan). Then, 7 years later, in 2007-2008, the nations entered into a devastating economic/financial crisis that continues to our day, in spite of all the political hype to the contrary.

I have wondered if these 21 years are broken down into 3 periods of 7 years: 2001-2008, 2008-2015, and 2015-2022, or 2000-2007, 2007-2014, and 2014-2021, or an overlap of the two sets. This is only speculation at this point; however, if it is close to true, then we could expect another great event in 2014-2015. We can personally testify that, in our own lives, the Lord has been working in 7-year periods (1993-2000, 2000-2007), and most likely, if this continues, we will see another major turn of events in 2014.

If we consider Jacob's time with Laban, it too is broken down into periods of 7's. Jacob complained to Laban that he had served 14 years for his two daughters and 6 years for his flock, as Laban changed his wages 10 times. The extra year is accounted for in the time it took Jacob to travel away from Laban to Shechem in the land of Canaan. One could argue that Jacob's distress lasted for 20-21 years. Jacob called this period of his life a time of affliction and toiling of his hands (Genesis 31:42).

However, Jacob had another period of 21 years, another time of distress. This was the number of years that he was separated from his favorite son Joseph, who he had presumed was dead. It was a time of deep anguish of his soul: "**Surely I will go down to Sheol mourning for my son**" (Genesis 37:35).

Of course, the good news for Jacob was that his son was not only alive but also a great blessing to the Egyptian people and, ultimately, to Jacob and his sons.

Now, in the last issue, I also noted that God is taking possession of the earth **little be little** as He shakes all things that can be shaken until only **the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ** (Revelation 11:15) remains. Just as He told the sons of Israel that He would not drive out all the enemies in Canaan all at once but little by little, until they became fruitful and took possession of the land (Exodus 23:29-30), so the Lord is doing with His conquerors who are being raised up as sons of God to rule and reign with Him on earth and among the celestials in the age to come.

Simply, for those called and chosen to be glorified sons of God in the Tabernacles Age, this present period of the last days is a time of preparation. We are to be learning to lean not on our own understanding but on the Lord Himself as our very trust, knowing that He is taking possession of the earth and its nations little by little or, if you like, a piece at a time. Of course, this takes vision and understanding of God's divine plan and purpose, that is, **the eonian purpose of God** (Ephesians 3:11 CV).

I believe that this is the significance of the word "**little by little**" that the Lord gave me 10 years ago on February 10, 2001. It has been 10 years, and, as we look back upon those years, without a doubt, it has been a period of great shaking, as if the earth and its nations are in childbirth.

Interestingly, I heard a broadcaster yesterday state that it seemed that the Middle East was about to give birth to something, but he asked: "What is it?" During another broadcast, I heard him state that this was the beginning of **a new world order**, and he did not see it as a good one either. As the West, in their naivety, proclaim it is all about freedom and democracy, it may be nothing of the sort. There is reason to think this way.

After all, on **February 11, 1979**, the regime of the **Shah of Iran** completely collapsed in what is called the **Iranian Revolution**, which led to an Islamic state under Sharia law. Exactly 32 years later, on February 11, 2011, the regime of **Hosni Mubarak** has completely collapsed in what is called the **Egyptian Revolution** or the **Revolution of Rage**. Will Egypt end up as an Islamic state as well? Time will tell. However, based on Scripture, it appears that Egypt has a much more glorious destiny in the age to come. They will become the Lord's people. This is taken up in the next issue.

This cannot be a coincidence; it must be the hand of some unseen force at work. Whether it is the hand of man conspiring to gain control, or the hand of the world forces of darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials (Ephesians 6:12), or God Himself directly intervening, we can be sure of one thing: It is all part of God's plan to bring about His purpose in His time and in His way. God is Sovereign! **The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth be silent before Him** (Habakkuk 2:20).

To conclude, I want to return to the question of what kind of birth might be taking place in the world-at-large. Joseph became alive to his father after 21 years and became a blessing to his family as they were all reunited. Joseph is a type of **the conquerors** who will possess the land (immortal bodies) and become a blessing to all the nations and families of the earth. The Lord has been working in what could be called the Joseph Company, conforming them to His image "little by little." You see, this word has an individual application for the conquerors. It is about taking possession of our eonian inheritance little by little, until we are manifested in the image of the Son of God.

Today, the called and chosen of God are groaning, along with creation itself, to give birth to the man child, **the immortal and glorified sons of God** (Romans 8:18-23). Are we headed toward this glorious event? Most definitely! Could the groaning continue and intensify in the next 10 years leading up to 2021-22? Most likely! Could it come about sooner? We can only pray that it will! Could it be longer? Oh, Lord, no! I would rather be transfigured into our heavenly, redeemed body and see the Lord sooner than later. Wouldn't you? Oh, Lord, come!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1131

Egypt's Future — "My People"

February 13, 2011

Truly, as we seemingly see crisis after crisis and shaking after shaking erupt across the globe, we are living in exciting, if not, turbulent times. Truly, the dawn of the manifested glory of our beloved Lord Jesus and His worldwide kingdom is drawing near. The great and glorious King of Righteousness is coming!

In a 32-year span, the world has witnessed two major revolutions in the Middle East in which dictatorship regimes have been overthrown for the supposed cause of democracy and freedom for the masses.

However, the **Iranian Revolution of 1979** did not lead to democracy and freedom but to a theocracy under the strict rules of Sharia law. Now, as all eyes are on the **Egyptian Revolution of 2011**, many are wondering if it will go the same path or not. Of course, there are views on both sides and forces vying for power and control on both sides, so, at this point, no one knows for sure.

Many are also wondering if this is merely one in a series of dominoes that will fall across the region, the first of which began in Tunisia. Needless to say, Egypt is the biggest and most profound domino to date. Again, if this is part of a broader trend, to what is it all leading? Will it be good or bad for the region or for the world, for that matter? Are there evil forces trying to wrestle their way to power and control over the masses? God only knows!

In this issue, let us put aside the present-day speculation and turn to the Bible to see if we might discover the future of Egypt as revealed by the Lord. Forget what man says or postulates; does the Bible give us an indication of what will happen to Egypt, perhaps in the long term? By *long term*, I mean in the coming Kingdom Age. To me, *short term* refers to the remaining days of our present wicked age, the last days leading up to the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth when Christ's conquerors will possess the Kingdom and rule and reign with Christ over the nations, teaching the nations true righteousness and justice.

Now, let us consider what the Lord has revealed about the destiny of Egypt through Isaiah the prophet. For the sake of full disclosure; we should not be surprised that some disagree with the following interpretation of scripture.

(19) In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border. (20) It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. (Isaiah 19:19-20 NASB)

Given the context of these verses and what follows, it is apparent that "in that day" refers to the next age or what is called the **Kingdom or Tabernacles Age**, which is the 1,000-year reign of Christ over the nations of our present (second) earth.

The altar and pillar to the Lord refers to the **Great Pyramid of Giza** that is located just south of Cairo in the midst of Egypt, that is, at the border between Upper and Lower Egypt. This great pyramid is an engineering marvel that is so amazing that it is **one of the seven ancient wonders of the world**, and the only one that remains. To learn about its many wonders and mysteries, search the Internet and read some of the many articles about it.

There are three facts worth noting about this pyramid. First, no one seems to know who built it and how they built it. Second, it was not finished with a top stone or capstone; it is absent. Third, and the most compelling reason that verse 19 refers to the Great Pyramid of Giza, is the fact that the number **5449** is the sum total of the numeric value (gematria) of all the words in the above verses (19-20), which so happens to be the precise height of the pyramid in pyramid inches. This must be the hand of God.

According to Isaiah, a day will come when the Egyptian people will be oppressed, and they will cry out to the Lord. In that day, the Great Pyramid of Giza will become a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts (armies). But, how will it be a sign and a witness, since it has stood on the plain of Giza for millennia?

This might seem a bit of a stretch, but I propose that it will become a sign when those who built it are raised up in the **first resurrection** that commences the coming age. These ancient architects and builders will explain the many mysteries of the pyramid and why a capstone or headstone was not placed on its top. Perhaps, they will even supernaturally restore it. They will declare that they could not lay the capstone until Jesus the Christ, God's Son, is declared the King of kings and Lord of lords of the nations. Zechariah the prophet has given us assurance that the capstone will come forth full of grace.

Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forth the capstone [headstone] with shouts: Grace! Grace to it! (Zechariah 4:7 LITV [KJV])

Christ is the Head, **full of grace and truth** (John 1:14). The Great Pyramid will be crowned with a capstone or headstone (literally and/or figuratively-spiritually) when the King is crowned and declared King of the nations. Thus, it will be a sign and a witness that the Savior and Champion has come to the Egyptians (and the whole world) to deliver them out of oppression and into the glory of His kingdom.

Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. (Isaiah 19:21 NASB)

However, the Lord must first strike them in order to heal them.

The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them. (Isaiah 19:22 NASB)

If this is a prophetic word for Egypt leading up to the coming Kingdom Age, then there are two possible conclusions. First, they have been under oppression for the last 60-61 years, and their revolution is about leading them to the Lord, which means the Great Pyramid will become a sign and a witness to them in some miraculous way. Second, the revolution will lead the Egyptian people into greater oppression for the short term. Either way, Isaiah offers a glorious future, not only for Egypt but also for Assyria and Israel and, by extension, all the nations.

(23) In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. (24) In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, (25) whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance." (Isaiah 19:23-25 NASB)

The Lord will reveal Himself to the Egyptians, and they will become His people. They will realize that the Great Pyramid, which stood in their midst for centuries as a great marvel and tourist attraction, is God's witness to them that He has been with them all along and He has come to presence Himself in their midst. **Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords and the Son of God, is the headstone!**

Notice that there is a blessing to Assyria, which is mostly present-day Iraq. The two nations that God used in the history of ancient Israel will be united in Christ. Israel was delivered out of bondage in Egypt and later taken captive by the Assyrians. thus, forcing the northern kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) to be scattered among the nations as the lost house of Israel. Do not make the mistake of reading the present-day state of Israel into this. It refers to the house of Israel that lost its national identity and is today found among, most notably, the Western nations of Europe, the UK, the USA, Canada, as well as Australia and South Africa. All will be reunited under Jesus the King, along with the rest of the nations.

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,
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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1132

National Christmas Tree Topped

February 19, 2011

Right from the start, I warn you that this issue might be a bit off the wall, so to speak. At any rate, perhaps this will be useful to some in furthering their understanding of biblical numerology.

As I was perusing the news of the day, I was caught by the headline: "**National Christmas Tree toppled behind the White House.**" Of all the critical news of the day, with so much of it seemingly far more relevant, why would this one caption jump out at me?

The 42-foot Colorado blue spruce tree that fell on Saturday, February 19, 2011 had been planted behind the White House more than 32 years ago. Sustained winds of 25 miles per hour (mph) and gusts up to 50 mph swept through the nation's capital and caused the tree's trunk to snap at a point 4 feet above the ground.

Regardless of one's view about Christmas trees and the holiday itself, the fact of the matter is that this tree was a national symbol associated with the December holiday celebrating the birth of Christ. That the tree was reported as the Christmas tree, not the holiday tree or some other politically correct designation, associates it with something of God, even if in a cursory or not so biblical way.

Now, five significant numbers appear in this national news event: 4, 25, 32, 42, and 50. But first, let us look at the biblical meaning of each number (i.e., biblical numerology) in numeric order.

The number **4** signifies **the earth** or **the material creation of God**, even **the fullness of creation**. In Genesis 1:14-19, it was on the fourth day that God completed the restoration of the earth that was in ruin and waste. In other words, the material creation was restored, thus allowing for the populating of the earth with living creatures. This is borne out in creation itself, for there are four regions (north, south, east, and west), four elements (earth, air, fire, and water), four seasons (spring, summer, autumn, and winter), four kingdoms (mineral, vegetable, animal, and spiritual), four divisions of the day (morning, noon, evening, and night), and four phases of the moon (first quarter, new moon, last quarter, full moon). There are also four living creatures before the throne, symbolized as a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle (Revelation 4:6-7). The four gospels depict Christ as each of these living creatures: Matthew proclaims: "**Behold the King,**" which depicts the **Lion**. Mark proclaims: "**Behold the Servant,**" which depicts the **Ox** (calf). Luke proclaims: "**Behold the Son of Man,**" which depicts the **Man**. John proclaims: "**Behold the Son of God,**" which depicts the **Eagle**. There are many more examples in scripture, but these few should serve to make the point.

The number **25** signifies **blessing**, especially as it relates to the **Holy Spirit**. In Hebrew, the number 25 is comprised of the letters *kaph*, which refers to **an open palm**, as in the act of giving, and *hey*, which refers to **inspiration** or **the breath of God**, as in the Holy Spirit. Putting these together, they speak of the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Also, 5 squared equals 25, and the number **5** signifies **grace**, which in itself signifies the **blessing of God**. In Genesis 8:6, Noah's name appears the 25th time in connection with opening the window to allow a fresh breeze into the ark, signifying the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that led to the release of the **doves**, also signifying the **Holy Spirit** (Matthew 3:16). In Genesis 25:11, Isaac's name appears the 25th time in reference to God blessing him. God's blessing fell upon several others when their names appeared in scripture for the 25th time: Jacob (Genesis 28:1), Israel (Genesis 48:8-22), Abraham (Genesis 19:29), Joseph (Genesis 39:6), and Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:23).

The number **32** signifies **covenant**. The 32nd time that Noah's name is mentioned in scripture refers to the covenant God made with him and his descendants: "**Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth**" (Genesis 9:9-10 NASB). Similarly, Abram's name appears the 32nd time with the account of the blessing of Melchizedek with the bread and the wine (Genesis 14:19), which speaks of the covenant of Christ: **For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins** (Matthew 26:28 NASB). Again, there are other examples but these will suffice.

The number **42** signifies **man's opposition to God** or **antichrist**. In the Revelation, we discover that the number 42 (months) appears twice, each time in reference to opposition to God: **They will tread under foot the holy city for 42 months** (Revelation 11:2 NASB). **There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for 42 months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven** (Revelation 13:5-6 NASB). However, the good news is that the number 42 means that the second coming of Christ and His kingdom of righteousness are on the heels of man's opposition.

