

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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WHERE WERE YOU?

Each morning as I eat my breakfast, which for me is the best meal of the day, I read the local newspaper. As I peruse local and world events, my mind often gets caught up in what is going on in the heart and mind of mankind. I often muse over the condition of what many call “the church” of our day, which to me seems to be in a state of confusion, as if wandering in a wilderness and not knowing which way to turn. It seems that many have lost their compass, or lost sight of the sun, or are blinded by a dust storm. Of course, these are metaphors for the real thing: compass refers to the leading of the spirit of God; the sun refers to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and blinded by a dust storm refers to being blinded by the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4.4).

We need to continually remind ourselves that the church is really *the ecclesia* (out-called), which is the body of Christ, and that the body has only one vision, and that is of Christ, the Head of the body. The body of Christ is not an institution of the world that many call “the church”; it is not to be fashioned after the businesses and organizations of the world. It is of an entirely different realm. It is of the realm of the One who said: “**My kingdom is not of this realm**” (John 18.36). It is of the spiritual realm and is seated among the celestials in Christ (Ephesians 1.3; 2.6). Lose this vision and you have lost sight of your Head, and you are wandering in the wilderness of this world, blinded by the god of this world. You have become distracted from the truth of God’s word!

Recently, I read several articles about Christians, and it caused my brain to kick into overdrive and ask: What is going on? What is it with Christians these days?

Some “churches,” as well as denominations, are embracing **environmentalism**, which some categorize as a *liberal* agenda. Some groups are joining forces with this movement of the world. After all, they state that what is missing is “the faith connection.” According to one article, “a national evangelical leader” is encouraging Christians to become stewards of the earth. He stated: “Everyone of vision is going to have to do our part. We have to recruit people to our way of thinking because it is God’s way of thinking because to do otherwise is sinful. It’s a moral issue. Environmental degradation is an offense against God.” Really? Is this Biblically true? Does Scripture tell us that the ecclesia is to be caught up in environmentalism, especially the movement to reverse climate change?

The whole matter of climate change (global warming) is part of a media and political frenzy that mirrors the cry of “Armageddon is coming” that we have heard for years. Everything bad is now being linked to global climate change. There was a good report on how an endangered species of deer found in Florida has seen a significant population increase. It was a good report for the deer, which look more like big dogs and do not seem to fear man. However, rather than report on the good news and leave it at that, the report concluded that it might all be for naught because in 100 years, the islands they populate will be under water due to global warming.

Oh, we need to be reminded that God alone is the Sovereign of His creation, and He knows what He is doing. Consider God’s conversation with Job when He asked: **Where were you...? Can you...? Do you know...? Who can...?**

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”... Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its

season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that an abundance of water will cover you? Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind? Who can count the clouds by wisdom, or tip the water jars of the heavens, when the dust hardens into a mass and the clods stick together?" (Job 38.4, 31-38 NASB)

Sure does sound like God has control of the heavens, as well as the atmosphere of the earth. And yet, man shakes his fist at God and says: "Don't bother us; we can handle this on our own. We'll get ourselves out of this mess." Some churches have bought into this line of thinking. It is their new vision. As God asked Job, so do these brethren need to be asked: Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that an abundance of water will cover you? Who can count the clouds by wisdom, or tip the water jars of the heavens, when the dust hardens into a mass and the clods stick together?

Now, do not take what I have to say on this matter to mean that I am against being good stewards of our earth. I am all in support of good stewardship. My graduate school education was in environmental protection with emphasis on air pollution, and I worked in this field for over 25 years. In addition, I have traveled to several continents of the world and have seen firsthand areas that were heavily polluted; the air was polluted from diesel trucks, the land was covered with trash, and most of the trees and underbrush were burned, producing a scorched landscape. I support having clean air and water, and I support seeing trash properly disposed of and materials recycled. I even support conservation of our resources. So, I state this only to make the point that I am not one who thinks we should ignore our environment.

However, what I cannot support is seeing the so-called church of our day become embroiled in a so-called new vision that is being fashioned by the media and the politicians. It is as if many today are saying that the vision of Christ and our destiny in Christ, as well as the destiny of the entire earth and all of mankind, is no longer needed, or is inadequate for modern man, or is no longer our sole message, or must be joined with one of many visions held by the lost world. What has happened to the ecclesia being **stewards of the mysteries of God in Christ** (1 Corinthians 4.1)? Have some of the Lord's people cast aside the message entrusted to the body of Christ? If the ecclesia does not speak forth the secrets of Christ, then who will? We need to be reminded that many in these modern-day movements are blatantly against Christ. What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6.15)?

Is this what the true ecclesia of God, which is the body of Christ, is to be aligned with in these last days? How about turning to the Bible to see what God has to say on the matter? Instead, why not consider God's word to us that He is going to shake the heavens and the earth?

"For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.'" ... And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." (Haggai 2.6; Hebrews 12.26 NASB)

God is going to do it! If God Himself brings about change in our climate to get the attention of mankind, are we to declare that it is a moral issue and if we do nothing about it, then it is a sin? Actually, **it is sin if we try to reverse God's judgment upon this world**. Think about it! The real sin is that we do not see that God is after our moral character. He is after a change of mind, a turning from man's ways to God's ways; He is after repentance. He is after a dramatic change in the heart of mankind, and this is to be part of the message of the ecclesia of Christ. If we lose this message, then we are no longer the salt of the earth or the light of the world.

Let us not be distracted with the message of the world; let us lift up Christ, the Savior of the world.