

# 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)

#04-1068

## ***Resurrection & Transfiguration Into Immortality***

July 12, 2010

Recently, I was encouraged to hear from a dear friend and brother in the Lord who recently ran across two Christians whose eyes have been opened to the essentiality of resurrection and immortality. One person saw that people are not alive *in* death and that resurrection is the only way out of death. Another person came to the realization that immortality is our only hope. It is my understanding that they both came to this simple but profound understanding on their own, which tells me that this was enlightenment from the Holy Spirit.

When the light goes on, so to speak, for Christians, and the light is truth that mainstream pulpit teaching avoids or distorts, then it is time to get excited, for the spirit of God is at work preparing a people for the coming of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

In our day, we should not assume that everyone who claims to be a Christian even believes in the resurrection of Christ. To be sure, most Christians have not fallen for the lie, for the foundation of our faith rests on the fact that Jesus not only died as a man but was raised from among the dead as a man and ascended to the throne of God to sit at the right hand of God, waiting for the day in which He takes the scepter of *the reign of the heavens* to establish His kingdom on this earth. This is a foundational truth.

However, when it comes to the resurrection of the saints and, I might add, all mankind, it is an entirely different matter. The fact of the matter is that there is another foundational truth related to resurrection that seems almost lost amongst many who call themselves evangelicals, and this truth is that the only way out of the state of death for all mankind, including believers, is through resurrection.

I may sound like a broken record, but I believe that this is a bedrock truth of Scripture that has been lost or relegated to the back burner because of the erroneous doctrine of heaven and hell, that *in* death, believers go to heaven forever, **apart** from resurrection, and unbelievers go to hell (a torture chamber of endless flame) forever, **apart** from resurrection.

Many do not deny that a resurrection of the body will occur later, but they place little relevance on it. Why should they if, *in* death, they are alive *in* heaven (or billions are *in* hell)? I emphasize the phrase *in* death because, in fact, this is what many people believe, even if they do not express it this way. The word *afterlife* is used by most to describe this state of *in* death.

Have you noticed the abundance of movies coming out of Hollywood that portray an afterlife? Christians might think that Hollywood has simply taken a Christian concept and distorted it, but I contend that both Christians and Hollywood have adopted something straight out of paganism.

The Bible clearly teaches that death is the cessation of life, and yet most Christians, as a result of the teaching they have received, believe death is merely a portal into another life (i.e., afterlife), which means no one ever dies, including unbelievers, even if they are in hell, which, by the way, they are not.

Jesus' only way out of this world was through death and resurrection, and yet many believe that this is no longer valid on this side of Christ's resurrection. They have fallen for the very same lie which deceived Eve: **"You surely will not die!"** (Genesis 3:4). 930 years after his creation, Adam died; and ever since his one transgression, everyone born of Adam's race, which includes even those of us who believe, dies. There are no exceptions.

## **Death is the opposite of life; it is not another form of life.**

I realize that many will counter this with the argument that the body is what dies, but the spirit and/or the soul live on, for they are immortal, beyond death. Man was made as spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Take one component away, and we cease to exist. We were not created to be a spirit without form. The spirit gives life; take away the spirit, and life departs the body. The soul is connected to the body; take away the body, and the soul ceases to operate. Kill the body, and the spirit and soul of man have no place to reside. The spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Spirit is the life of God given to man. It is the breath of life. The soul returns to the unseen called sheol or hades, not hell. The body returns to the soil of the earth from which it was fashioned when Adam was formed.

This is why Paul devoted a whole section of his first letter to the Corinthians (chapter 15) to defending not only the resurrection of Christ but the resurrection of the saints and, ultimately, of all mankind. Death is an enemy of mankind that must be abolished and will be abolished at the consummation of the eons (1 Corinthians 15:26).

**(16) For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. (17) But if Christ has not been raised, your faith is foolish; you are still in your sins. (18) And then those that fell asleep in Christ were lost. (19) If we only have hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most miserable. (20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead; He became the firstfruit of those having fallen asleep. (21) For since death is through man, also through a Man is a resurrection of the dead; (22) for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.** (1 Corinthians 15:16-22 LITV)

“Fallen asleep” refers to death, not life or even life *in* death. Death is likened to a sleep. When we sleep, especially a deep sleep, we are unconscious (dead) to the world around us. This is where the expression “dead to the world” comes from. In death, all mankind is dead, not only to the world but to heaven or to hell (for those who persist with the concept). According to Paul, the good news is that *in* Adam all die but *in* Christ all will be made alive. Whom do you want to leave out of this “all”? By his use of the expression “resurrection *of* the dead,” Paul referred to all the dead of mankind, not a select few. The expression “resurrection *from* the dead” or “resurrection *from among* the dead” refers to a more select group that will precede the bulk of mankind.

Scripture clearly teaches that there are two resurrections: 1) **the first resurrection** (Revelation 20:4-6), which is also called “the *out*-resurrection” (Philippians 3:11 WAET), “a *better* resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35), and “the resurrection *from* the dead” (Mark 9:9-10; Luke 20:34-36); and 2) **the second resurrection**, which is also called “a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (Luke 14:13-14; Acts 24:14-15), “a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29), “the resurrection on the last day” (John 11:23-24), and the resurrection of “the dead, the great and the small” (Revelation 20:11-12). The conquerors will appear at the first resurrection, and the believers who did not conquer will appear at the second resurrection (resurrection of the righteous and of life), **saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15), along with the rest of mankind (resurrection of the wicked and of judgment) that will experience a second death, not of the body but of works.

Dear brethren, resurrection and transfiguration are the only way into immortality. Many Christians see their hope through the prism of what is commonly called *eternal life*, as if we have it while we occupy bodies of death (mortal bodies). No! We must come into immortality. Today, only the King of kings and Lord of lords possesses immortality (1 Timothy 6:15-16). We wait for the Son to come from heaven to change us into His immortal life. Those who are asleep in Jesus must be raised from the dead into life and transfigured into His image, and those who are alive and remain when He comes must be transfigured into His image as well. This is our hope, our fondest expectation. Without resurrection and transfiguration into immortality, we have no future, no destiny.

Praise God; the Son of God has been raised from the dead, and He lives to bring all mankind into immortality, not all at the same time or in the same manner, but all eventually. When the consummation of the eons comes at Creation’s Jubilee, **God will be all in all new**. No more death of any kind; (first death [body] or second death [works, deeds]), just life!