Finally, the number **50** signifies the **Holy Spirit** or **Jubilee**. It was on the 50th day that the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 waiting in the upper room. Also, in the 50th year, the sons of Israel were called to celebrate a Jubilee in which all **debts were cancelled and liberty proclaimed** to all the inhabitants of the land (Leviticus 25:10).

Well, this is a brief explanation of the biblical meaning of these numbers. This leads to a question: Based on these numbers, could there be some spiritual or prophetic meaning to the toppling of the National Christmas Tree? I will leave it to you to decide. Perhaps, what follows is just like this poor dead tree that is now a pile of mulch.

When I read the article, I was immediately caught by the number 32. I knew it meant covenant, and I wondered if the toppled tree signified **a broken covenant**. Since the tree was a national monument on the grounds of the **White House**, it could refer to our government that has broken its covenant with God. After all, our national motto is "**In God We Trust.**" Have our national leaders turned from trusting God? From all the news of our day, I have to conclude that they, along with the whole nation, have. Could God be telling (i.e., warning) us that whatever covenant we had with Him as a nation is now broken, much like the ancient northern house of Israel broke their covenant with God, leading to their downfall, deportation, loss of national identity (name of *Israel*), and scattering throughout the nations? After all, as I have shared elsewhere, the argument could be made that the US is an Israelite nation.

Next, the tree grew to **42 feet** before its demise. Opposition to God is what brings down nations. Again, the ancient northern kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) fell due to their opposition to or broken covenant with God. Is this a sign that the US has become an enemy of God? When it fell, only **4 feet** of the trunk remained, which could signify that all creation groans **to be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God**, waiting eagerly for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:21-23). It also means that **38 feet** of it fell to the earth. Although not mentioned earlier, the number **38** signifies **slavery**. After refusing to enter the Promised Land, all the sons of Israel wandered in the wilderness for another 38 years. As a type of Israel, a man had an infirmity for 38 years (John 5:5). There are other mentions of 38 years in connection with events surrounding Samaria or the northern house of Israel (10 tribes) as they were about to go into slavery for their sin.

Dear brethren; God is warning us! **It is time to wake up, repent, and return to the Lord. Are you ready?** But there is good news; the tree was toppled by wind, which signifies the Holy Spirit. Whether a 25 or 50 mph wind hit the tree, we do not know, but either way, it speaks of the blessing of the Holy Spirit and a coming Jubilee. Our beloved Lord Jesus is coming, and the Holy Spirit is getting ready to blow across this land as never seen before. He will topple all that is in opposition to God, for **righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne** (Psalm 89:14). True liberty is coming!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1133

Seek Me That You May Live

June 1, 2011

It has been some time since I have posted anything. The reason is that as I consider all that is being written in the name of the Lord in our day, I keep getting the sense that there are way too many voices speaking and much of it is leading to confusion. Add to this the observation that few seem to be able to discern the truth and many believe no one has a lock on the truth, and it should not be a surprise that we are living in confusing times filled with untruths. I have said it before, but we are in the day of Babel, not only in the secular world, which is filled with way too many voices coming through all the hi-tech media of our day, including the social networks, but also in the church world. Confusion abounds!

I do not want to add to the confusion, so I have simply been waiting on the Lord. I have purposed in my heart to wait until I believe the Lord has something He wants to say through me. In some ways, this is a difficult thing to do considering all that has been happening in the world this year, including the US. Anyone who does not think we are in the days of shaking must be asleep, blind, deceived, or unwilling to accept the obvious.

God said He would remove **those things that can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain** (Hebrews 12:27). Why? Because **we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken**, and that kingdom is **the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ** (Revelation 11:15) that is coming soon!

Well, last night I was having a restless sleep, and early in the morning hours I kept hearing Amos 5:4 over and over again. I did not hear the actual words of the verse, just the numbers of the chapter and verse. It has been some time since I read Amos, so I was not familiar with this particular passage.

For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, "Seek Me that you may live." (Amos 5:4 NASB)

Amos was a herdsman and a grower of sycamores who was called by the Lord to give a prophetic word to the house of Israel in the days of King Jeroboam II.

A little short history lesson is needed in order to understand the significance of this word, especially to us Americans in this day. Believe me, this is a word for us.

The Lord made great promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 13:16-17; 22:17; 28:14; 32:12) that began to be fulfilled under King David but were fully manifested during the reign of his son Solomon. The twelve tribes of Israel became a great nation. **Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance** (1 Kings 4:20); Solomon had **peace on all sides around about him**, and they **lived in safety** (1 Kings 4:24, 25; 5:4); and **the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord** (2 Chronicles 7:1). Solomon's kingdom was the head of all the nations on earth with its influence stretching across the globe, even to North America.

Unfortunately, this renown was short-lived, for Solomon turned from the Lord. In turn, the Lord told Solomon: **I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant** (1 Kings 11:11). Following the death of Solomon, Israel rebelled against Judah and the kingdom was divided into a northern kingdom made up of ten tribes called *Israel* and a southern kingdom made up of two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) called *Judah*. From this time onward, the name *Israel* was always associated with the ten tribes and the name *Judah* with the two tribes. This is a vital historical and prophetic fact that many Christians of our day do not understand.

Now, Jeroboam I, an Ephraimite, was the first king of Israel. Thirteen kings later, Amos was called forth as a prophet to the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam II. This was during a time of great prosperity accompanied with great moral declension. The Lord had blessed Israel with prosperity, but instead of

seeking the Lord, they turned from Him. To get their attention, the Lord sent judgments upon them. He caused a lack of bread, withheld rain on some places and poured it out on others, smote them with scorching wind and mildew, sent plagues, and generally overthrew them, and yet they did not return to the Lord. Instead, justice had been turned into wormwood and righteousness had been cast down.

It was with this condition in view that Amos was called upon to admonish Israel to **seek Me that you may live**, even to **seek good and not evil, that you may live; hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate** (Amos 5:14-15). We need to understand that the people were somewhat oblivious to what they were doing or not doing. They continued to offer sacrifices, tithes, and freewill and peace offerings. They also sang songs to the Lord and held festivals (Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-23), but the Lord hated it all and rejected it. Some were even longing for the coming of the Lord, but the Lord had a word for them as well: **Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light** (Amos 5:18 NASB).

Dear people of God, do you not see a word in this for us today? I have written elsewhere that I believe the United State is an Israelite nation. Please see issues #04-1075 through #04-10109, and #04-10113, July-August 2010, for a more complete understanding.

Many of our forefathers were of the lost house of Israel, and America is part of the modern-day version of Israel that lost its national identity as Israel did. Nationally and prophetically, we are part of the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Six kings after Jeroboam II, the nation of Israel under Hoshea still had not returned to the Lord. Time had run out for them, and the Lord placed them under an iron yoke, which meant they were taken captive and removed from their land. This occurred from 745-721 BC when they lost their national identity as Israel and they were scattered among the nations. To this day, Israel remains scattered and its name lost. The sons of Joseph were blessed with the name *Israel*, which meant that wherever they resided, so did the name. *Ephraim* means "fruitful," and *Manasseh* means "making to forget." We can see how these meanings apply to modern-day Israelite nations. For example, take the United States; we have been one of the most, if not the most, fruitful nation in the history of nations, and yet, we have been made to forget that we are an Israelite nation. We might acknowledge that we are Christian to a large degree, although this is being undermined every day, but we have never known ourselves as an Israelite nation. Instead, to our detriment, we have been led to believe by many evangelicals that the true Israel of our day is found in the Middle East. This is not true; this Israel is Judah and Edom.

What has become of the Israelite nations of our day, most of which are called the Western nations? I will answer for my own country. We are rich and in need of nothing; we continue to have great prosperity in spite of the recent financial crisis; we are in moral decline with leaders calling good evil and evil good. There is little righteousness in our government and justice is coming out perverted. Several months back, one very high official in our government stood on the floor of the Senate saying how much he loved the Pledge of Allegiance, but when he recited it, he left out the phrase *one nation under God*. Whether intentional or not, to me it was a prophetic word from the Lord that our nation has turned from God.

What about the church in America? It continues to offer up its tithes and songs and has its meetings and many conferences (festivals). Its measure of success is how much money it takes in and how big it can get in size and in real estate. Some are also looking for the coming of the Lord as evidenced by the group that was looking for the rapture on May 21 in expectation of avoiding the darkness that is coming. The church has wed herself to the world and to her own institutional mindset. She is blind to her condition in fulfillment of the Lord's exhortation to Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-18). We are in days of darkness that will continue to grow darker as the day of the Lord draws near. Rapture is not our way out! See article #17, January 2009, *Snatched Away [Rapture]*. **The Lord is our way through!**

And, as all of this is going on, the Lord is smiting us with financial, jobs, and housing crises that are not getting better; violent storm after violent storm; wars that won't end; and corruption, hypocrisy, and lies at many levels of government; and the list goes on. Shaking abounds!

What are we to do? **For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, "Seek Me that you may live."**

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)

#05-1134

We Need An "Engedi Moment"!

June 29, 2011

During the early morning hours of June 8, 2011, as I slept, I was awakened with the word "Engedi." I knew of the word but, frankly, had no clue what it meant or where it was found in scripture. Based on past experience with the Lord, I was pretty sure it was from Him, which led me to search it out in His word.

Engedi was an important oasis town and fresh-water spring west of the Dead Sea. The name means "spring of a kid (goat)" or "fountain of the goat, " It was also known as *Hazazon-tamar* or "the cutting (felling) of the palm." Engedi (*Hazazon-tamar*) is mentioned seven times in scripture, dating it as far back as the time of Abraham and as far forward as the manifestation of New Jerusalem.

Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, defeated the Amorites at Hazazon-tamar (Genesis 14:7) but was himself later defeated by Abram the Hebrew and his 318 trained men. When Joshua brought the sons of Israel into Canaan, Engedi was the last city named in the inheritance territory given to Judah (Joshua 15:62). While escaping from the pursuit of Saul, David stayed in the strongholds of Engedi, also described as the "wilderness of Engedi" and the "Rocks of the Wild Goats" (1 Samuel 23:29; 24:1). An overwhelming army or great multitude of Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites camped at Engedi in preparation to make war against Judah and Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:2). Solomon poetically referred to the vineyards of Engedi (Song of Solomon 1:14). Finally, Ezekiel prophesied of the river of living water giving life to all that it contacts and of fishermen standing by this river from Engedi to Eneglaim as they catch a great many of all kinds of fish (Ezekiel 47:10).

Obviously, each of these references is spiritually significant, but the account of King Jehoshaphat in Chronicles caught my attention as being most relevant to our day. You could say it was an "Engedi moment" for the king and his fellow Judahites.

Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah after the death of Solomon and the breakup of his kingdom into Judah (2 tribes) and Israel (10 tribes) as ordained by the Lord and prophesied by Ahijah (1 Kings 11:9-13, 29-36). He was one of the good but not "perfect in all his ways" kings. He followed the example of his father David's earlier days, and he required that the Law be taught throughout the land. As a result, the Lord was with him, and he amassed a million plus army (1,160,000), along with great riches and honor. But consider what happened when he received word that an army was ready to invade his kingdom.

(2) Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi)."
(3) Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. (2 Chronicles 20:2-3 NASB)

Amazingly, in spite of a million-man army, Jehoshaphat feared this enemy encamped at Engedi. It must have been a massive army for him to have such fear. However, this caused him, along with all of Judah, to turn to the Lord. They didn't presume that the Lord was on their side or that their own military might was sufficient to win in battle. Out of desperation, they sought the Lord.

(4) So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD. (5) Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and

Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court, (6) and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. (2 Chronicles 20:4-6 NASB)

The king rightfully and humbly appealed to the Lord as the ruler over all the nations, just like the psalmist, who declared that God is a great King: **For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods** (Psalm 95:3 NASB). By his question, he declared that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-Israel is the King of all, and on this basis, he appealed to Him alone.

As the whole nation of Judah stood before the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord spoke through a Levite.

(13) All Judah was standing before the LORD, with their infants, their wives and their children. (14) Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah...; (15) and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. ... (17) 'You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you." (2 Chronicles 20:13-15, 17 NASB)

What an encouragement in a time of great fear and dismay! Jehoshaphat stood on this word and encouraged his people to **"put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established,"** and **"put your trust in His prophets and succeed."** So, they went forward singing and praising the Lord. As the story goes, the Lord caused their enemies to turn on themselves and kill one another. Judah prevailed and **the dread of God was on all the kingdoms of the lands** and **the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God gave him rest on all sides.** See 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.

Can you imagine what would have happened if on September 11, 2001, the leaders of America had turned to the Lord as Jehoshaphat had done? What if church leadership in America had turned in such a fashion? We can only imagine that things might have turned out entirely different. Oh, many proclaimed "God bless America" in that day as if God were on our side, but we never truly turned to and humbled ourselves before the Lord God. Instead, we trusted in our own strength, our military might, and embarked on wars of vengeance and so-called justice. Rather than taking up the sword of the Spirit and waiting for the Spirit of the Lord to speak to us as a nation, we took up the physical sword of man and went to war. Since then, there has been no peace or rest on all sides. The fact of the matter is that conditions for us and the rest of the world have grown progressively worse with our wars playing a significant role in leading us to the cliff of bankruptcy. By their very nature, wars rob the wealth of nations.

The decline of America on practically all fronts has been accelerating since the beginning of the 21st century, and yet, as a nation, there has been and continues to be no collective voice or heart like Jehoshaphat that seeks to draw the nation together to seek the Lord, even to declare that God is King of all the nations. If anything, there is a concerted antichrist movement to deny God His rightful place on the throne of the Universe and over all the nations.

