

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)

#03-0943

Kingdom Thoughts #3.

March 20, 2009

Kingdom Building?

To wrap up my present musings over the matter of kingdom building, I offer a few random thoughts or fragments. I will just list them without trying to connect all the dots.

First, the sign that the kingdom has come, apart from Christ Himself appearing in person to the nations, is when the leaders of the nations acknowledge that there is only one kingdom and one King of the nations and His name is Jesus, the King of kings, the Lord of Lords, the Son of God, and these leaders actively seek to know and apply God's divine law. In other words, the leaders of the nations acknowledge the Son's right over the earth, and they begin to turn to the Lord for answers. Of course, in that day, the Lord's conquerors will be ready to give the answers. It is the divine law that establishes the kingdom of Christ on earth among the nations. The law does not have to be created, for it is God's law. It needs to be applied, and it could be argued that the kingdom will be built to the degree the law is accepted and administered throughout a nation. However, I see it not so much as building as I do submitting. In other words, the kingdom of Christ is about the rule and reign of Christ as administered through His conquerors.

Second, during the oncoming eon, some nations will not submit willingly to *the reign of the heavens* in their affairs of state, so there will remain some opposition to God's Son and His kingdom. We know this to be a fact, for Scripture informs us that there will be a revolt by some nations against the Lord's kingdom nations at the end of the millennial age (Revelation 20.7-10). It will take the thousand years of the kingdom to remove and subdue all the enemies from the kingdom of our Lord. Consequently, those counted worthy to reign with Christ in the oncoming eon will have work to do as they participate with Christ in heading up all in the heavens and on the earth. The conquerors will not be sitting on clouds drinking heavenly mint juleps (perhaps, juice) or walking on golden streets with day after day of leisure. If you want to call this kingdom building, then so be it.

Third, in reference to the church being in Babylonian captivity and submitting to its rule over our lives, some might argue that this cannot be so. Some might think that this is a sign of spiritual weakness and defeat. After all, aren't we in spiritual warfare and aren't we to battle to change things? Well, it is true we are in battle, but the key is the word *spiritual*. We are to engage the powers of darkness that have powerful influence over what is occurring throughout the world and in the nations, and that seek to devour those of us who are going on in the Lord. But this does not mean that we are to engage Babylon to infiltrate it and clean it up. Submitting to Babylon while in captivity is not spiritual weakness. In fact, it is the greatest spiritual strength to know how to live under Babylonian captivity, to endure until release comes, and to learn the ways of the Lord when so much around us stands in opposition to His kingdom. It is in captivity where we are taught by the spirit of God and where we are to be living examples of ones who **sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts** (1 Peter 3.15). After all, Paul wrote to the believers in Rome while under the Roman government: **Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities** (Romans 13:1 NASB). He did not tell them to infiltrate and change the form of government. He said to be in subjection to the authorities. And, I believe we are to do this until the kingdom of Christ comes to this earth.

Fourth, some might question: Can't we build the kingdom by establishing things outside of mystery Babylon? For example, can we not have our own schools where we teach from the Bible, our own financial institutions where we can lend money without interest, our own judicial court of elders (judges) by which we can settle disputes among believers, our own hospice and elder care facilities? The

answer is yes. I see no biblical reason why these things cannot or should not be done, so long as man's law does not prohibit such things. One example from Scripture is where Paul chided the Corinthians for trying to settle disputes among the brethren by going to man's court (1 Corinthians 6:1-11). The fact of the matter is that there are Christian groups that do some of these things to the degree that they are allowed. The Amish come to mind, a group of believers that are very much respected for their humility and simple lifestyle. Others have built various types of facilities to care for the elderly, widows, and orphans. These are good works and very much based on the law of love. The church should have been doing much more of this over the last fifty years or so, rather than building mega-churches and huge facilities that offer entertainment to its "members."

But this sort of building is not infiltrating Babylon; it is working outside it to the degree that it is allowed. If the entire church were engaged in building itself up in love in this manner of caring for one another, then the world would truly begin to see the kingdom of our Lord in operation. I suspect that, in the next eon, this is how the nations will begin to see the true operation of the Lord's kingdom. In other words, the ecclesia will finally come into the prayer that our beloved Lord lifted up to His Father.

(20) "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; (21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; (23) I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (24) Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (25) O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; (26) and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:20-26 NASB)

This prayer will not go unanswered as the ecclesia of God is brought into unity and the law of love is fully written on their hearts in such a powerful way that the world will see the love of God in them. In that day, the world will desire to have what the ecclesia has.

Fifth, my closing thought deals with **the preeminence of Christ**. In much of the teaching or preaching on kingdom building, I often sense that the whole notion of the kingdom actually overshadows the Lord Himself, the King. I am not saying that His name is not lifted up periodically, for it is. But what I am saying is that the emphasis seems to shift to the ones that are exhorted to get out of their religious boxes and start building. In other words, the emphasis is on the so-called builders and power manifested through them, with the Lord Jesus in prominence but not in preeminence.

There is no kingdom apart from a king, just as there is no authority apart from a king. We need to keep in mind that the kingdom is about the Son of God receiving His inheritance and possession. Read Psalm 2. Yes; we are part of the kingdom and the conquerors, as His complement, will be the major players and mover and shakers in His kingdom, but it is still His kingdom, and we need to keep Him in the forefront at all times. But it is more than this, for He is our Head, and as the Head of the ecclesia, He is to have the preeminence in all things.

And he is the head of the body, the church [ecclesia]: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18 ASV [CV])

When Christ is preeminent in all things, then the kingdom has come! We don't have to build it; we are to hold fast to our Head who is the kingdom, and, as we do, the very character and nature of His kingdom, which is His character and nature, will be manifested in glory. His glory is the perfect expression of love that never fails!