

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)*

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What Does This Mean?

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And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:12 NASB)

The story is well-known among Christians that following the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection, He appeared to His disciples over a forty-day period (Acts 1:3), after which He ascended to His Father’s throne. Peter and the others were witnesses to this fact. It was not fiction. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 waiting in the upper room, another fact that caught the attention of the many that were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast day. Undoubtedly, many who were gathered there either personally saw Jesus crucified or heard of His crucifixion. If they had not heard of His resurrection, at least they knew or thought that the One named Jesus, who performed many miracles and spoke with great authority, was unable to save Himself from death on a cross.

Those that were observing the 120 on that day were amazed and perplexed at what they saw and heard. After all, the disciples were speaking in the native tongues of every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). They should have been speaking as Galileans, but those gathered there heard the Galileans speaking of the mighty deeds of God in their own native languages. They were so perplexed that they asked: “What does this mean?”

As the story goes, Peter stood before the masses and read from the prophet Joel to explain that they were not drunk but were filled with the spirit of God.

Over the last century in particular, there has been much emphasis on speaking in tongues and the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Some would call this the Pentecostal movement. This so-called movement has placed much emphasis on outward manifestations of the spirit and supernatural manifestations of the power of God. There has been a hunger that continues in our day to see God move in powerful and miraculous ways, even to see a repeat of the Pentecost of 2,000 years ago.

However, what is often overlooked is that this particular feast was celebrated with leaven (Leviticus 23:17), meaning it was never meant to be a perfect feast nor was it ever meant to be the end point or fulfillment of the Christian life. It was meant to be only part of the journey into the kingdom of Christ.

The fact of the matter is that the last feast, the feast of Tabernacles, especially the last day, the great day or eighth day of the feast, is a perfect feast, for this is when the Lord’s conquerors will receive their immortal, glorified, spiritual bodies and **from their innermost being will flow rivers of living waters** (John 7:37-38) that will flow out to all the nations on earth as the inhabitants of the world are taught righteousness and as **the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the seas** (Habakkuk 2:14 NASB). We are waiting for this glorious feast.

Now, as I considered Acts 2 and the inquiry of what it all meant, I began to realize that the answer to the question “What does this mean?” does not lie in Joel’s prophecy but in what Peter stated after his reference to the prophecy. It is so simply profound that I believe the so-called church of our day has lost sight of it.

(22) “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— (23) this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and

put Him to death. (24) But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” (Acts 2:22-24 NASB)

“This Jesus God raised up, of which we are all witnesses! Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies [as] Your footstool for Your feet.’” [Psalm 110:1] Therefore, let all the house of Israel know securely [fig., without a doubt] that God made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified!” (Acts 2:32-36 ALT)

What does this mean is answered in these words: **But God raised Him up** and **This Jesus God raised up**. To prove the point, many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles, which left everyone feeling a sense of awe (Acts 2:43). But why were there manifestations of wonders and signs? It was to prove that God had raised up the Son of God, the Living One that died but who is now alive forevermore (Revelation 1:18). This Jesus! There is only one Lord.

In other words, the manifestations of the power of God were not some sideshow to impress people nor were they designed to create some new movement or form a ministry for men to make money. It was for one purpose, and that was to prove that this Jesus was no longer dead and in the grave but that He rose from among the dead and now is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Interestingly, some of the ministries that I have observed that seek manifestations of the power of God seem to place the emphasis on the experience and the people and not on what Peter declared. I cannot recall hearing anyone declare that what they had experienced was a sign that Jesus was raised up.

I believe that the Lord’s people have lost sight of the most important message that we have for the world. Let’s face it, except for remote or severely oppressed areas, the vast majority of the world has heard of Jesus and knows that Christianity is one of the major “religions” of the world. I put religion in quotes to stay true to my belief that Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship.

Please see article #1, September 2007, *Christ, Who Is Our Life*.

The resurrection of Jesus has been relegated by many to a once-a-year holiday misnamed Easter. It is as if everyone knows this as fact, so it is not necessary to declare it, even when God manifests His power in some mighty way. It should be just the opposite. When God moves on someone’s body and brings healing, for example, the response should be to declare to the world that “This Jesus God raised up!” The healing is proof that Jesus was raised from among the dead and He lives.

The message and even the life of the early church was Christ whom God raised from the dead. This was their witness to the world. In fact, He had become their very life. And when they stood in His life, God proved to the world that indeed He had raised His Son from the dead and had exalted Him to His right hand. Jesus, the Son of God, was now seated upon His Father’s throne. The promised Holy Spirit manifested many signs and wonders to not only bring glory to the Son but to declare to Israel that the One they had crucified is the risen One, Messiah, the Christ.

Dear brethren, we need to repent for moving away from this powerful message, which is the entire foundation of our faith in Jesus. **If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep (died) in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied** (1 Corinthians 15:17-19 NASB).

The next time that we see a mighty work of God in our life or in someone else’s life, let us proclaim that Jesus has been raised from among the dead. This is what it means! This is our message for today. In the eon to come, our message will change because we too will be raised from among the dead if we are asleep in Christ or be transfigured if we are alive and remain. Immortality is what it means.