What will it take for our nation, as well as the nations of the world, to turn to God and humbly cry out to Him for the answer? We need an "Engedi moment," a moment when all is stacked against us, and we see no way out. The enemies of all realms (not just of the human) must be against us to the point of backing us up against a wall, so to speak, so that we have nowhere to turn but to God. For it is in that day and at that moment that we will hear God's solution to our Engedi moment. Only when we are desperate enough to hear from God will the Spirit of the Lord speak, and when He does, there will be only one solution. The solution is a Person; and He is Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We need the kingdom of our Lord to come. We need the King! Our Engedi moment is coming!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1135

Engedi Speaks of Spiritual Leadership

July 3, 2011

As reported in the last issue, I believe the Lord woke me from sleep in the middle of the night and spoke to me the word *Engedi*. As I have meditated on this word and studied it more, I have realized more needs to be said. I was going to revise the last issue as part of a series but decided instead to let it stand and simply add to it in subsequent issues, as the Lord leads.

To rightfully place this word in the context of our day, I feel we need to step back a bit and take a closer look at the historical record of Jehoshaphat and the hostile army stationed at Engedi. This is important because, in order to have an "Engedi moment" in which God owns the battle, one must have the right heart toward God. In other words, it requires more than a nation having its back against the wall, so to speak. It requires a humble spiritual leader who unites the people as one with a heart-felt cry to God and an unwavering trust in God, even knowing Him as their trust.

Let us consider a few points.

First, Jehoshaphat's father Asa had a similar experience when an Ethiopian army of a million men came against Judah's army of 580,000 men. When he saw that the numbers were not in their favor, King Asa called upon the Lord and put his trust in Him. The Lord heard and routed the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah (2 Chronicles 14:8-9, 11-12). In other words, Jehoshaphat had a good role model.

Second, it is interesting that King Asa had an army of 580,000 men at his disposal, but when his son Jehoshaphat took the scepter of Judah, he had an army of 1,160,000 men (2 Chronicles 17:14-19). How could the size of the Judah army have doubled? The answer is simple. Israelites from the northern kingdom of Israel defected to Judah. Keep in mind that Israel under Jeroboam had forsaken the Lord and given the people Baal and a golden calf to worship; however, not all the Israelites were pleased with this evil transgression. When they heard that King Asa was removing the idols from the land and restoring the altar, and that the Lord was with Judah, many of them defected from Israel in favor of Judah, especially some from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon.

He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. (2 Chronicles 15:9 NASB)

It is apparent that the number of men in Judah's army had swelled dramatically under Asa so that his son inherited a very large army.

Third, the number of Jehoshaphat's army was recorded prior to him making peace with Ahab the wicked king of Israel and joining him in war against Ramoth-gilead. Ahab refused to heed the warning from Micaiah the prophet and was killed in battle (1 Kings 22). The record does not offer a count of the casualties from this war that Jehoshaphat should have avoided, so it is possible that his army was considerably diminished below the 1,160,000 level, which could have led him to fear the enemy that was invading Judah by way of Engedi. He knew that he had failed to follow the Lord and could see the result of his disobedience to wage war alongside wicked Israel.

Fourth, as Jehoshaphat returned from war, **Jehu the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD? But there is some good in you, for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God"** (2 Chronicles 19:2-3 NASB). The king had made a mistake, but there was some good in the man that made him a seeker of God. Undoubtedly, it was this heart that led him to rally all of Judah as one voice and to call upon the Lord as they faced possible annihilation by a mighty force staged at Engedi. In other words, a spiritual leader does not have to do everything correctly and will make mistakes; he needs a heart for the Lord.

Fifth, Jehoshaphat did not hide in his closet, so to speak, or appear before his people with some sort of political speech to positively spin the dire situation. He unabashedly stood before his people and cried out and appealed to God based on their history with the One who is in heaven and the ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations. No one can stand against His power and might. Even if they suffered, Jehoshaphat vowed: **'Should evil come upon us, the sword, or judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry to You in our distress, and You will hear and deliver us'** (2 Chronicles 20:9 NASB).

Sixth, Judah and Israel had a history with the Ammonites and Moabites, and Jehoshaphat reminded God of this history. When the sons of Israel had come out of Egypt, the Lord did not allow them to destroy the tribes of Lot, and now these very same tribes were about to reward them by driving them out of their God-given inheritance. Again, the king cried out: **"O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You"** (2 Chronicles 20:12 NASB).

Seventh, all of Judah stood together with their king, and when they did, God sent a word to them through Jahaziel the Levite. He answered their cry for help.

(13) All Judah was standing before the LORD, with their infants, their wives and their children. (14) Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah...; (15) and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. ... (17) 'You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you." (2 Chronicles 20:13-15, 17 NASB)

The battle was not theirs but God's. For their part, they were to stand and see the salvation of the Lord, that is, stand as one united under God and see Him save them from their enemies. They did not even have to fight; they simply had to march out and face their enemies. When they did, God made His move. But how did He rout their enemies? Some say that God sent angels to the battle, but the most likely scenario is that He caused a distrust to rise up among the army stationed at Engedi. The Moabites and Ammonites came from the land of Edom (Mount Seir), and they had Edomites in their ranks. It has been proposed that other Edomites, ones separate from the Edomites in the invading army, laid an ambush on the Moabites and Ammonites, which, in turn, led the Moabites and Ammonites to turn against the Edomites in their ranks, thinking they were co-conspirators in the ambush. Thus, infighting occurred that quickly led to all the tribes devouring one another.

Eighth, and the most significant, Jehoshaphat was a humble spiritual leader who united all his people as one nation under God. There was no wavering in the king's heart and call to God alone as their only way to be saved from their enemies. He was an example of a true leader, one that was fertile ground upon which the Holy Spirit could work. He didn't puff up himself before his people with rhetoric about how powerful he and his army were, nor did he assume that God was on their side. No; he did not presume anything except how powerless he and his people were in such a situation. The King of Judah set his eyes upon the Lord and the people followed. **"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You."** This is spiritual leadership. Think about it in light of our modern-day leaders!

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)

#05-1136

Engedi Demands a Trusting & Seeking Heart

July 4, 2011

The last two issues have been about an "Engedi moment." By this, I mean it is a moment when a nation or a group of people realize there is an insurmountable enemy at their gate, figuratively speaking, that will overcome them or even annihilate them without the help or intervention of God. This is what Jehoshaphat and Judah faced when the sons of Lot, along with some Edomites, gathered a great multitude of an army at Engedi (2 Chronicles 20).

However, there is one vital point that must not be missed about an "Engedi moment"; the heart of the people, including their leaders, must be prepared to cry out to God. In other words, the soil of their hearts must be prepped in such a way that they have already turned to God before the danger of Engedi presents itself to them. Simply, they cannot be a rebellious, unrepentant people and expect God to miraculously move on their behalf.

We see this matter clearly in the contrast of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Following Solomon's death, the united kingdom of Israel was split into Israel (holder of the birthright) and Judah (holder of the scepter). For fear that the ten tribes would return to Jerusalem for worship, Jeroboam, the king of Israel, instituted worship of Baal and the golden calf, and named priests outside the line of Levi (1 Kings 12:25-33; 2 Chronicles 11:14-17). This was an abomination to the Lord (1 Kings 13:33-34; 14:7-10), as well as to some who defected from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon (2 Chronicles 15:9).

There is no doubt that all the tribes joined together in Judah were well aware of how the Lord turned against Jeroboam (Israel) when he warred against Abijah, the king of Judah. The sons of Judah trusted in the Lord, the God of their fathers, and subdued and conquered the sons of Israel by slaughtering 500,000 chosen men of Israel. Jeroboam did not recover from such defeat, and the Lord struck him dead (2 Chronicles 13). This event alone should have been and, in fact, was to many a wake-up call, so to speak, for clearly the Lord would fight for those who remained true to Him and did not depart to false gods.

God is not unfair with His people. The fact of the matter is that He is just and righteous even when His people go astray. Throughout the history of Israel and Judah, the Lord often warned them of their departure from Him and the need to return to Him. Even when He knew they were not going to return to Him, He would tell them in advance what He was going to do. Proof of this is discovered throughout the writings of the prophets.

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7 NASB)

Further, the Lord often brings certain calamitous events to His people to get their attention. Case in point is the slaughter of 500,000 Israelites. We might not like such things or even deny that they are from the Lord, but the historical biblical record clearly reveals these are the judgments of the Lord.

This leads me to the present day and my own country. In light of Engedi, a few questions come to mind. If America were faced with an Engedi, would our national leaders humble themselves before the nation and, especially, before the Lord, calling upon Him: **"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You"**? Do we see any national leaders on the scene today who project such a heart? Of course, we do not know the heart, only the Lord does, but the words and actions coming forth from our political leaders indicate that we are in a vacuum when it comes to true, righteous, spiritual leadership. What about the church and its leadership? Take some time and visit many of the "church" services in your area and answer the question yourself. David Wilkerson was a genuine leader who had a heart for the

Lord and continually sounded the trumpet of warning. The Lord took him so abruptly that it should make us wonder if the time is up before the Lord finally strikes at the heart of the nation that has been gradually turning from Him and trusting in its own strength (Isaiah 31:1). See issues #03-0947 to #03-0953, April 2009, *Hammer Which Strikes A Rock*. Where is our boast in this day (Psalm 20:7-9)?

Dear brethren, America is under the judgment of God. Over the years, I have heard so-called Christian leaders rebuff any notion that our country is under God's judgment, regardless of what is going on and its source. Of course, the media jump all over any Christian who dares utter the word *judgment*, as if the person is an extremist nut. Whether it is violent weather, earthquakes, man-made crises, or terrorist attacks, God is not seen as having any hand in any of them.

For example, after September 11, 2001, there were some in the Christian community that were declaring the terrorist attack was God's judgment, but, for the most part, it was not a popular thing to say; it was considered heretical by some to even imply any complicity on the part of God. After all, as the thinking goes, God could never cause or allow such horrible things, especially on America that is blessed by God. What about the slaughter of 500,000 sons of Israel? What I find strange is that some who deny God's judgment are also ones who see God casting billions upon billions of people created to be in His image into a torture chamber called *hell* forever and ever with no chance of reprieve.

Let us consider another example occurring in 2011. In parts of our country, we are experiencing extreme flooding the likes of which has not been seen for many years, and, in other parts, we are experiencing extreme drought accompanied by massive wildfires. So, we have rain deluging one city (region) and rain being withheld from another. Does this sound familiar?

"Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you while there were still three months until harvest. Then I would send rain on one city and on another city I would not send rain; one part would be rained on, while the part not rained on would dry up." (Amos 4:7 NASB)

(1:11) "I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands." ... (2:17) 'I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,' declares the LORD. (Haggai 1:11; 2:17 NASB)

Many other present-day examples could be cited, but I will leave them for you to discern. What is clear to me is that God's judgment has fallen on America in many realms, both natural and manmade. It is also clear that, at the same time, an antichrist (even, anti-God) spirit has taken hold of our national, political leadership, as well as much of the media. It has become so blatant that even the mention of "God" or the "Creator" in our Pledge of Allegiance or Declaration of Independence has been left out of some speeches by our leaders. Also, some in the media blatantly attack Christians in their commentary. Every week now, we see or hear examples of these things.

Now, I realize there are still many righteous in America, so do not take what I have to say as an indictment on all. What I am speaking to is the heart of the nation. Right now, if we were faced with an Engedi, would we expect our leaders to humble themselves before the nation and, especially, before the one true God and rally us with the cry: **"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You, the Lord God of our forefathers"**? Or, would they posture for political position and power and feed us spins, lies, and hypocrisy? Again, I realize there are exceptions, even among our leaders, but given all that is going on in our country today, do you have the confidence that our leaders would respond as Jehoshaphat did? Do you have the confidence that a majority of Americans would cry out in such a fashion, or would they demand the government save them? I will leave you to answer the question.

I have come to the conclusion that, at this point in history, which is the last hour, the responsibility rests with us individually, not nationally. We need to seek the Lord and submit to the Holy Spirit to break up all fallow ground that remains in our heart: **Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you. You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies and trusted in our own way** (Hosea 10:12-13 NASB).

Judgment is upon us! It is time to turn from all unrighteousness, seek the Lord, and trust Him!

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)

#05-1137

In Crisis, Remember Engedi

July 11, 2011

(15) "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude [staged at Engedi], for the battle is not yours but God's. ... (17) 'You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf....' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you." (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17 NASB)

In the last three issues, I have shared some thoughts about the word *Engedi*. For Jehoshaphat and Judah, *Engedi* meant a great multitude of enemies gathered against them that were set on destroying them as a people and a nation. Purely from a physical standpoint, the odds were not in Judah's favor, unless the Lord intervened on their behalf.

As previously shared, Jehoshaphat was not alone, for his father King Asa also had a similar experience that led him to cry out to the Lord. However, we can go back even further to their forefather King David who wrote: **In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears** (Psalm 18:6 NASB). The fact of the matter is that there are numerous examples throughout scripture of men that had a heart for the Lord who found themselves in desperate situations that led them to cry out to the Lord for help.

What lesson can we learn from these men, especially from Jehoshaphat and the enemy encamped at Engedi? The answer is discovered in two "d" words: **desperation** and **dependence**. A study of the men of old reveals they were often led into great crises that were so beyond their ability to overcome that they became desperate for God's help. In their desperation, they cried out to the Lord who heard their pleas and acted on their behalf, often in miraculous ways. Through their cry of desperation and the Lord's mighty response to their cry, they learned the essential lesson of dependence on the Lord. Later, Jesus' disciples learned the same lesson from Him: **"For apart from Me you can do nothing"** (John 15:5).

Thus, desperation is a good thing if it leads us to dependency on the Lord and a knowing deep within our soul, as if set in concrete, that we can do nothing apart from Him. Another way to state this is that God-ordained crises are designed to bring us to the end of our old Adamic life of self-dependence and drive us to a new Christ life of God-dependence.

I must confess that I know why the Lord spoke to me the word *Engedi*, a word that, frankly, had no special meaning to me when I first heard it. I just realized that, in the days leading up to hearing this word, I had been crying out to the Lord *exactly* as Jehoshaphat had cried out: **"Lord, I do not know what to do, but my eyes are on You."** This had to come from the Holy Spirit who **helps our weakness** and **intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words** (Romans 8:26).

