

# 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)

#04-1060

## ***Message of the Unknown God***

June 4, 2010

In issue #04-1057, June 1, 2010, *A Message for the Nations*, I asked the question: If you were called before the leaders of the nations to present the kingdom of God to them, where would you start? I attempted to answer the question with nine related truths, starting with **“In the beginning God.”** We could say that all truth starts with this one declaration. Everything in creation starts with God the Creator and, we need to add, the Sovereign Landlord over all His creation. The Creator God is not an absent landlord, but rather, an actively engaged Landlord. As such, the nations must turn from their **vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them** (Acts 14:15) and acknowledge that **the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of men** and that **Heaven rules** (Daniel 4:25, 26).

But there is one essential and absolute truth that the nations must know. God created through His Son, and the government of the kingdom of God rests on His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). The nations cannot simply acknowledge some non-specific, generic god while ignoring the Son of God. The Son gives specificity to God who is the Father of all, and it is through the Son that all come to know the Father.

**“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”** (Matthew 11:27 NASB)

The name of the Son of God is Jesus, who is also called **Faithful and True, the Word of God, and the King of kings and the Lord of lords** (Revelation 19:11-16). God has installed His King upon Zion, His holy mountain (Psalm 2:6), which refers to the kingdom of God and the embodiment of His kingdom in what is called **New Jerusalem, the holy city, having the glory of God** (Revelation 21:2, 10-11).

These should be self-evident truths to Christians, but we cannot assume that they are to the nations of our day, for they are not.

Now, I want to add to the answer to our question by looking at a tremendous sermon given by Paul, the beloved apostle of Jesus Christ, while he was in Athens, Greece. Paul caught the attention of some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers because he seemed to be **“a proclaimer of strange deities,” –because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection** (Acts 17:18 NASB).

**(22) So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. (23) For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.** (Acts 17:22-23 NASB)

The Greeks had many named gods, but there was one god that was unknown to them. They were unsure of the identity or name of this god; even so, they worshipped this unknown god. Perhaps they had a sense within them that this god stood out from all their other gods. At any rate, Paul was led to use this inscription to enlighten their ignorance by revealing the God they did not know.

**(24a) The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth,...**

In essence, Paul restated Genesis 1:1: **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** I believe that this is the first truth the nations must acknowledge. It all starts with God, the Creator of all things.

**(24b) does not dwell in temples made with hands; (25) nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;...**

According to the Greeks, their gods dwelt in temples and statues made by the hand of man, and they served their gods. But Paul declared that God does not need the help of man for anything, since He is the very source of life itself. But God! God alone gives life. Again, this was Paul's way of restating a truth from Genesis 2:7: **Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [soul]**. As a side note, the Psalmist expands this thought beyond man to include the entire heavenly host. Notice how the word and the breath are joined together: **By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host** (Psalm 33:6 NASB).

**(26) and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,...**

Here Paul was stating the fourth and fifth truths that I believe the nations must hear: The Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of men, and God fixes the times or epochs by His own authority. The nations might think that their beginning is unique or different from other nations, but Paul corrected such thinking. All the nations come from one source; there are no exceptions. The difference among the nations is God's doing, not man's doing. This should make the nations humble, not proud, and is designed to cause the nations to seek God.

**(27) that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; (28) for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' (29) Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.** (Acts 17:27-29 NASB)

Paul went straight to the heart of the matter. Man's very existence is in God. Paul took advantage of the words of the Greek poets to drive home the point that we are all related. I have heard some Christians argue it is wrong to state that all mankind, saved and lost together, are children of God, but Paul refuted such an argument. Instead, he used the thoughts of the poets to drive home the point that this Divine life is not in what man makes or forms out of the things of the earth. In essence, all of us come from the same source of life, and, as such, we all are children of that Source. Paul presented a very similar truth to the Corinthians, a truth the nations must ultimately come to believe as well:

**(5) For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, (6) yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.** (1 Corinthians 8:5-6 NASB)

This leads to Paul's last point. They were ignorant of the truth, but God is now declaring the truth to all.

**(30) Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, (31) because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."** (Acts 17:30-31 NASB)

*Repent* means to turn from idols and other gods and turn to the true, living God. Paul stressed the fifth truth I believe the nations must hear; He fixes (appoints) a day to judge the world in righteousness, and He is going to do this through a Man whom He (God the Father) raised from the dead.

This is the seventh truth for the nations: **This Jesus God raised up** (Acts 2:32), which brings Paul's sermon before the Greeks back to the controversy that he was "**a proclaimer of strange deities,**"—**because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.** The nations must hear of the resurrection of Jesus, for He is mankind's only way into immortality. **Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Resurrection.** Mankind's resurrection into immortality rests with the Man, Jesus!