

# 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 REIGN OF THE HEAVENS***

**And in those days cometh John the Baptist, proclaiming in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Reform, for come nigh hath the reign of the heavens’.... (Matthew 3.1-2 YLT)**

**‘For I say to you, that if your righteousness may not abound above that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye may not enter to the reign of the heavens.’ (Matthew 5.20 YLT)**

**I say to you, that many from east and west shall come and recline (at meat) with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the reign of the heavens.... (Matthew 8.11 YLT)**

**‘And, going on, proclaim saying that, the reign of the heavens hath come nigh’.... (Matthew 10.7 YLT)**

In some of my writings, I use the expression *the reign of the heavens* to refer to the coming kingdom of Christ and the conqueror’s call to enter this reign. Some might think that this refers to leaving this earth and “going to heaven”; this is the view held by so many in our day. This is not what I mean when I use this expression; so to prevent a wrong impression, it is needful to explain *the reign of the heavens*.

First of all, the expression is discovered in *Young’s Literal Translation*, as noted in the above verses. Most translations use the phrase *the kingdom of heaven*. However, this phrase is not the most accurate, for in the Greek it is **the heavens**, and it should read *the kingdom of the heavens*. It should be noted that regardless of which expression is used, the phrase is unique to the Gospel of Matthew, where it is used 32 times.

The New Testament starts with the Gospel of Matthew for a very good reason; it presents the King and the Kingdom, which is a central theme of Scripture. Much of prophetic Scripture points to one glorious event: the day in which God’s Son—His Anointed King, Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world—will come to this earth and take the scepter of the kingdoms of our present world system to rule and reign for 1,000 years. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to God’s King, but He has not begun to exercise His absolute reign over this earth. This day is coming soon, and we must be readied in *this* day to stand in His presence in *His* day.

There is some merit in using the phrase *the reign of the heavens*. The word *kingdom*, as translated from the Greek word *basileia*, means “reign.” The word *reign* implies action (ruling, governing), and *the heavens* describe where the action is occurring or from where it originates. Scripture declares that **the heavens do rule** (Daniel 4.26 ASV). Why? Because God’s realm is the heavens, and He rules from His realm! However, this must be differentiated from the sky above and outer space that are also referred to as the heavens. God is spirit and His realm is the spirit (or, spiritual) realm, which is often called the *heavenly* or *celestial* realm. Angels rule over this earth from this realm. We cannot see the spirit realm unless God peels back the curtain for us to see it as He did for Paul, John, and others. We cannot see the angels that are spirit beings unless they manifest themselves to us and we are fortunate enough to know that we are seeing an angel.

Today, our world system is ruled by fallen man along with the powers of darkness among the celestials (i.e., evil angelic host), and yet God's rule is in the heart of His people on earth who are obedient to His voice and His commands. We could best describe the rule of our world today as a mixture of good and evil. But in the next eon, the rule of Christ will overtake this world system to establish a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace. For 1,000 years, the kingdom of Christ will expand and overtake this earth until the glory of God fills it. Thus, *the reign of the heavens* will come to this earth. God, through His Son and the conquerors of Christ, His complement, will rule and reign over this earth. **“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth”** (Revelation 5.10 NASB; also Revelation 20.6; 22.5).

Given the emphasis throughout the evangelical community on “going to heaven,” “walking on streets of gold,” and “living in heavenly mansions forever and ever,” it is vital that we clearly understand what *heaven* means. Unfortunately, based on these expressions, it is apparent that many approach heaven on strictly a material level; or, we could say, they see it spatially. After all, walking on streets of gold or living in mansions is simply taking something of this earth and transferring it to another place called *heaven*. To be sure, their vision is of streets that are much nicer and homes that are much bigger and fancier than anything on earth. But all they have done is create a utopia some place in the far reaches of the universe. After all, in the so-called *rapture*, they see themselves flying off in the air traversing space while avoiding a collision with the stars. Well, some see themselves in the good ol' gospel ship; presumably, it will have all the latest navigational technology.

But, are we to look at heaven in such a fashion? Is it to be seen entirely as a place, even if it is a much more glorious and peaceful place? This raises the question: What is heaven? It is interesting that after the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai and spoke to the sons of Israel, He spoke to Moses: **“Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven’”** (Exodus 20.22 NASB). Obviously, heaven was not zillions of light years away, as many perceive it today. Where was heaven in that day? It was where the Lord was. Where was the Lord? He was on the mount! Thus, heaven came to earth, for wherever the Lord is, there is heaven.

We must see that heaven, in relation to the Lord, is another dimensional reality. It is the spirit realm. Those who are counted worthy to attain to the next eon to rule and reign with Christ will enter this realm, and as they do, they will bring the rule of Christ to the nations of the earth. As the angels do today, they will be able to traverse the celestial realm and the physical realm of time and space that will continue on earth. In other words, they will exist in both God's realm and man's realm on earth, and as they do, they will bring *the reign of the heavens*, God's rule, to the nations of the earth. They will teach the nations God's way of rule and His divine laws, which will lead mankind to the utopia it has elusively sought since the fall of Adam. But it will be on earth!

Today, the celestial rulers are the angels; but when the kingdom of God's Son comes, the rulers will be the ones who conquered through Christ while in their bodies of death. The writer of the Hebrews letter, which was written with the coming Kingdom Age in view, declared: **For not to messengers [angels] does He subject the impending inhabited earth [world], concerning which we are speaking** (Hebrews 2.5 CV [NASB]). Only the called and chosen will have this privilege, for Jesus warned: **“Not everyone who is saying to me, ‘Lord, lord,’ shall come into the reign of the heavens; but he who is doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens”** (Matthew 7.21 YLT). Obeying the will of God is the key to entering *the reign of the heavens*. Today, the Holy Spirit is preparing an obedient people, the conquerors, who will be brought into the place of dominion (ruling and reigning with Christ), and this requires those who have believed on Jesus (born from above, the seed of Christ residing within) to walk worthy of **the God who calls them into His own kingdom and glory** (1 Thessalonians 2.12). Hebrews describes it as the bringing of **many sons unto glory** (Hebrews 2.10).

This is what it means to enter *the reign of the heavens* in the next eon. It is a glorious privilege for all who conquer through Christ in this day. Can you imagine any greater vocation than bringing the reign of Christ to the nations? Let us conquer so that we might reign with Christ!