Like Jehoshaphat, my cry was of desperation that came forth as I considered all that has been going on in the world and where the world is heading. Frankly, at first, all I could see was the multitude of enemies at our gate, and I became desperate to know what to do. How are we to prepare? What steps are we to take? After all, the enemies are many, even a great multitude, and they will crush us unless we get some help. I was feeling like a speck of dirt being swept away. The more I cried out for answers, the more desperate I became. It was in this hour of desperation that I heard ***Engedi***, as if the Spirit of the Lord were saying: **"Remember Engedi. Remember the battle is Mine. Stand and see."**

I realize that some reading this might be wondering: Where is his faith? Where is his joy? Where is his victory? I realize that we are to walk and live by faith, that we have Christ in us, that we are to have joy, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and that we have the kingdom within us, at least to the degree we **sanctify**

Christ as Lord in your [our] hearts (1 Peter 3:15). But let us be real; life is seldom like a leisurely stroll through the park, and the Christian life is no exception. Joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5)!

I don't know about you, but, as each day passes, I get a greater sense of how Lot felt prior to the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter reminds us: **He [God] rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds)** (2 Peter 2:7-8 NASB).

Frankly, I would prefer to be like Abraham who was residing on the high ground and looking down upon the plain on which Lot lived. The high ground or mountain signifies the kingdom of God, while the plain signifies the kingdom of man or, if you will, **Mystery Babylon** and what many call the **New World Order** (NWO). But the truth of the matter is that the kingdom of Christ has not manifested itself among the nations, and we are stuck, in a practical sense, on the plain. We **wait for His Son from heaven** (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Are you desperate for His arrival? Are you dependent on His life until He comes?

The world is in the grips of an anti-Christ, even anti-God, spirit, and if the elite globalists, the superrich, the power brokers of the world get their way, life is about to change dramatically—and not for the better for most of the citizens of the world who are being led, manipulated, and enslaved by Mystery Babylon. It seems as if the odds are stacked against the common man of our day. It could be likened to Engedi's great multitude.

Babylon is nothing new, for it has been with us in one form or another since the fall of mankind. It is a mystery because most people in the world today do not recognize that we are living in the midst of it and that we are being manipulated and enticed by it. Unfortunately, many Christians are looking for it to come and fail to recognize that it is already here. We have been yoked to it, whether we know it or not, or whether we like it or not. The unseen forces of Mystery Babylon and the emerging NWO are so powerful that it would seem that most people of the world have no choice but to go along with it in order to survive. Consequently, many have, and many will, in fact, not only go along with it but will embrace it.

Dear brethren, as the present wicked age comes to a close, there are two things we need to do.

First, we need to heed the exhortation of the mighty voice of the angel: "**Come out of her [Babylon the great], my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues**" (Revelation 18:4 NASB). Trust the Lord to lead you out!

Second, we need to do what Jehoshaphat was told to do: "**Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf. Do not fear or be dismayed; go out to face them, for the LORD is with you.**"

Paul the beloved apostle has given us the same word, only he reminds us of the true nature of the battle. It is a spiritual battle against wickedness in high places (among the celestials or heavenlies).

(10) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (14) Stand therefore.... (Ephesians 6:10-14 KJV)

As the darkness tries to envelope us, we need to depend totally on the Lord, face the enemies with the whole armor of God, which is Jesus Himself, and having done all, stand and see the salvation of the Lord. The good news is that it is the Lord's war. He will overcome them. We need not fight in it by taking up the ways of man or his physical sword. Our command is to stand and withstand. John has given us assurance of the outcome of the war and an encouragement for all who stand as conquerors.

"These will wage war against the Lamb, and THE LAMB WILL OVERCOME THEM, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful [i.e., the conquerors or overcomers]." (Revelation 17:14 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)

#05-1138

Engedi Signifies Life

July 28, 2011

I have one more thought about the word *Engedi*, and it has to do with life, specifically the river of the water of life that comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

On one level, *Engedi* means that the battle is the Lord's; therefore, stand and see the salvation of the Lord. It is a good word, and one that should encourage our hearts in this day of great uncertainty and a multitude of enemies that are set against God's people and His kingdom.

On yet a higher level, *Engedi* signifies life.

Engedi or *Hazazon-tamar* is mentioned seven times in scripture (Genesis 14:7; Joshua 15:62; 1 Samuel 23:29; 24:1; 2 Chronicles 20:2; Song of Solomon 1:14; Ezekiel 47:10). It could be argued that all references have some connection to life, but it is Ezekiel that most definitely links *Engedi* to life.

Engedi was an important oasis town and fresh-water spring west of the Dead Sea and on the eastern border of the Judean Desert. The elevation of the surrounding land goes from the level of the Dead Sea at 423 meters below sea level to the heights of the Judean Desert at 200 meters above sea level. It was known for its rugged terrain, including many caves carved into limestone, and fertility, all of which made it an ideal place for refuge. For example, David hid from Saul in the terrain of *Engedi*.

The name means "spring of a kid (goat)" or "fountain of the goat," which recognizes the spring-fed streams that flow year round and the goats that roam the surrounding rugged terrain. Today, it is a nature reserve that is a sanctuary for many types of birds, animals, and plants. Its natural springs are used for agriculture and water for human consumption.

So, on the natural level, *Engedi* is a source of life for man, along with many of God's creatures. But, on the spiritual level, there is an even greater meaning to the word, as revealed through Ezekiel and explained through John.

Much like John, Ezekiel was caught up in spirit and given a vision of a city. This is easily seen by comparing the two visions.

In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, and on it to the south there was a structure like a city. ... And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. (Ezekiel 40:2; 43:5 NASB)

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. ... I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (Revelation 21:10-11a, 22 NASB)

Without any doubt, John saw New Jerusalem, but there is disagreement among commentators as to what city Ezekiel saw. Did he see New Jerusalem, or did he see an earthly Jerusalem that will rise up in the Middle East during the Kingdom Age? Since this is beyond the scope of the word *Engedi*, I must leave this question unanswered. Besides, I am not sure I have an answer for it at this point in time. I simply want to highlight the similarities of the two visions and their connection to life.

One thing for sure; the visions of both Ezekiel and John touch upon life and convey a mighty important spiritual lesson.

Starting in chapter 47, Ezekiel describes a river of water flowing out of the house of the Lord toward the east, which means it was flowing in the direction of the Jordan River and the Dead (Salt) Sea. I read an interesting article by a geologist-pastor who described how this could occur based on the movement of tectonic plates. In light of Ezekiel's vision and Zechariah's prophecy of the Mount of Olives splitting in two due to a major earthquake (Zechariah 14:4), the Sinai plate would move south and the Gaza plate would move north, thus splitting the Mount in two, with one portion moving north and the other moving south. At the same time, the Arabian plate would move east, thus shifting the Jordan River toward the west, and Ezekiel's river would then flow into the Jordan and south into the Dead Sea.

In Ezekiel's vision, the command was given to measure the depth of the stream every 1,000 cubits until it was 4,000 cubits east of the gate of the city. Each measurement revealed that, as the stream moved east, it grew deeper and deeper until the river could not be forded; one could only swim in it (see Ezekiel 47:1-6). Ezekiel was brought back to the bank of the river to see some trees.

(7) Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other. (8) Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh. (9) It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. (10) And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many." ... (12) "By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing." (Ezekiel 47:1-10, 12 NASB)

These verses speak of life that comes forth from the river that flows out of the house of the Lord. Wherever this river flows and whatever touches it is given life. The Dead Sea will no longer be a sea that cannot sustain life. The geologist-pastor states that the Dead Sea is a dead end, so to speak, due to a risen fault at its southern edge. When the great earthquake hits, this fault or plate will move and open up the Dead Sea so the river of life will flow through it and out to the Gulf of Aqaba. Trees will bear fruit for food and healing, and fish will thrive in the water from Engedi (to the south) to Eneglaim (to the north).

Thus, Engedi is associated with *life*, and, on a spiritual level, fish signify *humanity* that needs to be saved and given the life of God through His Son (see Matthew 4:19; 13:47-50). When the river of life reaches an area that once was dead, abundant life springs up, and Engedi is the first place identified with this life.

Now, whether this is a picture of something natural that will occur in the next age, I do not know. But what I do know is that this is clearly a spiritual picture of New Jerusalem as seen by John. For more on this topic, please see my book *New Jerusalem* (2009).

(1) Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2 NASB)

New Jerusalem is all about life; life in the oncoming eon (eonian life) and beyond. Engedi is a recipient of this life. So, as the crisis comes upon the world, remember Engedi!

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)

#05-1139

Did Peace Come to Jerusalem?

July 29, 2011

(6) Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. (7) "May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces." (8) For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, "May peace be within you." (Psalm 122:6-8 NASB)

Today, many Christians cite David's psalm as their reason for crying out: "We must pray for the peace of Jerusalem." There is nothing wrong with praying for the peace of the present-day Jerusalem or, for that matter, for the peace of any city of the world today. After all, **blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God** (Matthew 5:9). As a reminder, the sons of God will be **New Jerusalem** in the age to come and beyond.

It is safe to state that many Christians, especially evangelicals, are praying for the present earthly Jerusalem and not New Jerusalem. In fact, many add to this cry: "We must stand with Israel (i.e., modern-day nation on the ancient land of Canaan), for they are God's chosen people, and if we don't stand with them, God will judge us."

Of late, this prayer has intensified among Christians, especially as John Hagee and Glenn Beck have joined forces in their support of modern-day Israel and as this Jewish-Edomite state is being pressed on all sides as the whole region becomes a tinder box.

Mind you, they are praying for a city that has rejected Jesus as Messiah and the King of Judah and that Paul declared must be cast out as an Ishmaelite, for our city is above and she is free, not in bondage (Galatians 4:21-31). If we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, I contend we should be praying for the holy, heavenly city of God that Abraham sought and that will come down out of heaven, not the bloody, great city on earth that is mystically called Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord was crucified (Ezekiel 7:23; 22:2; 24:6, 9; Revelation 11:8).

Nevertheless, I want to approach this matter from another angle, as implied by the title of this issue. Was David's prayer answered? Did peace ever come to ancient Jerusalem, a peace that would have answered to David's heart? Yes! Let us consider the reason for this answer.

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.'" (Exodus 4:22 NASB)

The people descended of Jacob were collectively identified by the Lord as His first-born son. As a chosen people, they were called forth from Egypt by the Lord, called to be a kingdom nation that would be a blessing to all the nations on earth and be an expression of His glory **so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else** (1 Kings 8:60).

For a long time I thought that they failed to become this great nation, but after studying a little of the history of the kingdom of David-Solomon, I realize that I have been wrong in this view. The fact of the matter is that David's prayer was answered during Solomon's reign. David began to build the greatness of the Israelite kingdom. It was in David's heart to build God's house, but due to his involvement in much shedding of blood and the waging of wars, the Lord would not allow him to build.

(7) David said to Solomon, "My son, I had intended to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. (8) "But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before Me. (1 Chronicles 22:7-8 NASB)

Instead, the mantle was passed to David's son Solomon, who would live in peace.

(9) Behold, a son is being born to you; he shall be a man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about. Indeed, Solomon shall be his name, and peace and quiet shall I grant Israel in his days. (10) It is he who shall build the House for My Name, and he shall be to Me like a son, and I for him like a father. I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for the eon. (1 Chronicles 22:9-10 CV)

Under Solomon's reign, true greatness was achieved in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 13:16-17; 22:17; 28:14; 32:12). Consider these few verses.

(20) Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance; they were eating and drinking and rejoicing. (21) Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. (1 Kings 4:20-21 NASB)

(24) For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings west of the River; and he had peace on all sides around about him. (25) So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:24-25 NASB)

Consequently, they came into the inheritance of the land, along with all its abundance and greatness. The Queen of Sheba was breathless when she saw the wisdom of Solomon and all that he had done (2 Chronicles 9:1-8). However, there was one more indication of this greatness—the house of the Lord.

(3) "You know that David my father was unable to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. (4) "But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. (5) "Behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name.' (1 Kings 5:3-5 NASB)

And so, Solomon indeed built a house for the Lord that not only had His name upon it but was also filled with His glory.

(1) Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. (2) The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house. (3) All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, saying, "Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting." (2 Chronicles 7:1-3 NASB)

Truly, the fulfillment of the promises of greatness given to ancient Israel and Jerusalem began with David but were fully manifested during the reign of Solomon. This is fully supported by the historical record that reveals that the greatness and influence of Solomon's kingdom stretched around the world, as far as the British Isles and even to the North American continent.

In other words, the ancient first-born sons of God that made up the twelve tribes identified as Judah (two tribes) and Israel (ten tribes) and united into one kingdom under Solomon were truly blessed as a chosen people, at least for a season, and had come into their inheritance on the Promised Land. Peace and rest had finally come to the ones called out of Egypt to live on a land promised to Abraham.

The peace of Jerusalem had come in answer to David's prayer.

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)

#05-1140

Spirit of Stupor

July 30, 2011

As I was considering all the news reports of late, the word that seemed to come to me is that there is a **spirit of stupor** over our nation, especially over our political leaders in Washington, D.C.

It is amazing to watch and hear all that is being said in this day. It is as if all rational reasoning has been thrown to the wind. At times, our political leaders act like drunkards that have no sense of direction. At other times, they act like they are on some drug, some opiate, for their words defy logic of a sound mind. Case in point is the latest comment from a leading political figure regarding her party's position on the debt ceiling, spending, and taxes: "We're trying to save life on the planet as we know it."

The question is: What is going on? Don't these politicians see the pit that we all are going to fall into because of their actions or inactions?

Some might argue that they know what they are doing, for they are driven by an ideology that they must pursue at all cost. Along this line, some might argue that they hunger for power, control, and money for their own self-interest, and care little for what it will do to the nation. Others might argue that they are purposely trying to destroy our nation. And yet, others might merely yawn and describe all of this as business as usual that will work out eventually, and life will go on as it has always gone on.

This sort of reminds me of Peter's exhortation against the mockers of the last days who will say (are saying): **"Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation"** (2 Peter 3:4 NASB). I have news for the mockers; one day soon, the sand is going to run out of the hourglass, and the kingdom of our Lord will come to rule over the nations.

To be sure, from the standpoint of man's self-centeredness, there are many plausible explanations for what we are witnessing in our day. But I have another view. What we are witnessing is God's doing, for He has given our nation, especially our leaders, a spirit of stupor, a word that Paul used in reference to the sons of Israel that he quoted from Isaiah. This spirit is the judgment of God.

