

# 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)

#03-09138

## ***You Turn Back To Dust #1***

August 1, 2009

It can be stated without any doubt that many people are told and believe that there is no such thing as death, for all enter some sort of afterlife upon death. To many, death is merely a portal into another existence whether it is in some place among the stars with golden streets, flowing rivers, and golden fields, or in some holding chamber in the earth, or in some hellish torture chamber where dead but alive souls are hung on spikes with flames of fire nipping at their heels and worms coming out of their ears. Most refer to this as "life after death," but I think a better term for such thinking is "**life in death.**" In other words, people believe that there is life in death, which, if you think about it, is impossible. Life and death are opposites, and for all mankind, either one or the other occurs at any one point in time but not both at the same time. Death is the cessation of life. Consequently, one is either alive or dead.

I have stated in previous writings that there really is not much difference between Christians and pagans or, if you prefer, between believers and unbelievers, in their belief concerning life after death or life in death. Both hold the belief that the soul is immortal and therefore must continue on in death. In other words, death is really about entering immortality because, at death, all are beyond death, having entered into some new form of life, whether good or bad. The difference between the two is in location, condition, and activity in death. Just to be clear, I reject such views, and, I believe, so does Scripture.

I realize that some would counter this with the argument that death deals entirely with the body and that people live outside of the body in some other form. As the teaching goes, Christians occupy some type of spiritual body while walking on the clouds of heaven as they wait for a new body in the "rapture." I have heard some of the weirdest and, I might add, most illogical descriptions of what happens upon death and later at the "rapture."

Now, recently, as I read Psalm 90, I was caught by verses 3-4. I have not used this verse in previous writings on this subject, but I should have, for it truly captures the heart of the matter. In fact, in these two verses, we discover the meaning of death and the way out of death through resurrection.

**(3) You turn man back into dust and say, "Return, O children of men." (4) For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.** (Psalm 90:3-4 NASB)

In Hebrew, the word translated *man* refers to mortal man, which has led some translators to state "You turn **mortals** back into dust." In other words, according to Moses, men are mortal and when they die, they decay into dust. Man was formed of dust (actually, soil) from the ground (Genesis 2:7), and to dust or the soil he returns. Notice that it is the man that is turned back into dust. By definition, mortal man is not immortal. When the body dies, so does the man. Man is comprised of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23), and, when one of these components is removed, there is death of the man or, if you will, the person. All three constitute man, and man ceases being man if any one of the three is removed or ceases functioning. At death, the spirit of life (Genesis 7:22) leaves the body, for the spirit gives life; the soul, which is the experience of the body and, as such, cannot exist apart from the body, ceases, and the experiences go to the unseen or Hades; and the physical body decays into dust. James says that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). Separate the two, and the person dies.

For more explanation on this subject, I refer you to other writings, in particular, my book *The Purpose and Plan of the Eons*, Volume 2, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7, and *The Upward Call* issues #03-0908 (01-12-2009), #03-0955 (04-22-2009), #03-09134 (06-22-2009), and #02-0838 (06-06-2008).

Peter presents us with a compelling proof that, when man dies, the person, not just the body, dies. As he stood before the men of Israel, Peter quoted a prophetic word from David that declared that the soul of Christ would not be abandoned to Hades, the unseen, and His body would not undergo decay (Acts 2:25-28). To stress the point, Peter declared: **“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he 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 NASB).

It needs to be stressed that Peter stated this after the Cross of Christ, and he declared that the person of David, not just his body, died, and he has not ascended into heaven. His decayed body is still in the tomb. In other words, he remains dead to this day, not alive in heaven. This applies to all the dead from Adam to the person that just died as you read this issue. To add to this, Paul declared that the King of kings and Lord of lords alone possesses immortality (1 Timothy 6:15-16). Jesus is the only Man that is beyond death.

But there is good news for all mankind, for Moses quoted the Lord who says, **“Return, O children of men.”** Return from what? Return from the dust! This can only refer to one thing, which is the only way for anyone to return from the dust or the state of death, and that is the resurrection, whether through the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5, 6), which is the better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35), or the second resurrection (Revelation 20:11-15), which follows the 1,000-year reign of Christ of the next eon (Revelation 20:5, 6, 7). Ultimately, everyone born of man will be resurrected from the dead, not all at the same time, but all eventually. Why? Because **this Jesus was raised from the dead!** Resurrection is possible only because God the Father raised His Son from the dead as a prototype, if you will, of what will be done for all mankind on the basis of Jesus being raised from among the dead. If He were not raised up over 2,000 years ago, then death would have remained a tomb for all mankind, with no way out. The good news is that Jesus has made the way; He is the Way, the One who is Life itself.

Please see issues #02-0839 (06-13-2008), *All Who Are in the Tombs Will Hear*, #02-0840 (06-20-2008) *Sons of the Resurrection*, and #03-09133 (06-17-2009) *What Does This Mean?*.

But there is more, for Moses then declared: **For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.** These are not merely rhetorical words. They refer back to the matter of the children of men returning from the dust or being resurrected. Awakening from the state of death will seem to the person as if he or she died moments before. Thousands of years could pass and will pass for many between the two events, but when their mortal bodies are awakened from the dust and brought into immortality, it will seem like yesterday. To the Lord, a thousand years is like one day (2 Peter 3:8). I realize that this goes against the grain of much of what is taught on this matter among Christians, but we must realize that the dead do not know that they are dead, and, when they awaken, they will not know how long they have been dead. **The dead do not know anything** (Ecclesiastes 9:5). This is the mercy and kindness of God.

Both Jesus and Paul tell us that death is a sleep. When Lazarus died and Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus was asleep, the disciples did not understand what He meant. Jesus told them that Lazarus was dead and, as such, defined what He meant by sleep (John 11:11, 14). Paul reinforced Jesus' definition of death being like sleep in his encouragement to the Thessalonians that those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will be raised from among the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Consequently, death is presented as if it were like the sleep that we all experience while in mortal bodies. We go to sleep at night and wake in the morning as if time had stood still. We knew nothing while we slept (barring dreams), as if the passing hours were like yesterday or a watch in the night.

Now, I want to conclude with a very specific point that has been on my heart. Christianity that teaches life in death has done a great disservice to mankind and, frankly, has lost the glory of the good news. Death is the enemy of mankind, and it needs to be dealt with in a way that releases mankind from it; it needs to be abolished by the One who holds the key of death (1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 2:8). All, without exception, are destined to die unless one is of the company that are alive and remain and counted worthy to be transfigured when the Lord comes. If men (mankind) knew that when they die they return to dust and that there is no way out of the state of death unless God raises them up from the dead and this way is through His Son, then the good news would truly be good news. Think about it!