

# 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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## ***The Comeback***

The big news following Super Bowl LI was how the New England Patriots staged the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history. Quarterback Tom Brady was hailed as a hero, the comeback kid. Everywhere I went the next day, it seemed as if everyone was talking about the great comeback. As I considered this, the thought came to me as to how easy it is for people to get all excited and lift up sports figures and others as heroes. People are always looking for someone who achieves greatness; someone they can look up to, often to the point of idolizing the person. This is why we call them *idols*.

Then, the thought hit me: the greatest comeback in all the history of the world and mankind occurred about 2,000 years ago, when the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was crucified and three days later raised from the dead by His Heavenly Father, according to the Spirit of holiness. He was dead, but He came alive. He came back from the dead, and today is alive and seated at the right hand of God the Father, having been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and the right to give life to all. No man had or has ever done such a thing or has ever had such a great comeback. Now, Jesus is the Pattern Son for all of mankind that will rise from the dead and come into life, into the life of the Son. This is great news. This is something to truly get excited about. The achievement of God's Son far exceeds all the greatest achievements of mankind put together. His achievement is the absolute, unequivocal greatest of all time that cannot be undone, outdone, or repeated by anyone in heaven or on earth. Jesus has defeated the greatest enemy of mankind, and that is death, and today He holds the keys.

**And when I perceived Him, I fall at His feet as dead. And He places His right hand on me, saying, "Do not fear! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One: and I became dead, and lo! living am I for the eons of the eons. (Amen!) And I have the keys of death and of the unseen."** (Revelation 1.17-18 CLV)

So, why isn't all of mankind hailing Jesus as the greatest hero of all time and one to extol as the greatest man that has ever walked this earth and that is now alive and waiting to return to this earth to set the nations free and lead the world into true righteousness, justice, and peace? Why?

Jesus is the King of kings, and righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. He has the right to this earth, for the Father has declared: **'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.'** The death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Son has forever settled who is the rightful heir of the nations and the earth.

He came to this earth to reveal the beating heart of the universe. The beating heart of all is His Father, who is love. There is only **one God, the Father, from whom are all things, for from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things**. Jesus was in absolute obedience to His Father's will, all the way to the cross; consequently, **He (the Father) raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come**. Is there any doubt that the nations are His inheritance and the earth His possession? Today, there is **only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things**. These are not mere words to be lumped together with all the words of mankind; they are absolute truths from God the Father that extol the greatness of His Son and lift Him to the heights of glory.

We could go on and on extolling the greatness of Jesus, but the question still begs for an answer. Why isn't all of mankind hailing Jesus as the greatest hero of all time and one to extol as the greatest man that has ever walked this

earth and that is now alive and waiting to return to this earth to set the nations free and lead the world into true righteousness, justice, and peace? Why? Without doubt, believers could come up with many answers, many of which would be based on their doctrinal bent.

Regarding the world or the nations, there are a few answers. First, the world-at-large has been blinded to this truth. The world apart from Christ has no spiritual discernment. Those of the world apart from Christ simply have no way to see this great truth. Second, it isn't the time for it. God has appointed times, and it is not the time for the eyes of the world to be opened to the truth. Jesus Himself said that times or epochs are fixed by the Father, by His own authority (Acts 1.7). The timing is based on the return of the Lord to this earth to establish and manifest His Kingdom. The third answer deals with the battle that is in the heavenlies. As Paul wrote, there is **a struggle going on against the principalities, against the authorities, against the world-holders, of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies.** (Ephesians 6.12). Of course, the Lord's people are in this battle, but so is the world, even though they do not know it. The world, especially today, is in the midst of a raging battle in which wicked spiritual forces in the heavenlies seek to deceive and keep mankind in bondage to the carnal flesh and away from the Lord. These forces continually try to stir the pot, so to speak, so that it is in a raging boil and never settles down to a calm or a ripple. This very day, the world seems to be on the verge of an insanity unlike any we have seen in recent years. Without doubt, this is not the first time humanity has reached such heights of carnality (i.e., Noahic pre-flood days), but it sure is an eye-opener in our day. The source behind the scenes is the wicked spiritual forces stirring up the heart of man with destructive and delusional thinking and rage that defies logic.

But what about the Lord's people, or what we call the *church*? Is Jesus truly our hero? Frankly, the term *hero* falls far short of the Lord Jesus and, in some ways, seems inappropriate, but let us remain along this line for the sake of discussion. Are we extoling His virtue as the One who has overcome death and now gives life to all? He is the spiritual, heavenly Life-giving Spirit Man in glory. In Christ, all shall be made alive. Or, have we relegated this great truth to what many call *Easter*; you know, the holiday with the rabbit and the egg hunts? Have we too become blinded by the many things of the world and by our own prejudices, ideologies, political persuasions, doctrinal templates and systematic theologies, causes, strategies, and the list goes on? Have we become distracted by many things, even things that might seem quite legitimate, instead of being caught up by the one thing, which is the Person of the Lord Jesus who overcame death, having the greatest comeback in the 6,000-year history of mankind, as we know it?

The latest controversy in the United States is the question of immigration and how to protect the nation from those who might seek to destroy us. A recent news article reported that evangelicals are divided over this issue, some wanting a free flow of immigrants and others wanting strong vetting. Clearly, the wicked dark forces in the heavenlies are stirring the pot over this important issue. What caught my attention was a picture of a woman protestor holding a sign that read: *Jesus was a refugee*. Really? Is this our message to the world? Such things drag Jesus down to the level of fallen humanity instead of raising Him to the heights of glory. True; He had no place to lay His head and His kingdom is not of this realm (i.e., of man). However, He is the Creator of all and all things are in Him and upheld by Him. As already stated, He possesses the whole earth. Does this sound like a refugee? Jesus cannot and must not be reduced to a slogan on a protestor's poster. He is in all, through all, for all, by all, and any other preposition you might think of. Simply, He is ALL in all.

Our message to the world is not very complex, but we have become distracted with many messages with His name on it but without Him *being* the message. Mankind has never been able to overcome or defeat death, but Jesus has done it for us, and now He is the way for us to come into true life, the very life of God. Paul delivered the good news that he received: **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve** (and many more as proof of His resurrection). **He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.** The day is coming when what was written many years ago will be shouted for all the universe to hear: **"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death where is your sting?"** (1 Corinthians 15.3-5, 25-26, 54-55). This is our expectation in Christ. As they say, we need to get back on message. His first comeback is followed by a second comeback. The One who had the greatest comeback is coming back to this earth once again, ALIVE, never to leave it subject to dark forces ever again. Hallelujah!