(7) What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; (8) just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." (Romans 11:7-8 NASB)

For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, the seers. (Isaiah 29:10 NASB)

In English, the word **stupor** means "a state in which the mind and senses are dulled; partial or complete loss of sensibility, as from the use of a narcotic."

A stupor is more than just simply being blind or deaf; it is much deeper than that. As Isaiah states, it is like a spirit of deep sleep. Have you ever observed someone waking from a deep sleep? He might seem disoriented and even stagger a bit as he begins to walk. It is as if he is drugged or his senses and mind are dull and lethargic. This is the picture we are to have in our minds as we contemplate a spirit of stupor. Frankly, I am tempted to call it a **"spirit of stupid,"** especially in light of our day.

As I have stated in other issues, the US and, for that matter, the world is under the judgment of God; a judgment that will only increase in its intensity as we get closer to the end of our age.

Why is there judgment? There is judgment for the very same reason that judgment fell upon ancient Israel. As a nation, the US no longer looks to the God of heaven for answers. Instead, our politicians and, sadly, probably much of the so-called church look for answers from the institutions (including government) and laws of man, not the spirit and law of God. The nation whose motto is "In God We Trust" and that invokes "God Bless America" during every crisis trusts more in man (self and nation) than in God.

Through Isaiah, the Lord explained why He gives a spirit of stupor or deep sleep.

Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote...." (Isaiah 29:13 NASB)

The Israelites were no longer following the law of God, for they had formed their own traditions (man's law) and treated these as if they were of God, but they were no such thing in the eyes of God.

In like manner, America as a nation offers lip service to God, for we ignore His law in favor of man's law as we live off a tradition that takes pride in the thought that it was by Divine Providence that we were birthed as a nation. If you don't believe we have ignored God's law, then consider His law against usury, which is lending money to fellow countrymen and charging interest.

"You may charge interest [usury] to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest [usury], so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess." (Deuteronomy 23:20 NASB)

Consider this: as a nation, if we had followed this one law of God, we would not find ourselves in such dire financial straits as we are in today. If our Congress had followed the US Constitution that gave it the right to print money and even the option to lend it out without interest, we would not be having this great argument over the debt ceiling, for there would be no debt, and we would not be a debtor to foreign nations, which also goes against God's law. As Solomon wrote: **"The borrower becomes the lender's slave"** (Proverbs 22:7). In 1913-1914, our nation was enslaved to the international financial beast of **Mystery Babylon** called the **Federal Reserve**, which is a banking cartel linked to all the central banks of the world that issues our money as debt notes. It is an evil system that has enslaved us to debt and usury, and most (but not all) of our political leaders are blind to this wicked enslavement.

The purpose of the spirit of stupor is to push Mystery Babylon, which includes the Federal Reserve, into the pit, metaphorically speaking. Make no mistake about it; we are headed for the pit, for the spirit of stupor has blinded our leaders to the truth of God's law. Even if they were told that the answer is God's law, especially in regard to usury, they would ignore it, for they are the blind leading the blind, and we know what will happen. **If a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit** (Matthew 15:14).

This is God's doing, but it is not for our ultimate destruction; rather, it is for our deliverance. It is so that America and the world will be set free from Mystery Babylon and come into the joy of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. God so loves the world, and He fully intends to manifest His love in the age to come through His Son and the many sons of glory.

To me, it is fascinating that America was rooted from the lost sheep of the house of Israel (ten tribes), but she has been made to forget these roots, just as the name *Manasseh* means "making me to forget." God has blinded us to our real heritage, but the good news is that the day is coming soon when our national eyes and ears will be opened to know our divine destiny as a nation, **a destiny that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, the Son of God, and the King of kings**. This is truly good news!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1141

Battle of the Debt, Washington, D.C.

July 31, 2011

It is amazing to listen to the news reports about what could be called **the Battle of the Debt**. If the nation's founding fathers were resurrected today to observe what is going on in Washington, D.C., they would be amazed to see what has happened to the republic that they founded. I would imagine some of them would say it is time for a new revolution.

Let me be clear that I am not advocating a revolution. What I do advocate is the coming of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, for this is the only way out of our current state of affairs and the only way into true happiness and freedom. We have tried man's way and failed miserably. Only by following God's way, according to God's law, will true success come. We need God's Son who has been installed on the throne of Mount Zion as the King of kings and Lord of lords. As Christians, we must hold fast to this unequivocal and undeniable truth. Anything else is compromise.

To those truly discerning the times, it should be apparent that our nation, along with the rest of the world, has reached the point of no return. Oh, Babylonian leaders will do everything they can to save the current world system, even if they have to resuscitate it. They may even succeed for a season as they tell the world the worst is behind us, but do not be deceived; it is a lie.

In light of the current economic/financial mess we find ourselves in, we often say that we are about to fall off the cliff. I have used the same metaphor. However, when stepping back and looking at the big picture, I believe that we have already fallen off the cliff and are stuck in the muck at the bottom of the canyon, again, metaphorically speaking. Simply, we cannot climb our way back to the top, for there is no way out, at least as far as man is concerned; and God will see to it that it remains so until His Son comes. The judgment of God will continue to come upon Mystery Babylon until it fully collapses. We know this will happen because this is God's plan as revealed throughout His Word and by revelation given to His prophets.

It should be abundantly clear to any who have some idea of God's law that the political system centered in Washington, D.C. is a lawless system, for it breaks God's law in many ways. However, before looking at some of these, it needs to be stated that the United States was not founded this way.

Now, I usually stay away from the word *religion*, for I believe Christianity is a *relationship*, not a religion. Please see my first article (#1) dated September 2007, *Christ, Who is our Life*. Even among those who would agree that Christianity is about a relationship, some would, nonetheless, still call it a religion, which, by my way of thinking, simply lumps Christianity with every other religion of man. You can call me a purist on the matter of the true nature of Christianity, if you will, but I see great danger in compromising on this truth. We see the evidence of such a compromise in the fact that much of what is called Christianity in the world today is religion; it is formalism and the tradition of men. Well, there is much that could be said about this topic, but this is not my point for this issue. I simply want to be clear on my view of the word *religion* in light of the quotes that follow.

Alex de Tocqueville, the French jurist, visited America in 1831 and was quite impressed with what he saw. During his day, Europe saw religion and liberty as opposing forces, even enemies of each other. In his assessment of America in that day, he stated: "In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching in opposite directions. But in America I found they were intimately united." He noted that the American colonists "brought with them into the New World a form of Christianity which I cannot better describe than by styling it a democratic and republican religion.

There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America." [Source: *The 5000 Year Leap* by W. Cleon Skousen, NCCS, 1981.]

Generally, our founding fathers believed that religion is the foundation of morality and that morality and religion are both essential for good government and the happiness of mankind. Further, they affirmed the existence of the Creator, for He alone designs all things in nature and promulgates all the laws that govern nature. Some 55 years after the Declaration of Independence, these principles were manifested in an observable way to foreigners visiting our country. Today, could this be observed by visitors to our nation's capital, especially if they were to observe the inner workings of our government?

In the last few days, I have listened to news commentators "report" on and "analyze" the haranguing going on between the two political parties in Congress and the White House over the debt, spending, and taxes. The most telling remarks came from so-called elitists, who know best how things ought to run in D.C., as they analyzed the "tea party" freshman class of the House of Representatives. These freshmen were described as a group that "cannot be bought off by their leadership," "cannot be threatened with loss of committee assignments," "cannot be bought off with ear marks [pork money] for the district they represent," "cannot be threatened with withholding funds for their reelection campaigns," and "cannot be persuaded to give up their principles and turn from the very reason why they were elected by the voters in their district."

In other words, they cannot be coerced or bribed into following the rules of the power brokers.

I don't know about you, but this is something quite noteworthy and commendable, regardless of one's personal opinion of their positions. And yet, the elite Washington crowd sees this as bad, for these freshmen reps are castigated as "extremists" for not playing the Washington game as it is supposed to be played, which thrives on special interests, backroom deals, and bribes of all manner to make it work. Please do not miss this point. It is common knowledge that this is the way Washington works.

The Washington way is corrupt and lawless. The foundation of our political system has become one built upon special favor, partiality, bribery, hypocrisy, lies, and the love of money; all of which are matters addressed by God's law. No wonder God is judging it with **a spirit of stupor**. It is so bad that they cannot even discern how foolish and irrational they sound as they debate the issues.

The current political and financial system breaks the law of God in many ways. Here are a few examples.

Bribery and partiality are against God's law: "You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous" (Deuteronomy 16:19 NASB).

Lying to and hypocrisy toward one another are against God's law: "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another (Leviticus 19:11 NASB). **"So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness** (Matthew 23:28 NASB). Notice that hypocrisy is aligned with lawlessness.

Usury [charging interest on lent money] is against God's law: "You may charge interest [usury] to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest [usury] ..." (Deuteronomy 23:20 NASB).

Taxing a man's labor and taxing beyond 10% [a tithe] are against God's law: 'Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S; it is holy to the LORD' (Leviticus 27:30 NASB), for **the land is Mine** (Leviticus 25:23). Notice that, as the Creator and Owner of the earth, God demands a tithe for use of His natural resources. God's law does not demand a tithe from man's labor, and yet our government places its heaviest taxation burden on a man's income derived from his labor.

Do we honestly believe that man's way (law) is the best way? Lord, have mercy!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1142

God Downgrades the United States Government

August 8, 2011

The big news of last week centered on the Congressional debt deal that President Obama signed. Much could be and is being said about this deal, which was sold to us as the best that they could do and that it would reduce spending. Excuse me; but trimming your **expected or projected increase** in spending over the next ten years is not reducing spending. By some estimates, the debt will increase by trillions of dollars with this so-called "deal."

It is like saying that today we live on \$40,000 of borrowed money, but in ten years we want to live on \$120,000 of borrowed money. But then we decide to lower our expectation, so we lower the \$120,000 to \$100,000 and call it a spending cut. This is no reduction in spending. It's bogus.

The problem the United States faces today is a **borrowing problem** and the **usury** that goes along with it that demands we pay interest to our creditors, whether they are foreign governments, the Federal Reserve, or other institutions. We have become a **debtor nation** because of our government's abrogation of its constitutional responsibility to directly issue currency that is backed by the wealth of the nation and not issued as debt.

Well, there are others who are much more knowledgeable on this subject than I am, so I won't attempt to delve into the technical details of it. All I know is that the United States Government (USG) is not operating according to the law of God regarding the lending of money and charging interest.

The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave. (Proverbs 22:7 NASB)

In case you miss the point, we have become the poor and the slave. It is as if we are like ancient Judah when they lost all their wealth and were taken captive by the Babylonians and removed from their national territory. The only difference is that we have been allowed to remain within our national territory. We have been taken captive by the international bankers that govern the financial realm of **Mystery Babylon**. In the US, it is called the **Federal Reserve** (banking cartel, not a government agency) that is in collusion with our Federal government.

I often cite **God's law on usury**, but we need to understand that the US is the foreigner under God's law. Consider how the law of usury is worded.

(19) "You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. (20) "You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess. (Deuteronomy 23:19-20 NASB)

It is the Babylonian system that is lending us our money with interest (usury), which is the reason our currency is called **debt notes**. In a sense, the **banking cartel** is acting legally under God's law because we are foreigners to them. Likewise, all of our banks are governed by this same system, and they are lending money at interest to American "countrymen." However, this does not mean we are not breaking the law of usury, for many of the banks and financial institutions in America are owned by Americans, including some owned by churches, and they all charge interest to their countrymen.

This may be difficult to grasp, but it makes sense if we see that the whole world has been yoked to this financial beast. It matters not if we are on our own land. We are all enslaved to it, and Mystery Babylon sees all the nations as indebted or enslaved to it. It is like a parasite living in our land, as if it were one of us. Unfortunately, we have been trained to think this beast is a good thing when it is not.

This is God's doing, for it is His judgment on not only the United States but the whole world. He has blinded us to the truth. By the way, the only nations that seem to follow the law of usury are in the Arab world.

Now, the big news of the day is the downgrade of the worthiness of our credit. Interestingly, these credit ratings pertain to our ability to continue borrowing money and paying interest on it. In other words, it is a rating by the Babylonian financial system of our ability to play the game of usury with foreign investors. What they are saying is that we are not playing the game so well right now. But let's be real; a downgrade from AAA to AA+ doesn't sound so ominous. Actually, another rating group called Weiss Ratings previously downgraded the US to a C.

The comments coming out of the politicians and pundits over the downgrade are laughable; some call it insanity. Comments range from blaming S&P for "stunning lack of knowledge" and "half-baked political analysis" to blaming other things like the "tea party" or "military spending." A former Fed chair has said the solution is to print more money, which is like saying: "Let's go wild with the credit card." Then, one of the richest men in America was stunned by it all, not understanding why this is happening.

I stand fast with my earlier assessment that there is a **spirit of stupor** over our nation right now, brought upon us as a judgment of God. See issue #05-1140, July 30, 2011, *Spirit of Stupor*.

From the spectrum of comments on the downgrade, there is also a **spirit of confusion** over the nation. With such massive confusion, we can be sure that God is behind it all. We know it is so because He has done it before.

(7) "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." (8) So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. (9) Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth. (Genesis 11:7-9 NASB)

Babel is the forerunner of Mystery Babylon. God confused the language of the Babylonians then and He is doing it in our day, only this time, it is not through different languages but by analysis and commentary that makes little to no sense to the reality on the ground. As the Tower of Babel had to be stopped, so Mystery Babylon will be stopped.

Well, here is the point of this issue: In a manner of speaking, in His own way, God has downgraded the USG. Notice that I am not stating that He has downgraded America. America stands for the people and the land, but the USG stands for the entity that rules the land.

The USG is no longer a government for the people and by the people. It shuns the **law of God** for the **law of man**. It is **USG Incorporated**, for it operates more like an incorporated business that talks about increasing its "revenues," as if it produces a product that people purchase. The fact of the matter is that it is in the business of doling out favors and all sorts of entitlements, even providing government paid cell phones or abortions on demand, to the people to keep them happy, or at least in line, so they don't question the power and control of government over their lives. It is like carrots on a stick.

