

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)

#04-1051

America – A Christian Nation?

May 15, 2010

The last issue (#04-1050, May 12, 2010, *Kingdom Nation*) briefly touched upon what makes a nation a kingdom nation or, more specifically, a kingdom of God nation. The starting point for such a nation is Genesis 1:1 (*In the beginning God created*), Exodus 19:5 (*All the earth is Mine*), and Exodus 20:3-4 (*You shall have no other gods before Me; you shall not make for yourself an idol*). A nation that lays hold of these truths and declares that God is the Sovereign over its governance, for He has the right as Creator and Owner of all the earth, comes into the kingdom of God as one of God's nations. We should add that such a nation also submits willingly and obediently to God's divine law.

However, a kingdom nation must progress beyond this starting point to declare that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords; that is, He alone is God's King (Psalm 2). In the Age to come, when the kingdom of Christ begins to take root among the nations, the nations that willingly come under the reign of Christ will be kingdom nations, and their governance will conform to God's kingdom of righteousness. Nations will not immediately embrace God's Son and His righteousness, but over the next thousand years, many will, but not all (Revelation 20:4-9). Further, not every person within a kingdom nation will embrace God's rule (law) at first either; some will reject it and others will remain skeptical until they see its glory.

Let me be clear that this is how I am defining a kingdom nation. I realize that, in the world today, there are other types of kingdom nations that identify with a religion and, in some cases, are governed by that religion. There are kingdom nations in the Islamic world (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Bahrain), and there are nations in the Christian world that claim a particular denomination as their official state religion (e.g., Lutheranism in Norway) or have a state church (e.g., Church of England). Of course, the Vatican, the autonomous city-state of Catholicism with the Pope as its head, is based entirely on a religion.

The word *religion* is used in the sense understood by most people, that is, a specific system of beliefs, creeds and outward forms of worship, rituals, formalities, and even hierarchies. However, the kingdom of God is not based on man's concept of religion any more than Christianity is. See article #1, September 2007, *Christ Who Is Our Life*. It is about a nation's relationship to the Sovereign of creation and the nation declaring that God, *not* man, is sovereign over it; just as Christianity is about man's relationship with the living God of creation and man confessing that Jesus Christ, *not* self, is Lord over his life, to the glory of God the Father.

Now, if you are still with me on this matter, let me ask: Is there such a thing as a Christian nation? If so, as the title of this issue asks: Is America a Christian nation? My answer is no on both counts. I'll explain.

In recent years, as God has been increasingly thrown out of the governance of the United States and, for many, the name of Jesus has become anathema rather than revered, there has been a fair amount of debate over whether we were founded as a Christian nation and whether we are one today. Our former president has said that we are, and our current president has said that we are not. Who is right? Of course, the answer depends on how one defines a Christian nation. Is it simply a nation made up predominantly of Christians? Or, is it a nation whose constitution declares that Jesus Christ is both Lord and King, submitting to His governance according to God's divine law? After all, if a nation takes the *Christian* label, shouldn't Christ have the preeminent role in the governance of it? I think we could conclude that no nation on earth today meets the definition based on governance. All the nations, even ones like the US that are made up predominantly of Christians, give lip service to God. God is generally ignored in governance and acknowledged in name only when it is politically convenient.

I have concluded that a nation claiming to be Christian can do so only on the basis of a large population of professing Christians; however, even this is becoming harder to claim.

So, regarding the question of whether or not America is a Christian nation, I agree with the current president. It is not! I am not sure why he believes this, but I doubt that I share his reasoning, which probably deals with **political correctness** and the increasing **secular globalization** of our country.

My reason is quite a bit different. I believe that America, as defined by the US Constitution (USC), was not meant to be a Christian nation but that it came very close to becoming a kingdom nation. The fact of the matter is that when our founding fathers declared independence from King George, they acknowledged in the **Declaration of Independence** that there is a Creator who alone endows rights on mankind that cannot be removed by men or governments. These are called **unalienable rights**. This one declaration was a tremendous and profound starting point for America and would have been even more profound if it had been directly incorporated into the USC, which it was not. In fact, the USC does not directly mention the Creator or God.

There is no doubt that many of our founding fathers were Christians, in spite of the revisionists of our day who claim otherwise. Many who had preceded them to the shores of America were seeking **freedom of religion**, not **freedom from religion**. Simply, they sought freedom from the control of state religion. The right of the individual is one of the foundations of our country, and they sought the liberty to seek and serve God **individually**, not as dictated by the state. As such, America was a nation that was predominantly comprised of Christians who individually exercised their right to express their faith in Christ in their own way. The way they expressed and lived their faith was called religion.

However, this does not mean that the founders and the framers believed their religion had no role in the governance of the nation. In fact, some firmly believed our country would not survive without religion, morality, and knowledge. Our first president, George Washington, believed that religion and morality were indispensable for political prosperity, and that national morality cannot prevail without religious principle. Can you imagine the risk the framers of our constitution, many of whom were Christian, took when they ensured legal equality for all religions, both Christian and non-Christian, in the canon of the land? This is what the First Amendment (under the Bill of Rights) to the USC is all about: *Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*. No other country had ever declared such equality.

When our founding fathers acknowledged the Creator in their Declaration of Independence, they were very close to framing our country as a kingdom nation. In my opinion, if they had simply incorporated the first two commandments of the Ten Commandments (as noted above) into the USC and again acknowledged God as the Creator, they would have brought the governance of America under the Sovereign of Creation. Obviously, it was not God's appointed time for America to become a kingdom nation, for it would have failed under the charge of mortal men. However, I believe it will be one in the Age to come when the immortal conquerors sit upon the Lord's throne (Revelation 3:21).

You might wonder how I could state that America could have been a kingdom nation given that the First Amendment grants freedom of religion. After all, you might ask: To be a kingdom nation, doesn't everyone need to be a Christian? Actually, not any more than the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the sons of Israel had to be Israelites. You see, in the Age to come, kingdom nations will proclaim that God alone is Sovereign and declare His Son is Lord and King, but they won't force the Father and His Son upon the unbeliever or ones who exercise another religion. Rather, kingdom nations will tolerate the differences and work to change hearts through love until God's law is written on all hearts and all know the Lord (Hebrews 8:10-11). The kingdom will come not by force or coercion but by changed hearts and minds that experience and come to know **God is love**.

Many people make the mistake of labeling Christianity as a religion, but it is not. By the way, **pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world** (James 1:27 LITV). Christianity is a living love relationship with God and His Son that is worked out in love for one another. People cannot be forced or legislated into this relationship; they are loved into it, for love sums up all the commandments. As a result of love, ultimately, **every knee will bow** [willingly] and **every tongue will confess** [willingly] **that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father** (Philippians 2:10-11). See issue #03-09166, September 16, 2009, *Every Knee Will Bow*. When this comes, God will be all in all, and all will be in His kingdom of love, and all will know the Lord.