

# 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)

#03-0908

## ***Cell Phones For The Dead***

January 12, 2009

This may seem to be a rather bizarre title, but it comes from something that I recently heard reported as news. The report started off with a mention of the afterlife, and then proceeded to report that the dead are being buried with their cell phones. As the thinking goes, it was so much a part of their life that it makes sense to bury their phone with them. After all, it is not unusual for people to be buried with objects that were dear to them while alive, such as jewelry or teddy bears. But it is a little bit more bizarre than this, for it was also reported that people dial the dead person's phone while it is in the coffin. Thus, you could be at a wake (visitation) and hear the phone ringing inside the coffin. The reporter did not state whether any of these calls were answered. As if this were not enough, it was then reported that people are buried with music playing in their coffin.

A few days later, I was listening to a local radio show and a woman who hears what she calls "angelic whispers" and "angelic gossips" was being interviewed. Listeners were encouraged to call the radio station to talk with her. So, people called in, and after they said their name and gave a little information, the woman told them what she was hearing about their lives. Sometimes she hit upon a unique situation or the name of an acquaintance or loved one in the person's life. She was never too specific in her response to the callers. She said she was giving them choices. To me, it was all very strange but, in some ways, was not much different from a psychic reading or a false prophet that gives a word for a price. This woman was not asking for money, just pushing her new book. However, just like the report of the cell phones, this program began with a brief discussion of the afterlife. Specifically, people are in heaven, and they communicate to us earthlings. I guess this is where the whispers and gossips come in. But this woman added a twist to her gift. She could not hear directly about one's life; she had to be talking with the person to discern what to say. She did mention God and praying for some of her callers, so there was an overtone of religious thought and spirituality but no mention of Jesus.

To add to this, the whole matter of the afterlife is seen in many movies that are produced in the name of entertainment. To discover how pervasive afterlife and the occult are in what comes out of Hollywood, visit any video store or flip through the channels of a cable or satellite service. It is so pervasive that it seems as if people are fixated on the unseen and death. It is paganism.

I have no historical reference point, but it seems to me that mankind has always been fascinated with the afterlife, and most believe that in death the person enters into some other life. It is as if death is not really death but simply a portal to some other life, whether it is in heaven, hell, the underworld, or whatever place strikes the imagination. Of course, most religions believe in some kind of afterlife, whether it is of the pagans or the enlightened. The thought of an afterlife is so strong among some religions that death, especially dying as a martyr, is fervently embraced.

Now, here is my point: After considering the evidence, I have concluded that a majority of Christians are not really much different in their view of an afterlife than most non-Christians, barring perhaps atheists. After all, both groups, which comprise pretty much all mankind, have the dead alive in another place. The details of the place obviously have their differences. In death, some are walking on golden streets, some are being entertained by virgins, and others are in horrible places of great torment and conflict.

If you have read my material, you should know by now that I reject all the above. I won't go into all this since I have done so in many other writings. But now, I want to propose something that might seem a bit controversial, and it is this: I believe that the reason for so much belief in the afterlife, particularly

for those who are not Christian, rests squarely on the shoulders of the so-called church. So much preaching has gone forth that exhorts people to believe in Jesus so that they can go to heaven when they die, and if they don't believe, then they are going to hell, a place of torment and torture, when they die, that this teaching has been a breeding ground for all sorts of thinking about an afterlife. Don't take my words in the wrong way. We must preach Jesus and the need to believe on Him, but not for the purpose of dying and going to heaven. You will search in vain to find this to be the good news.

Consider the good news as presented by Paul in his defense of the resurrection, which is the hope of all who believe on Jesus. Paul's hope was not an afterlife; it was resurrection (Philippians 3:11).

**(3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.** (1 Corinthians 15:3-5 NASB)

The Christian belief of an afterlife is not much different from the belief of pagans and other religions. The major difference is how one gets there and what it looks like, but at the heart of it all is that no one dies. The world, including the Christian world, has believed the lie of the serpent of old: **"You surely will not die!"** (Genesis 3:4). Consequently, most people believe that they will live even though they die. And the Christian world or, more specifically, the church has done nothing to correct this lie but rather has been instrumental in bolstering and teaching it to the entire world. Think about it!

Some brethren that I very much respect, who are very clear on the matter of resurrection, do not see the question of whether or not there is life in death as worth discussing, for it causes unnecessary division. To them, it really does not matter what view one holds. Strangely, they hold very strong views on other matters that are just as or more divisive. I contend that it does matter and that this is the reason why so many of the Lord's people do not have a proper understanding of the two resurrections yet to come, and it is the reason why the world has so embraced the whole concept of an afterlife. The church has taught the world that there is an afterlife. Whether the world believes in the Christian concept of an afterlife does not matter. What matters is that they hear of it from the church and, although they might reject what the church teaches, they nevertheless accept the concept and form their own rendition of it. Thus, they can have the dead in heaven (or in an underworld) apart from Christ, and these dead ones can communicate with the earthlings.

It is safe to state that there are several camps of beliefs when it comes to resurrection; some don't see it ever occurring, that is, they deny it, and others see it as having occurred already; two errors that Paul had to contend with (1 Corinthians 15:12; 2 Timothy 2:18); and yet some see it as a form of sanctification after we believe.

So, I contend that the very reason for the Lord's people holding some of these views and having little to no expectation of resurrection is because they have been taught and believed the lie that they do not die but immediately upon death enter a new life. Once one goes onto this ground, there are all sorts of opportunities to believe many things regarding resurrection, including casting it aside or making it a rather insignificant hope. After all, why look for it if you are already in heaven upon death?

But again, I must reiterate that I believe the reason for so much of the world believing in an afterlife upon death is because the church believes it and has preached it so effectively that the world has believed it as well; however, they have taken it, apart from Christ, and built their own theology, so to speak. In the end, many Christians do not believe much differently from the pagan world.

If you are interested in this matter, I refer you to the many articles I have written on the resurrection, along with several chapters in my book *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, Volume 2, chapters 1, 2, 4, 7.

We don't need a whisper; we need the shout of the Lord. Let us leave our cell phones at home!