So, I suggest that the downgrade is part of God's judgment on our governmental/political system. It is yet another shot across the bow, so to speak, another warning that we need to **seek the Lord that you may live** (Amos 5:6). Please do not take what I say as if I am some anti-government radical, for I am nothing of the sort. I love my country, but I am looking for a **better country** called **New Jerusalem**, and long for America to be ruled by the One who will give us righteous government. His name is **Jesus**.

THE UPWARD CALL

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1143

Quake News of the Day

August 23, 2011

Well, another exciting day in the US, at least on the east coast.

I was sitting in my office when I felt and heard one of the windows shaking as if a wind was hitting it. It lasted for mere seconds. I thought this was rather strange. My gut told me it was the earth shaking. I looked at the clock and it read 1:53 pm. My wife was outside near my office, so I opened the door and asked her if a strong wind had hit the house. She hadn't noticed anything nor had she felt any earth moving.

A minute later I got a phone call from a friend who lives over 300 miles north of us in Virginia. He said, "What's happening? My house just shook violently for about a minute. It must have been an earthquake."

Now we know that, in fact, it was a 5.8 quake that hit at 1:51 pm and was centered near Mineral, Virginia, which makes it the strongest quake to hit this area in recorded history. Although it was a strong quake, it appears that damage was minimal, at least according to what has been reported so far. I am writing this about 3 hours after the event.

It was quite amazing to watch the news coming out of Washington, D.C. and New York City. Communications were overwhelmed all along the east coast. It wasn't panic, but rather, what could be called high anxiety, at least initially. However, true to form, once it was realized that there was no widespread damage and no deaths, a silent yawn seemed to go up. After all, quakes of this magnitude occur across the globe every day. At least 1300 have occurred in this range so far this year.

To many, it is just another event in the long line of events. But is it? Does God have a message for us? If so, will we listen?

If you have followed much of what I report in these writings, you know that I believe the Lord has spoken to me in many ways regarding the day in which we live. I added a new section [**Prophetic**] to my web site to capture the words, visions, dreams, and even songs that have come to me, often in the night.

As I have reported before, I have been waiting for a rare quake to hit and have often wondered if Washington, D.C. is going to be the recipient of one. Whether this is the one or not, I cannot say for sure, but it seems to me that this is but another wake-up call from God. Will we heed it? I doubt it!

For the most part, the church seems to be ignorant or afraid of the need to sound a national call to repent and turn to God. Truly, the political and media realms have no discernment when it comes to God's judgment of America, but the church should not have such lack.

Again, I have reported on the word the Lord spoke to me regarding the heart of the nation. At 9:21 pm, on February 10, 2009, I heard: "**Thus saith the Lord, 'I have lifted up a hammer over the United States, and I am about to strike at the very heart of the nation.'**" On September 24, 2001, I heard: "**A rare earthquake is coming. You will know the end has come by a major earthquake.**" Again, I cannot state with certainty that today is a fulfillment of these words, but I can state with certainty that this is part of God's plan to shake our nation as we near the end of this age. It is a sign, an indication!

A few things caught my attention.

It has been reported that the **Washington National Cathedral**, a capital landmark, had at least three of the four pinnacles on its central tower fall off, and this tower appeared to be leaning. The pinnacles are "the top stones on the cathedral's towers."

Isn't this interesting; the top stones of a **Christian landmark** in the heart of the nation fell off.

Could it be that this is prophetic of the coming of the Lord Jesus, who is the top stone of His Church? Room must be made for our **Top Stone** to come and assume His rightful place among His people and the nations of the earth. He must come as the crowned King of kings!

Could this be a sign of shaking of His Church that no longer holds to Him as Head? As Peter wrote: "For it is time for **judgment to begin with the household of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

The second thing that caught my attention was the reaction of the beastly financial markets. The Dow, which has been cavorting up and down by very large margins over the last month, didn't even blink as it rose 322 points on the day. To those with any semblance of discernment, it should be obvious that the financial markets are a form of gambling. They produce paper wealth that is given and taken at will. They are part of the financial beast of mystery Babylon, and our nation has become enslaved to them.

As a side note, when, over the last several weeks, the market was tanking by hundreds of points each day, you could sense the panic and fear of even the news reporters and talking heads as they lamented the loss of value in their 401Ks. I heard one reporter lament over the losses because the whole nation seemingly relies on their 401Ks for their security. Well, if this is true, then many are in for a shock.

Our security must be found in our Lord Jesus alone! Everything that can be shaken will be shaken until we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken and has no bounds and no end.

The third thing that caught my attention was the time that I noted on my clock. It was 1:53 pm. The number **153** signifies **the sons of God**, which speaks of the manifestation of the sons of glory that will come by way of the **first resurrection** and **transfiguration**. From the church's perspective or, I should say, from the conquerors perspective, the next great event is the resurrection.

Interestingly, one of our local news channels reported that our area did not feel the quake until around 2:00 pm. If so, then why did I feel it two minutes after it occurred over 300 miles away? My answer: The Lord's doing!

Finally, the fourth thing that caught my attention is that I felt the quake but my wife did not. This is not the first time this has happened to us regarding what could be called the prophetic. I don't know if any of my neighbors felt it, but it seems to me that I had to be in one spot in my home to feel the window shake. If I had been outside, I would have missed it.

Just for the record, at that moment, I was working on a special study of the book of Revelation that I started a week ago. The purpose of this study is to understand the historicist perspective of Revelation in order to discern the historic time in which we live. Simply, I am seeking to discern the times.

Well, as the reports come in, more may come out of this quake. At any rate, let us watch and be ready for the coming **Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ** (Revelation 11:15).

I must be faithful to the word the Lord gave me over 16 years ago: "**When the structures crumble, testify of My Kingdom.**"

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)

#05-1144

197 Years Ago in the News

August 24, 2011

Did you know that 197 years ago today, on August 24, 1814, British troops marched on Washington, D.C., captured it, and burned several public buildings?

This episode in the history of our nation is called the **Burning of Washington** that took place during the War of 1812 between the British Empire and America. For the first time and the only time since the American Revolution, a foreign nation occupied the nation's capital.

During this brief occupation, the British army burned the White House, the US Capitol, the Library of Congress, and several other public buildings. The exterior structures remained but the interiors were pretty much destroyed. A torrential rainfall during this time may have saved the buildings from total destruction.

But here is the interesting thing about this historic event: Shortly after the attack, a tornado hit the area, resulting in deaths of both the British and the Americans. Fortunately, the rain helped to put out the fires. However, military equipment was tossed about and the British suffered damage to their ships. The British occupation of the capital lasted only 26 hours, and the US government, along with President Madison, was restored to its capital quickly.

Was this a judgment of God upon the young nation? Was it the providential hand of God that protected our capital from total destruction, even overthrow of our government by the British? Was it both? Perhaps!

As I see it, most people fall into one of two groups.

They deny altogether the providential hand of God in the history of men and nations, including the possibility that God is speaking through natural events, which are often called either **acts of nature** or **acts of God**. In the case of the latter, it is another way of saying acts of nature and does not necessarily imply the judgment of God. After all, if God is not in the history of men and nations, then how could He be in the cause and effect of natural events?

Others don't deny the hand of God in the history of men and nations. They might attribute really bad things that have happened to God's doing, but when they do, they often see these things as punitive rather than corrective on the part of God. They attribute man's "get even" anger and vengeance to God, as if He were like man rather than the God of love [**God is love**] who disciplines those He loves. Let us not forget that **God so loves the world**. Who and what nation do we want to leave out of His love?

It seems that those in the second group pick and choose the events they ascribe to God's judgment, and that they see them applying to the other guy (as in nation, region, etc.) and not to them. Especially when it comes to the overall nation, it seems that people don't want to acknowledge the possibility that God might be trying to get their attention or that they are suffering through some event or crisis because, as a nation, they have broken some divine law of God. Simply, they are so self-centered that they are blind to the sins of the nation and what part they might have played in bringing on judgment.

If you have a difficult time grasping this concept, then you are encouraged to study the history of ancient Israel and Judah. God told them what He would do if they broke His divine law or His covenant

with them. He was true to His word regarding every breach of His law and covenant to the point of even divorcing Israel. Consider the 10 tribes of the house of Israel that were removed from their land and cast out among the nations. They lost their national identity as the nation of Israel. As a reminder, the modern-day state of Israel is not an indication that the tribes have regained their name, as if they have been found. Modern Israel has usurped the birthright name *Israel* that was given to Joseph and his two sons. Today, the lost tribes of Israel are to be found in most of the western nations. In fact, America was founded by descendants of the lost tribes and, as such, is more an Israelite nation today than modern Israel in the Middle East, which should more rightly be called Judah or even Judah-Edom.

The point I want to make is that God's judgments are a good thing, even though they might seem severe at times; nevertheless, they are meant for good for those who discern His hand in them as well as His lesson. Consider what Isaiah had to say about His judgments.

(8) 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. (9) At night my soul longs for You, indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently; **for when the earth experiences Your judgments [mishpat] the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.** (10) 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 26:8-10 NASB)

The Hebrew word *mishpat*, translated as *judgments*, signifies a **judicial verdict**, like a sentence or formal decree for a crime. Thus, it is a legal term and refers to a ruling in a court of law. In this case, the court of law is the righteous throne of God that renders judgments based on the divine law of God.

But take special notice of the reason behind God's judgments. When the earth experiences His judgments, it is for a purpose, and that purpose is to learn righteousness. This sure does not sound like a vengeful God who simply desires to punish people who don't agree with Him and His law. His judgments are so that people will learn righteousness. This is a good thing!

But there is more, for, according to Isaiah, the wicked have a hard time learning this lesson, even though in good times they are shown favor (grace). Instead, they continue on in their unrighteousness and fail to behold or perceive the other lesson of God's judgments, that is, to perceive the majesty of the Lord.

So, the inhabitants of the earth experience God's judgments in order to learn His righteousness so that through His righteousness they will behold His majesty. What a loving God the world has!

Now, I must conclude with a brief word about the number 197.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [gematria = 197]. (Isaiah 7:14 NASB)

Truly, God's judgments are a sign, but He gave us the greatest of all signs when He gave His only begotten Son to the world. In the above verse, the word *Immanuel* has a gematria of 197. As if God wants to drive home the point, if we take the entire surface of the earth and smooth it (i.e., remove mountains and valleys), the entire surface area of the earth would be 197 million square miles. Coincidence or the hand of God pointing to His Son? I'll take the latter.

I am not trying to connect the event that occurred 197 years ago to our day. However, what I do want to leave you with is this: The next time a national event occurs, either in the natural realm or man's realm of governments and institutions, don't be so quick to pass it off as just another event in the life of a nation. Turn to God and seek Him for understanding of His judgments. Is it a sign? Then, praise God that He has given the world the greatest of all signs in His Son, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He came to this earth the first time to **conquer sin and death** and **take the scepter of Judah**. He is coming a second time to **conquer the nations** and **take the birthright of Israel-Joseph and usher in His Kingdom**.

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1145

The Number 186 in Light of the Quake

August 25, 2011

I must begin by acknowledging that what follows is subjective in nature, meaning I cannot prove it. However, I believe in a Sovereign God who rules **over the realm of mankind** (Daniel 4:32), and, as such, I do not believe in happenstance or coincidence. **There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries** (Daniel 2:28). Everything is being worked out in the history of man in accord with **God's eonian plan and purpose**. With this in mind, what follows should capture our attention.

Earlier this year, I reported that the **Washington National Christmas tree**, which was planted 32 years ago, toppled on February 19, 2011. At the time, I questioned if there was a message in this from God regarding our nation. Perhaps it signified that the nation that historically has taken pride in its motto "**In God We Trust**" no longer trusts God. Based on the number 32, I questioned if the toppled tree was a sign that, as a nation, we have broken our covenant with God upon which our nation was founded.

Now, **186 days later on August 23, 2011** (inclusive of this date), a 5.8 earthquake hit Mineral, Virginia that sent shock waves up and down the eastern seaboard from the southeast to the northeast.

As a result of this rare major quake, two national icons in Washington, D.C., the heart of the nation, experienced damage to the tops of their structures.

It was first reported that the **Washington National Cathedral** lost three **top stones**, which fell to the ground on the "**Pilgrim Street**" side.

Then, within a day, it was reported that the **Washington Monument**, which honors our first president, suffered a **four-foot, one-inch long crack in the stone of one of its triangular faces at the top of the monument**.

So, here we have the top stones of two national icons damaged by a rare major quake. It appears that God is speaking to us through the toppling of the national tree followed by the toppling or cracking of national top stones 186 days apart. Before looking at the number 186, a comment is in order about the cathedral top stones falling on Pilgrim Street.

The word *pilgrim* caught my attention. The **Pilgrims** were the first permanent settlers of the present-day Commonwealth of Massachusetts. They were what were called **English Separatists** or **Puritans** who broke away from the **Church of England** and traveled to America in 1620 to establish their own government based on the Bible. They wanted to create a **Bible commonwealth**. They separated because they believed that the work of the **Reformation** was not complete, and they sought to complete it in a new land where they would be free to do so. Based on the migration of the lost (10) tribes of Israel into Europe and the British Isles, it is most likely that these settlers were of the lost tribes. They even considered themselves to be the **New Israel**. Consequently, America was settled by Christian Israelites with the purpose of establishing the Kingdom of God, even New Jerusalem, in a new land. Unfortunately, no matter how motivated or even anointed they were, they were still in the era of Pentecost, not Tabernacles, and as such, their movement was destined to be **baked with leaven** [i.e., corruption] (Leviticus 23:17).

Could top stones falling from a cathedral (Christian symbol) onto a street named Pilgrim be God's way of revealing how far we have strayed from our roots as a nation? On the positive side, could He be telling us that the only remedy to our condition is Jesus, the one and only Top Stone? All our icons must be shaken to the ground to make way for the Crowned King. **He will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it [Him]!"** (Zechariah 4:7).

One further fact is that 186 years after the Pilgrims landed (1620-1806), five Williams College students prayed together one rainy afternoon and committed themselves "to send the Gospel to the Pagans of Asia, and to the disciples of Mohammed." From this commitment to the Lord, **America's first foreign missionary society** was formed in 1810.

