

## UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God*

**IN KING JESUS.**

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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### ***Predestinated According to the Purpose***

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

Over forty years later, I found myself looking up into the heavens on a clear night away from any city lights. Only this time, I was standing on ground in the West African country of Ghana. By the grace of God, my wife and I had traveled to Ghana to share Christ with the brethren. We had the privilege and joy of visiting a village in the bush called *Kudeha*. As I was sharing one night with the brethren in this village, I looked up and was awe-struck by the heavenly view; star after star, all arranged as if by design, all shining and flickering as if to say something to us on earth. There seemed to be far more stars than I recall even as a child. I even saw a huge meteorite with its long fiery tail go blazing through the night sky. The message that I know was placed on my heart for the brethren in this seemingly-forgotten village was *How Beautiful is the Body of Christ*. As I reflect on this time with these brethren, I realize how fitting it was for me to share this message and to be awe-struck with a glorious view of the heavens, for it speaks of Christ's love for His body, and the destiny that awaits the love of His life.

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

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

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us the secret of His will (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him) to have an administration of the complement of the eras [the dispensation of the fullness of times], to head up all [***gather together in one all things; the summing up of all things***] in the Christ — both that in the heavens and that on the earth — in Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand [***predestinated***] ***according to the purpose*** of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will, that we should be for the laud of His glory.... (Ephesians 1:8b-12 CLV [KJV, NASB])

It is God's will that was held in secret but now revealed through Paul, and this secret pertains to the purpose *in* Christ, which speaks of destiny. What is the purpose? What has God purposed *in* Christ for those who are called and chosen *in* Christ? There is really only one purpose. God has purposed to head up, or to gather together, or to sum up all in *the* Christ, both that in the heavens and that on the earth. But notice how Paul connects this purpose and destiny to the body of Christ: *In Whom our lot was cast, being designated beforehand according to the purpose of God!* God has purposed to head up all *in* Christ, and He has predestined a people to be part of this gathering into one. This means that the body of Christ is joined to the very purpose of God in gathering together in one all things in heaven and on earth. This was such a tremendous revelation to Paul that he prayed that the eyes of the heart of the saints would be opened to see it. Paul knew that spiritual sight or, we could say, spiritual vision was required to comprehend it.

I .... do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength, which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all. (Ephesians 1:16-23 CLV)

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

The Father has made Christ head over all, and in this capacity as head over all, He has given Him to the ecclesia, which is His body, His very complement, the complement of the one who is completing the all in all for God the Father to be *All* in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). Do you comprehend what this means to those who are called forth into the body of Christ? It means that the body is the very image or likeness of Christ, and in His likeness, the body is joined with the one who is summing up, gathering up, or heading up all things in the heavens and on the earth. How do you think Christ the head is going to gather together all things in one? Is He just going to say a word? Is He just going to pass His hand over creation? Hardly! He is going to do it through His vessel called His body, the corporate body of Christ. The head of all intimately joined to His body will bring about the purpose of God in the eons to come. Think about it!

The destiny of the body of Christ is heavenly and earthly, celestial and terrestrial, spiritual and physical (material). All together these groupings speak of all things in the heavens and on the earth, and this includes the visible and the invisible. *For by Him all things were created, in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible* (Colossians 1:16). This is to whom the body is joined.