

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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JANUARY 1, 2008

YET ONCE MORE, I WILL SHAKE!

As a new year begins, it is common practice to reflect on what transpired in the year that has just passed and to predict the events of the new year. Based on a cursory review, we can rightfully say that 2007 was a year of shaking.

Reviewing the top news stories of 2007, we discover that there were many significant natural disasters that affected millions of people and caused loss of life and tremendous loss of property. Major flooding caused by storms occurred in Mexico, Central America, Indonesia, South Asia (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh), North Korea, China, and the United States. The South Asia flooding was reported as "the worst in living memory" for that area: 2,000 were killed, 30 million people were displaced from their homes, and property damaged was assessed at \$120 billion. Hurricane Felix, a category 5 storm that registered 160 mph winds, killed over 100 people. The floods in Mexico left 80% of some areas under water. Add to these an 8.0 earthquake in Peru that killed 500 and left 50,000 homeless, forest fires in Greece that burned a half-million acres and killed 70, and the major forest fires and drought that hit the United States, and we must conclude that 2007 was a very active year for natural disasters. However, it wasn't just natural disasters that were major news stories, for some of the big stories, at least in the United States, involved acts of violence, such as the killing rampage at Virginia Tech, and, near the end of the year, the shooting spree that occurred at a Nebraska shopping mall and then at a mega church in Colorado.

Considering 2008, undoubtedly, there are many who are prophesying what will come about during this year. It is safe to assume that there are some, if not many, saying that the Lord will return this year. This is nothing new since it seems that every year there are people proclaiming His return. I don't fault anyone having this grand hope, for we should desire to see the love of our life. As the years pass by, the odds increase that one day those proclaiming His return will be right. Others are saying that 2008 is the year that the world will move into tribulation. With financial markets in crisis, some say we are on the brink of an economic recession, if not outright depression. They proclaim that an economic/financial judgment is coming to the United States that obviously will affect the world as well. Some see other judgments coming that will be in the judicial and political realms. Yet, there is a huge ground swell of activity, emotion, and outcry to save our planet from global climate change, as if man can actually control this huge juggernaut on which we live. People are warning of dire things happening around the world as the climate changes, and they are blaming much of it on man's activities and singling out the industrialized nations, especially the United States. Interestingly, a recent U.N. climate-change conference held in Bali was rattled by a 5.4 magnitude tremor. Was the Lord sending a message?

Undoubtedly, some see only doom and gloom and others see merely the ebb and flow of change, both good and bad, that happens across the globe. Perhaps 2007 was no better or worse when all the barometers that could be used to take the pulse of a period of time are averaged out. After all, it seems that the intensity of events from year to year, or decade to decade, or century to century is like the ocean that ebbs and flows. Isn't this the way it has been since the dawn of mankind and, especially, since the dawn of recorded history? But, is the intensity of the ebb and flow increasing, as if it is like a pendulum that is erratically swinging from left to right, or like a drunken sailor? If so, could there be a reason? What is behind this swinging pendulum? Actually, the answer is related to who is behind the swinging. The answer is discovered in Scripture.

“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. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and in this place I will give peace,’ declares the LORD of hosts.” (Haggai 2.6-9 NASB)

Then the word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, “Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.’ ‘On that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,’” declares the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2.20-23 NASB)

Haggai prophesied not only of the rebuilding of the Lord’s house in his day but the building that will occur in the next eon when a type of the historical Zerubbabel, God’s King, Immanuel (God with us!), will come from heaven to take the scepter of the kingdom of the heavens to reign over this earth. But in so doing, something must take place in the heavens and on the earth, and that is what is called shaking. Isaiah also prophesied that the Lord will make the heavens tremble and the earth will be shaken from its place (Isaiah 13.13). The Lord declares that He will not only shake the heavens and the earth but also the nations and the thrones and the kingdoms of the nations. He is going to overthrow them all. Why? The answer is given to us in the epistle to the Hebrews in which Haggai is quoted.

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.” This expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12.26-29 NASB)

Yet once more the Lord will shake. Surely, shaking is not a new thing to the Lord. He shook this earth before it was restored in six days; He shook it in Noah’s day when the flood came upon the earth; He shook it when Israel stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai as He revealed His intent to establish His kingdom in the heart of a people; He shook it as the Son of God hung on a cross for the sin of the world; and He will shake it once more as He brings forth His kingdom to this earth to engulf all the nations so that there is only one King and one Lord over the earth. As the end of our present wicked eon comes into sharper focus, there will be an increased intensity the likes of which mankind has never experienced until mankind sees the failure of his ways and turns to the Lord.

Why the shaking? Because everything must be shaken of man’s kingdoms so that all that remains is that of God’s kingdom. There will be only one kingdom in the next eon, and it is the kingdom of Christ. We receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken. When all the kingdoms of this earth have been shaken to dust, which not only includes nations but the kingdoms of the financial, judicial, political, social, and religious realms, out from the dust will rise the one true kingdom that has been in the heart and purpose of God, with His Son seated on the throne. Although we might not know the level of intensity of the shaking that will occur during 2008, or we might not know the exact nature of the events to occur, we can be assured of one thing: **Yet once more, I will shake!**