This leads to the number 186. According to Bonnie Gaunt in her book *Jesus Christ--The Number of His Name* (1992, Adventures Unlimited Press), "interplay of numbers is not unusual in the gematria of the scriptures. Numbers are often reversed or rearranged in a different order." She points out that the number 186 can be reversed to 681, as well as rearranged to the number 618. "Just as the Hebrew text reads from right to left, and Greek text reads from left to right, so the numbers can be read both ways, and are so used many times in scripture" (page 154).

If we accept this understanding, the numbers 186 and 681 reveal something quite significant.

The word **Golgotha**, the place of Jesus' death, has a gematria of **186**.

In reference to the cross, the declaration, **"It is finished"** (Revelation 16:17) has a gematria of **186**.

In reference to New Jerusalem, the promise **"And there shall be no more curse"** has a gematria of **186**.

The time between **Jesus' death on the cross** and the end of the 7th day and the beginning of the **8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles** was **186 days** (inclusive of the last day). The 8th day speaks of Tabernacles and New Jerusalem.

In Greek, the phrase **"the seventh day"** has a gematria of **681**. The 7th day signifies that the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles follows. Thus, the 7th day leads to **the last day, the great day of the feast** (John 7:37).

Finally, the phrase **"The Lord shall be King over all the earth"** (Zechariah 14:9) has a gematria of **618**.

But there is more. The words **Calvary**, **Lambs**, and **Lampstand**, as well as the phrase **"He is the Rock,"** each have a gematria of 301. Multiplying 301 (Calvary) by .618 (The Lord shall be King over all the earth) yields 186 (the great day, the 8th day).

So, with the gematria of these scriptural references, we come full circle. We start with the Cross and end with the last day, the great day of the **Feast of Tabernacles**, which speaks of the **first resurrection** and **transfiguration** of the conquerors who are the first fruits of **New Jerusalem, the temple in the Lord** and **dwelling of God in spirit** (Ephesians 2:21, 22), full of living water, which speaks of the life of the Son of God and the fullness of the Spirit of God.

(37) Now on **the last day, the great day of the feast**, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, **'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'**" (John 7:37-38 NASB)

And he showed me **a pure river of water of life**, bright as crystal, coming forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (Revelation 22:1 LITV)

(10) And he carried me in spirit onto a great and high mountain, and showed me **the great city, holy Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God**, (11) **having the glory of God**. And **its light** was like a very precious stone, as a jasper stone, being clear as crystal.... (Revelation 21:10-11 LITV)

And its light! Do you know that the speed of light is 186,000 mps? Here is yet another meaning of the number 186. **The Light of the World** is coming to shine through His many sons of glory, the saints in Light (Hebrews 2:10; Colossians 1:12). This is truly good news!

THE UPWARD CALL

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IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1146

Irene Means "Peace" [Gematria 181]

August 27, 2011

On August 18, 2011, I had a different type of dream than usual. I was in a prayer meeting and the person leading the time said: "Stu said something is going to happen in the southeast." In the dream, I was sort of embarrassed by the announcement, for I knew this group was not very open to the prophetic. Later, I told my wife about the dream and indicated to her that there was significance to it.

Frankly, I sensed this could be of the Lord but was not sure what it meant until two days later. On August 20, it was reported that a tropical storm had formed and was named *Irene*. On August 22, 2011, Irene became a hurricane, and it was reported that it was headed for the southeast Bahamas.

In other words, **Hurricane Irene** was happening not only in the southeast Bahamas but also off the southeast of the United States eastern coast.

As I write this, Irene has made landfall on the coast of North Carolina on its trek up the entire coast from the Carolinas to New England. It had been projected to be a mighty powerful hurricane, but now it looks like some of its punch has been lost and perhaps it won't be as devastating as initially projected. Instead of a Cat 2 or 3, it is a Cat 1. However, this doesn't mean that it won't cause widespread damage, for surely it will due to the rain and tropical-force winds hitting roofs and trees rooted in already water-soaked soil. Already, over 400,000 homes have lost power in one state alone.

Obviously, my dream announcement on the 18th that something is going to happen in the southeast and then something actually happening or, we could say, forming in the southeast in relation to the US east coast caught my attention.

I see and hear many news reports each day but usually do not attempt to link them to other events or even things the Lord might have revealed to me. However, in this case, I felt led to count the days from the time of the toppling of the National Christmas tree on February 19, 2011 to the day I received the dream of the happening. If you have read my most recent issues, you know that I have already linked the toppling of the tree to the 5.8-mag quake in Virginia and the toppling or cracking of the top stones of two other national iconic structures, the Washington National Cathedral and the Washington Monument, both in Washington, D.C.

I figured that perhaps all of these are connected, including Hurricane Irene. After all, a major earthquake hitting DC followed by a hurricane hitting the US mainland 5 days later should grab our attention or, at least, generate a little bit of curiosity. As it turns out, there is a connection.

The number of days from February 19 to August 18, inclusive of the last day, is **181 days** or exactly 6 months.

Now, here is the interesting part. In the Greek, the word *Eirene*, from which Irene is derived, has a **gematria of 181**. Further, the name **Irene means "peace"**. Thus, the number 181 also signifies peace. As if to make sure that I saw the connection, the Lord also gave me this dream on 8-**18-11**, which has the number 181 within the date, whether reading it from the left or the right.

As I have stated elsewhere, I do not see these things as coincidences.

But this raises the question: Why would God want to draw attention to a hurricane's name that means peace? I wonder if the ones who name the hurricanes ever check the meaning of the names they assign to these cyclones. The fact of the matter is that a hurricane is noisy, violent, and destructive; it is not generally associated with peace. So, what could God be saying to us?

Of course, on one level, the answer to the question is quite obvious. Jesus is the **Prince of Peace** (Isaiah 9:6) and the **King-Priest according to the order of Melchizedek**, who was the **king of righteousness and the king of peace** (Hebrews 7:1-2). Thus, the character of the coming kingdom of Christ is righteousness and peace. In this regard, this is a reminder that the **King of Peace** is coming. This must be our encouragement no matter what the near future looks like.

After His resurrection and before His final ascension to the throne of His Father, Jesus appeared to His disciples on two occasions, eight days apart, and blessed them with peace.

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.**" (John 20:19 NASB)

After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "**Peace be with you.**" (John 20:26 NASB)

The first day of the week is the same as the eighth day, which signifies **the last day, the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles** (John 7:37). Thus, Jesus was not only blessing His disciples but also prophetically pointing to the day when all the conquering sons of God are blessed with peace in His kingdom and reign with Him over the nations of the earth for 1,000 years.

On another level, the story of Jesus with His disciples in the midst of a great storm on the sea should remind us that Jesus is with us in the midst of the storms of life, especially the storms that precede His coming to meet us in air at the end of our present wicked eon.

(23) When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. (24) And behold, **there arose a great storm on the sea**, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. (25) And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "**Save us, Lord; we are perishing!**" (26) He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" **Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.** (Matthew 8:23-26 NASB)

Jesus was in the midst of the storm with His disciples, and He brought peace into the midst of it when He calmed the winds and the sea.

For those who know, love, and obey the Lord, there should be no doubt that Jesus is with them no matter how dire or great the storm might be in their life. In fact, most likely, He brought the storm their way in the first place, just as He most definitely raised the wind and sea when He was asleep in the boat with His disciples. I can imagine the Lord smiling to Himself as He was resting in the boat as it was being covered with the waves.

I believe there is a two-fold message to us with this announcement of a happening in the southeast that manifested as a hurricane named Irene, meaning peace, and the connection to the toppling or cracking of national icons, 181 and 186 days apart. First, God's judgments often manifest as great upheavals, either upheavals of the physical (earthly) realm (e.g., quakes and hurricanes) or of man's institutions, governments, and religions, that is, man's **isms**. Second, even though God's judgments might manifest as great storms, they have a purpose that is good. In this case, God wants us to know that, out of His judgments, peace will come to the whole earth. For the conquerors, peace will not only be with you, but it will be in you. The nations of the world will experience peace as they have never experienced it in the history of man's kingdoms, for the character of the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is peace.

THE UPWARD CALL

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1147

Specificity in the Day of Babel

November 11, 2011

I haven't written an issue of TUC for several months for two reasons. First, I have been diligently studying the book of Revelation from the historicist view and writing study notes on what I have learned. Lord willing, one day I might post these notes. Second, I have not been given anything to share that I have felt would be helpful. I have much I could share that the Lord has revealed to me over the last several months but most of it has been more on a personal level. Besides, I try to post only that which I sense the Spirit is prompting me to write and post. I am sure I am not 100% successful in this regard, but, at any rate, this is my heart.

With this in mind, this morning a few thoughts came to me while I was attending a prayer time. The prayers being offered up were sincere and heartfelt; they were prayers according to what was on the heart of each person. This is good, and in no way am I trying to be a critic of it. Yet, I found myself crying out to the Lord for direction as the prayers went in a multitude of directions.

"Lord, how should we pray? What prayers should we offer up together? Lord, how can we pray for repentance if we don't know the root sin of our wicked ways?"

This latter question is what truly gripped my heart, and as I cried out silently, two words came to me: ***specificity*** and ***babel***.

With all that is going on in America today, it is very common to hear people pray along the lines of 2 Chronicles.

(13) "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, (14) and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14 NASB)

The Lord was speaking to the **United Kingdom of Israel**, and as such, this call to prayer was national, not individual. Of course, we all need to repent of our individual sins, but this particular call to humility and prayer and seeking was national. In fact, it was to start with the Lord's people and proceed to all the nations, for it was in reference to the Lord's house of prayer that was to be a blessing to both Israelites and foreigners (2 Chronicles 6)—*all the nations and families of the earth*.

Given this, it is clear that the condition of a nation is a reflection of the condition of the Church.

Consequently, if we are led to pray along these lines, it seems to me that our prayers must have some specificity to them. Especially, if we are to turn from our wicked ways, that is, repent, we need to know what specific sins have beset us as a nation and as the Church of God that require repentance.

This is what is on my heart: As the Lord's people, we desperately need to hear what the Spirit of God is saying to the Church regarding the root of our sin. I am not referring to generic prayers about our sin as the Church but very specific prayers that go to the very root of our sin as the Church.

Essential and effective repentance starts at the root, not the outward manifestation or the trunk of it.

I have been studying the **olive tree** lately, and it is a very tenacious tree. Its trunk can be destroyed in fire or drought, but its root system is so pervasive that the tree will revive itself. The only effective way to kill an olive tree is to kill its root. In like fashion, the only way that the outward (cause-effect) sins of the Church that are reflected in the nation can truly be dealt with is to get to the root of the matter that is hidden under the surface, not by dealing with what we see being manifested. If we can get to the root and stand together in humility, confessing and repenting of the root cause, then the Holy Spirit can do the work of cutting off the life of the root and restoring our nation. In my estimation, anything less than this will fall short of reaching the mark, no matter how sincere and desirous we are in our prayers.

As an example, we pray against abortion, but what is the root cause of it? Do you realize that abortion is the judgment of God upon, not only America, but the entire world? If you don't believe this, then read Hosea 9:13-17. What was the problem? Ephraim refused to listen to the Lord and, as a result, his root was dried up. Further, we all know that the US Supreme Court began to throw God out of our public life in the 60's. This too was and is a judgment on the Church, but what is the root of the sin that led to this action on God's part? The financial crisis that won't go away has a root sin attached to it. What is it?

Consider another example. What was the source of the problem for ancient Jerusalem that will ultimately lead to its final demise when modern-day Jerusalem falls in the very near future? They burned their sons in the Temple as sacrifices to Baal (Jeremiah 19). Can you imagine such a thing? What did the Lord say would happen to Jerusalem?

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial." (Jeremiah 19:11 NASB)

Although it has been rebuilt many times, if we are to believe Jeremiah's prophecy, the present-day Jerusalem is destined to fall, never to be repaired or rebuilt again. Read Galatians 4:21-31 for our attitude toward the present Jerusalem. By the way, if you want to understand the *gehenna of fire* (so-called *hell*), it is discovered in the word about *Topheth*. *Gehenna of fire* is reserved for Jerusalem.

There are many examples that could be cited, but the point that needs to be driven home is that we must hear from the Holy Spirit regarding the root of sin in the Church and the nation so that we know how to pray and repent. This leads to the second word that came to me, *babel*.

Does anyone have any doubt that we are living in the day of Babel? *Babel* means "confusion" or "to mix." As I see it, it means that things are mixed up. Why? Because there are so many voices speaking within and without the Church that they are drowning out the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Church has become **a chatter house of countless voices all vying for attention**, and the Lord's people are being tossed to and fro by all these voices as if it is all from the Lord. But is it? Granted some is; but we need to discern the times, and we can only do this by discerning His voice, not in the earthquake or the fire, but in the sound of **the gentle blowing** (1 Kings 19:12).

As I look back on the many prayer times that I have been involved with over the years, I conclude that often the prayers were like mud thrown on the wall to see what stuck. We could call these **mud prayers**. At other times, prayers were what could be called **emphasis or group-think prayers**; they were based on the emphasis of a man's ministry or church or some new teaching. There may have been a time, a place, and a purpose for such prayers in the past, but no longer. The time is short; we don't need **mud or emphasis prayers** anymore. If we are to pray according to 2 Chronicles 7, we need prayers of specificity that speak to the root of sin, not its trunk. We need **root prayers**.

Dear beloved brethren, it is time to stop the train with all its clamor and noise, get off it, and set our ears to the heavens to listen for the voice of God. It is time for the many voices to be silent and for the Lord's people to begin listening quietly for what the Spirit is saying to the Church. **"The LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him"** (Habakkuk 2:20 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)

#05-1148

Violent Men Take It By Force

November 28, 2011

It is not uncommon to hear Christians say that we have to be violent with our flesh if we are to enter the Kingdom of the Heavens, as if, *for a Christian*, violence and the Kingdom of the Heavens go hand-in-hand. To this, some add that John the Baptist was a violent man. To make this point, most generally quote the following verse, presented from several translations.

