

# 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)*

#03-0951

## ***A Hammer Which Shatters A Rock #5***

April 3, 2009

**“Is not My word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”** (Jeremiah 23:29)

At this point, let us turn to Jeremiah 23 and consider the context of the above verse. To be fair and balanced, although the word that I believe was given to me speaks to the Lord’s judgment of the heart of the nation that is sick from the head to the toe, the responsibility for this sickness rests with the church-at-large. The heart of the nation is a reflection of the heart of the church. What we see coming forth from Washington DC, as well as Wall Street, is a reflection of the entire nation, including us who believe. We need to look in the mirror. We are called to be the light of the world, but our light has dimmed greatly as we have wed ourselves to the world and not to Christ. Of course, I am speaking in generalities; there are always exceptions. However, it is time for us collectively to wake up, repent, and seek the Lord in earnest.

Well, let us consider what the Lord spoke to Jeremiah.

**(1) “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD. (2) Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD.** (Jeremiah 23:1-2 NASB)

This seems to be a prophetic word for our day as so many believers are turning away from the organized church. I propose the reason for such migration, apart from a move of the Holy Spirit, is because the pastor-teachers have driven them away. The sickness of the nation starts with the church, and the sickness of the church starts with the pastor-teachers, as well as the other gifts included in the so-called five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11).

Please understand that the word *church* in the following context is the organizational institution that is so often spoken of and recognized throughout Christendom. I continue to hold that what is in the heart of God is the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, the dwelling of God **in spirit** that is growing up **in love** into the likeness of Christ, His complement. See issue #03-0936, March 4, 2009, *The Ecclesia Within the Church*.

Over the past few years, I have read articles about how believers have been leaving the pews, so to speak. Of course, without doubt, the reasons for leaving are many. Nevertheless, several years ago there was a survey done in the UK of what were called “out-of-Church Christians.” Interestingly, of 14,000 people surveyed, 91% of the respondents left “church” because of a decline in traditional Christian moral and doctrinal teaching. The survey concluded that people were leaving because the message given week after week was no different from that of “**the materialistic secular world.**”

By one 2005 estimate, over 112 million people around the world had left their churches. Again, the reasons for leaving vary; however, some said there was no longer a hunger for Jesus; others were disgusted with the emphasis on money: “Just give to the church and all your problems will be solved”; and some were upset over the control wielded by the pastor to make everyone conform to his teaching and emphasis. Well, the list of reasons is obviously quite lengthy, but the point is that people have been pushed out of local churches and their reasons are not off-the-wall or necessarily self-motivated.

Simply, they sensed something was not quite right in what they were being taught and told to do or not to do. There was a hunger inside them that needed to be satisfied.

On a personal level, I have had similar experiences. The first church we attended after the Lord broke into our lives seemed ok at first, but after a year, the spirit of God began to exercise my heart that there were things being taught and held by the group that were not sound, scripturally speaking. The day came when we knew we had to leave in order to grow further in the Lord, and this we did.

The Barna Group specializes in Christian research, and every five years, they survey Americans to see how many hold a “**biblical worldview**,” which, for their survey, is defined as believing there is absolute moral truth, the Bible is accurate, Satan is real, one does not earn his way into heaven, Jesus lived a sinless life while on earth, and God is the all-knowing and all-powerful Creator who is still in charge of the universe. In a recent article titled “*Barna Survey Examines Changes In Worldview Among Christians Over The Past 13 Years*” (Barna Group, Ltd, 2009), it was reported that only 9% of all Americans and **19% of born-again Christians hold to this particular biblical worldview**, and 34% of all adults and **46% of born-again Christians believe in absolute moral truth**. If you are interested in the results, then I encourage you to google *Barna Group* and see for yourself.

The percentages of 19% and 46% of one’s identifying themselves as born-again believers is quite an eye-opener, and supports, if not proves, my point that the church-at-large has been wed to the world and is not its light. Instead, the church is more like the world, especially in its thinking or worldview. In case you miss the significance of these numbers, **81% do not hold to this particular biblical worldview and 54% do not hold to absolute moral truth**. This is staggering!

Further, I recently read an article that dealt with the coming collapse of evangelical Christianity as believers will be living in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21<sup>st</sup> century in which intolerance of Christianity will rise to levels unheard of and unexpected (*The Coming Evangelical Collapse*, March 10, 2009, Michael Spencer). I am not sure that I agree with all the conclusions of this report, however, I do agree with the collapse part; only, after reviewing the Barna survey, I would conclude that the collapse is well on its way. After all, things are already very secular and the church-at-large has been infiltrated with secularism and materialism. It could be argued that evangelical Christianity has already collapsed.

Well, many other surveys could be cited, along with innumerable articles analyzing the condition of the church today and where it is going. We can be sure that views run the full spectrum from things looking very bleak to things getting rosier by the day. I have no desire to try to sort it all out.

So, what is my point? My point is this: the Lord spoke of His shepherds that are destroying and scattering the sheep of His pasture. **“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD**. I propose that this is a prophetic word to the pastor-teachers of the church of our day that also has applied throughout the history of the church. The Lord’s people are being driven away because those entrusted to lead them to green pastures instead have led them to the brown pastures of the world. They have given forth a watered-down and often a secularized gospel, leading many to hold a non-biblical worldview and to live in the light of this view.

The good news is that some of the sheep are not so dumb after all, and, as they have discerned the spirit of God, they have been led out of that which has the Lord’s name on it but has become like the world. It is the Lord’s doing in order to protect His sheep from the shears of the wolves, so to speak.

How can we expect a change for the good in the political leaders of our nation(s), if we, as the Lord’s people, are not much different from them? If we hold the same worldview, then we are no different than they are. How can the leaders of the nations be held accountable and judged by the Lord if He does not hold His shepherds accountable first? As stated previously, judgment begins with the household of God. If the Lord does not judge His own first, then Sodom and Gomorrah will have a legitimate controversy with the Lord in the day of judgment at the great white throne.

The many that have been scattered and driven away are an indictment of the pastor-teachers. **“You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD**. The Lord must attend to the leaders of the church before He attends to the leaders of the nations.