

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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HAMMER THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES #1

I have been considering this question: What will be the message of the conquerors (overcomers) of Christ when they are commanded to go forth to the nations as the Kingdom or Tabernacles Age commences? After all, the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all the nations. As I considered this question, while watching the nightly newscast on television one evening, I was struck by the amount of violence committed each day in our country due to hand guns and assault rifles. Some cities in the US seem to have an epidemic of gun violence. Earlier in the year, the state of Virginia commemorated the first anniversary of the massacre of students and faculty at Virginia Tech. If we extend the coverage out to the world, the magnitude of violence due to weapons of all kinds grows considerably; consider the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the threat of Iran and North Korea developing nuclear bombs, or the potential threat of Israel using its “undeclared” nuclear arsenal to neutralize Iran. Need we be reminded that the US was the first to build and use an atomic bomb against mankind! And this was from a nation that purports itself as Christian, even more so sixty or more years ago. Surely, none of this paints, as the saying goes, a very pretty picture.

To add to this thought, in the US the phrase *God and guns* is often identified with those called conservative Christians, as if God is pro-gun. It seems that to some, perhaps many Christians, it is a good thing, a right and necessary thing, even a God-given right that people have to bear arms in accordance with the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. But is God pro-gun when guns and all sorts of other weapons are used to break His command against murder? The argument is often made that guns do not kill, people do; and that there are other uses for guns, such as hunting and target practice. These are valid arguments.

Well, as I contemplated all the above, the thought came to me that Scripture clearly tells us the first message that the conquerors, the sons of glory, will take to the nations will be on the very matter of disarmament. In other words, the command or law of God in the next age will require that all implements of war be removed and that mankind no longer learns or trains for war. Both Isaiah and Micah prophesy the exact same words.

Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war. (Isaiah 2.2-4 NASB; also Micah 4.1-3)

The *first* thing to note in these verses is that they speak of the last days, which refer to the last 1,000 years for our present heaven and earth before the day of God comes into view in which all is new. The Kingdom or Tabernacles Age encompasses the last days.

The *second* thing to note is that in Scripture, the word *mountain* often symbolizes a kingdom. In interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about a great statue, Daniel declared that the stone that struck

the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2.35). The stone represents the kingdom of Christ that will fill the whole earth in the last days. Both Isaiah and Micah call it the chief of the mountains.

The *third* thing to note is that the nations will seek out the kingdom of Christ to learn the ways of the Lord and to walk in them. In other words, they will seek to know the laws of God that will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Zion refers to the government of God or *the reign of the heavens* on earth, and Jerusalem refers to the city of God manifested through His people on earth, specifically the conquerors who are counted worthy of the kingdom of God to rule and reign with Christ and to judge the world (1 Corinthians 6.2). Jerusalem represents the dwelling of God *in* spirit.

The *fourth* thing to note, which is the heart of the matter under discussion, is that one of the first words of the Lord to go forth to the nations will be to hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. In other words, the nations will be commanded to give up every weapon that is used to train for and learn war. Why? So that the nations will never war again! If there is no more war, then there can be no more senseless killing in the name of nations and for the purpose of gaining power over others.

Some might protest that this does not mean that the Lord will ban all guns. But why not? After all, isn't killing of any kind a type of declaration of war over another, and aren't guns the primary choice of weapons to kill others? This does not mean that murder will be totally absent during the next eon. Cain most likely killed his brother Abel with one of the tools of his trade, and so it will be possible to do likewise until the heart of mankind is fully won to the love of God. However, to end war will require that all weaponry be removed, and this, of necessity, must include guns.

Dear brethren, I fear that many of us have become warriors in the wrong sense. We have joined our hearts with the spirit of the world that seeks to destroy evil by physical force. I must confess that I have been on the wrong side of this issue for many years, but I have since repented. If we are found worthy to reign with Christ in His kingdom, our message for the nations will be peace, not war; love, not hatred; reconciliation, not division. Shouldn't this message be in our heart today if we are to take it to the nations in the age to come? Surely, if we are being trained to reign with Christ, the attitude of our heart should be changing to conform to the very character of the coming kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Paul, the apostle who no longer knew anyone and, we could say, anything according to the flesh, has given us the word of the Lord on the nature of our battle.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (2 Corinthians 10.3-4 NASB)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6.12 NASB)

This is our battle in this day. We do not use the weapons of flesh, which includes guns; we use prayer and the word of God. Our struggle is with the spiritual forces that drive mankind to kill one another, and this requires that we battle *in* spirit, not according to the flesh. The responsibility for the defense of nations rests with government, not with Christians.

Let us leave the battle of the flesh with the leaders of the nations. Let us take up our proper spiritual position.

Let us begin to think and act as ones who will take the law and the word of the Lord to the nations.