"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)

From the time of John the Baptist until now, **violent people have been trying to take over the kingdom of heaven by force.** (Matthew 11:12 CEV)

But from the time of John the Baptist till now, **the Kingdom of the Heavens has been suffering violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force.** (Matthew 11:12 WNT)

Was John the Baptist truly violent? He definitely had an aura of strangeness or "not of this world" about him, and he spoke rather bluntly to the Jewish religious leaders, but did this make him a violent man? Does the record indicate that John ever took up a physical sword? No!

As a young believer, I never embraced this verse even as more mature saints continually referred to it as they sought to "die to self." This phrase is a topic unto itself, but I thought we were crucified with Christ. Or, was this only Paul's experience?

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by [the] faith in [of] the Son of God, who loved [loves] me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20 NASB [DNT, YTL, CV])

I am not implying that we do not have things that must be dealt with in our lives, even to "die to," for there most assuredly are. Laying down our lives for one another, or taking up our cross to follow the Lord, or losing our soul life for the Lord's sake in order to find it are all vital principles that often involve radical change in our lives. However, I believe it is more about reckoning what the Lord has done for us, walking by faith, abiding in Him, and hearing and obeying His voice, than it is about us trying to change ourselves, peacefully or violently.

However, is this what the Lord Jesus was telling His disciples in relation to John the Baptist?

Undoubtedly, there is flesh involved in the violence cited by Jesus, but nowhere in Matthew 11:12 did He state nor imply that John the Baptist was or believers must be violent with "self" in order to force their way into the Kingdom of the Heavens. Besides, isn't the kingdom about **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit** (Romans 14:17)?

Jesus was not advocating violence as many seem to think. On the contrary, consider what Jesus told Pilate as He was headed toward the cross. Keep in mind that shortly before this Jesus had also chided Peter for using a physical sword against a high priest's slave (John 18:10, 11).

Jesus answered, **"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."** (John 18:36 NASB)

No; Jesus was not calling for violence or for His disciples to be violent with themselves or with others, nor was He advocating that His followers violently seize His kingdom that was of another realm. So, what did He mean?

Jesus spoke these words in reference to John the Baptist being imprisoned by King Herod. John was about to be beheaded (violence), and then He (Jesus), as the very King of kings, was about to be crucified (violence), and later most of His disciples would be martyred (violence), along with many saints that followed down through the centuries (violence) [Revelation 6:9-11; 20:4]. Why? Since the days of John, violent men have been trying to seize the Kingdom of the Heavens through violence.

In other words, many have been trying to force their way into the Kingdom of the Heavens by the arm of the flesh not by the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. No doubt this very same arm of the flesh was in the disciples, and Jesus knew it.

(54) 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?"** (55) But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, **"You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; (56) for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."**] And they went on to another village. (Luke 9:54-56 NASB)

We need to understand that, in Jesus' day, the Jews wanted to break away from Roman rule by force if necessary and establish the Kingdom of God (the Heavens) on earth, making them the head and all other nations subservient to them. Their rebellion culminated with the Lord sending His Roman army to destroy Jerusalem (Matthew 22:7). Many wanted Jesus to lead the charge to fight the Romans and take control of Jerusalem and Judea. When He refused to do so, they rejected Him as the rightful heir of the throne and demanded His crucifixion (John 19:15). Jesus is the King of Peace not of violence. His kingdom is the Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness.

The Jews in Judea were under the judgment of God, for they were under a wooden yoke (Jeremiah 27:11; 28:13) of Roman rule, meaning they were on their land but being governed by foreigners. Previously, when Judah was taken captive and removed to the land of the Babylonians, they had been under an iron yoke (Deuteronomy 28:36, 47-48; Jeremiah 28:13-14). In order for the King of the Jews to take the scepter of His kingdom as Jacob-Israel prophesied to his son Judah (Genesis 49:10), Judah had to be back on the land, and so they were, but they were still under judgment.

Unfortunately, the Jewish leaders rejected this judgment, refusing to repent as John had commanded (Matthew 3:2), and believed they had a right to fight to take control and establish the Kingdom of God, usurping the throne from God's Son. Ultimately, this led to the total destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the remaining Jews about 40 years later. Jeremiah had prophesied of Judah being made up of both good figs and bad or evil figs (Jeremiah 24-30). The good ones peaceably submitted to the judgment of God; the evil figs were more interested in fighting to the death, if necessary, in order to break the very yoke of judgment that had been placed upon them by the Lord.

But the history of Christendom is not much different, for it is strewn with Christians (in name) who have declared the sovereignty of God while trying to seize or advance the kingdom by their own violence and force. If this is hard to accept, then study the history of the Roman church. How many Christians, Jews, and Moslems have been killed down through the centuries in the name of Christ? Thousands, if not millions!

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." (John 14:27 NASB)

THE UPWARD CALL

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1149

Choosing National Leaders

December 26, 2011

Starting early next year, the race for the presidency of the United States will go to full throttle. It seems like it has been in this mode for some time; unfortunately, it has just begun and we have another ten months to go.

Now, this issue is not about any particular candidate or party or even ideology. Many Christians have very strong views about the candidates, the issues, and the course our country seems to be on. Some are even so adamant about these matters that they are willing to accuse fellow brethren of departing from Christ.

Case in point is the recent criticism of Franklin Graham that was first reported on December 22.

In an interview, Franklin was asked about supporting a Mormon like Mitt Romney for president. He answered that he was not bothered about the appropriateness of evangelical Christians voting for a Mormon. His criterion for president is who is most qualified for the office. He even stated: "You can have the nicest guy and he can be a Christian and just wonderful but have absolutely no clue as to how to run a country."

This, in turn, solicited an outcry from Steven Andrew of USA Christian Ministries calling on Franklin to repent for making such an assertion. He accused Franklin of misleading other Christians and betraying Jesus, citing 2 Chronicles 19:2 as a biblical warning about helping the wicked. According to Steven, we need leaders who fear God, and voting for a Mormon will bring God's judgment on America.

Rather than deal with these comments directly, I would rather direct your attention to the Lord's word regarding two ancient world leaders that did not know the Lord.

The first leader was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who the Lord raised up to judge Judah.

(8) "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words, (9) behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the LORD, 'and **I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant**, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. (Jeremiah 25:8-9)

Notice that the Lord called Nebuchadnezzar "My servant." In other words, the Lord raised up a pagan leader to bring judgment upon His own people.

But then, when the iron-yoke judgment of 70 years was completed, the Lord raised up another world leader who did not know Him either in order to bring down the kingdom of Babylon and release His people to return to their land of Judea.

(28) "*It is I* who says of **Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd!** And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" ... (1) Thus says the LORD to **Cyrus His anointed [messiah]**, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him and to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: (2) "I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through

their iron bars. (3) "I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, So that you may know that it is I, **the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.** (4) "For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen *one*, **I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me.** (5) "I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, **though you have not known Me....** (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-5)

I recall hearing a pastor of a well-known denomination quoting these verses then quipping out loud that he did not understand how this could have occurred through an unbeliever. His template told him that God can only do good things through the saved and bad things through the lost. In other words, he just could not fathom the thought of God using any vessel He so desired in order to do His will on earth.

But take special note that this is the Lord Himself speaking through Isaiah. The Lord, who knows all hearts, stated that Cyrus, the ruler of the Medes, did not know Him, and yet, He called him **"My shepherd."** This is an amazing statement; one that should shatter every notion that God cannot and will not work through leaders that do not know or acknowledge Him. To make sure the point was not lost, the Lord went so far as to declare that He called Cyrus by name. This was no case of mistaken identity.

Another very important point is that Cyrus was not called a servant as Nebuchadnezzar was called but His shepherd and anointed. In the Hebrew, the word for *anointed* refers to a messiah. Can you imagine that a so-called unsaved or pagan ruler was a messiah? This was a title of honor, for the Lord was going to use him to deliver His people out of captivity in a foreign land. We do not know if Cyrus consciously did this out of obedience to the Lord; nevertheless, he did it and the Lord commended him for it.

Cyrus was a type of Jesus the King who will one day deliver His people and, for that matter, all the nations out of the kingdom of this world and into His kingdom of righteousness. Thus, the lesson to learn from this is that the Lord can take any world leader and use him (or her) to fulfill His plan.

As a side note, some commentators believe that the Lord is going to do something very similar in our day to bring down **Mystery Babylon** of the western world. Accordingly, **the Kings from the East** (Revelation 16:12), predominantly from China and other eastern countries representative of the Medes, will be raised up to judge the Babylonian financial system to which the Lord Himself yoked the world, especially the western Christianized world, around 1913-1914 with the rise of the **Federal Reserve System**. A glorious day is coming when the Lord's people will hear: **"Come out of her, My people"** (Revelation 18:4).

God is the Sovereign over His creation and George Bush was raised up by the Lord to lead our nation just as Barack Obama was raised up to lead us in this hour, regardless of how one views his presidency so far. In fact, I have stated in previous issues that, at times, President Obama has unknowingly stated things that seemed prophetic. I recently said this to a Christian who was not a fan of the president and I received a strong look of disbelief, as if the Lord could never do such a thing through this leader.

All I can say is let us be very careful how we view our leaders and of any attitude that denies they are in office by the will of God, for they most assuredly are. The Lord can put anyone He so desires into office.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. **For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.** (Romans 13:1 NASB)

For by Him 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. (Colossians 1:16 NASB)

What if the Lord chooses a leader for judgment and discipline of our nation? What if this is what He has been doing through our most recent president? What if He isn't done with His judgment of us yet? In the coming year, we need spiritual discernment like we have never had before. Let us stand in the council of the Lord to see and hear His voice.

THE UPWARD CALL

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(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)*

#05-1150

The Number 70

December 31, 2011

Restoration of All Things

I am closing out the year with this topic because it has to do with the word that I believe the Lord has put on my heart for 2012.

There are two main views of the meaning of the number 70.

First, in his book *Number in Scripture*, E.W. Bullinger states that "7 x 10 signifies perfect spiritual order and carried out with all spiritual power and significance. Both spirit and power are greatly emphasized."

Second, the number 70 is considered the number of universality or the restoration of all things.

Of course, these two views are mutually inclusive. In fact, they go hand-in-hand since the restoration of all things signifies perfect spiritual order and is brought about by all spiritual power. Another way of stating this is that when God's perfect spiritual order comes, all things will be restored back to God. **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things** (Romans 11:36).

Before explaining this thought, let us consider some places in scripture where the number 70 appears.

The first mention is discovered with the descendants of Shem, Japheth, and Ham that repopulated the earth after the flood. Adding up the descendants of Noah as recorded in Genesis 10 reveals that there were 70 of them.

The house of Jacob that entered Egypt numbered 70, and from this group eventually came the nation of Israel.

(26) All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all, (27) and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were **seventy**. (Genesis 46:26-27 NASB)

When the Lord delivered the sons of Israel from Egypt and led them into the wilderness under the leadership of Moses, God gave Moses the command to choose 70 elders to help him judge the people.

The LORD therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me **seventy** men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. (Numbers 11:16 NASB)

Later and after Solomon's United Kingdom of Israel was split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, Judah was given the **iron yoke** of judgment (Jeremiah 28:13-14) and sent into Babylonian captivity for 70 years, which was also the length of years for the Babylonian monarchy. With the end of the 70 years, Judah was allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and its temple (Jeremiah 25:11, 12; Daniel 9:2; Zechariah 7:5).

The Lord told Daniel that 70 weeks were set for his people to finish the transgression.

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*. (Daniel 9:24 NASB)

These 70 weeks were actually 490 years that ended with the crucifixion of Jesus in 33 AD. The last week or 7 years of Daniel's 70 weeks occurred from 26-33 AD. Jesus began His ministry in the midst of the week in 29 AD when He went to John for baptism on the Day of Atonement. This is when He presented Himself for ministry and made an end to sin, which was fully consummated at the Cross.

Finally, Jesus sent 70 disciples out into the field for a harvest.

Now after this the Lord appointed **seventy** others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. (Luke 10:1 NASB)

These are just a few examples of the appearance of the number 70 in scripture.

Now, the number 70 signifies the restoration of all things in that it refers to all the nations. As we have already seen, there were 70 descendants of Noah following the flood, and these 70 were essentially the beginning of the nations on earth that was restored after the flood. Thus, the number 70 represents all the nations and their restoration.

Carrying this thought to its fullest extent means the restoration of all things. After all, according to Paul, who used a similar word, God in Christ has **reconciled all things** to Himself on earth and in heaven (Colossians 1:20), and God is not counting the world's trespasses against them (2 Corinthians 5:19).

This thought was conveyed in the 7-day Feast of Tabernacles that the sons of Israel celebrated each year, starting on the 15th day of the 7th month.

(12) 'Then on the **fifteenth day of the seventh month** you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work, and you shall observe a feast to the LORD for seven days. (13) 'You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire as a soothing aroma to the LORD: **thirteen bulls**.... (17) 'Then on the second day: **twelve bulls**.... (20) 'Then on the third day: **eleven bulls**.... (32) 'Then on the seventh day: **seven bulls**.... (Numbers 29:12-32 NASB)

Notice that on the first day, they sacrificed 13 bulls and on the second day they sacrificed 12 bulls. Each day they reduced the number of bulls to be sacrificed by one until on the 7th day they sacrificed 7 bulls. There were a total of 70 bulls sacrificed over this 7-day period.

According to the Jewish Talmud, these 70 bulls corresponded to the number of the nations, 70 in the world. Thus, the purpose of these sacrifices during the Feast of Tabernacles was to appeal to God for the restoration of all the nations of the world, to restore them back to God. They were doing this with full knowledge of God's heart as revealed through His prophets. Later, Peter reminded the men of Israel of this fact.

(19) "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; (20) and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, (21) whom heaven must receive until *the period of restoration of all things* about which **God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time**. (Acts 3:19-21 NASB)

One further proof of this was when Jesus, who came in fulfillment of all the prophets, sent out 70 of His disciples into the harvest of the world as a sign that it is God's plan to restore all the nations. God plans to harvest (i.e., restore) all the nations to Himself through His Son who has the power to subject all things to Himself (1 Corinthians 15:25-28; Philippians 3:21).