

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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Rule in the Midst of Your Enemies

Over the years, I have held that the *Kingdom Age* is coming in which the King of kings, our Lord Jesus, will manifestly rule over the nations. I use the word *manifestly*, which means to become evident or obvious, to indicate that this age will manifest His rule in such a way that there will be no doubt that there is one King over the nations. Others call this age the *Tabernacles Age* which is when the Lord's conquerors will go from Pentecost to Tabernacles as they are resurrected and/or transfigured into the image of Christ, that is, into immortal, spiritual, heavenly bodies like our Lord's body. I embrace this as well. After all, Paul wrote:

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:47-53 NASB)

Some counter this view with the belief that His kingdom is now, and it is progressing. This position is made based on Isaiah 9:7: **There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace**; Daniel 7:27: **His dominion is an everlasting** (literally, *age-during*) **dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed**; and Luke 1:33: **His kingdom will have no end.**

Well, who is right? Actually, both are, for the concepts of a present, progressing (advancing toward perfection) kingdom and a future, manifesting (being made clear) kingdom are mutually inclusive. The manifested kingdom is simply the growth of the progressive kingdom. Another way of stating this is that the coming Kingdom Age is the next phase (era) of the Lord's kingdom that keeps increasing until all things are put in subjection (1 Corinthians 15:27), that is, brought into an orderly arrangement in His kingdom. And, we might add, it will be a most glorious phase as the world learns and experiences true righteousness (Isaiah 26:9), and the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth in ways never seen or known before (Habakkuk 2:14). I believe that the world is presently transitioning from one age to another age, from the Pentecostal Age to the Tabernacles Age.

The fact of the matter is that the Kingdom of God has been operative in our world since the very beginning. As the Creator, God rules over His entire creation. After all, a kingdom is a realm ruled by a king, and God is King, **for God is the King of all the earth** (Psalm 47:7; also Psalm 5:2; 44:4; 47:6; 68:24; 74:12; 84:3; 95:3; 145:1). Down through the centuries, the kings of the earth have had to learn that God rules. This was proven in the days of Noah as the flood came upon the ancient world; it was proven in the days of Abraham as Sodom and Gomorrah were judged; it was proven in the days of Moses as the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh in order to set His people free; and it was proven in the days of Nebuchadnezzar when he experienced the temporary loss of his kingdom so that he would recognize that **the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes** (Daniel 4:25) and that **it is Heaven that rules** (Daniel 4:26). Through Jeremiah, we are told: **"At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it"** (Jeremiah 18:7-10 NASB).

Simply, God rules because He is the Creator and Sovereign of His creation. However, we must also acknowledge that He has manifested His rule in various ways through what are called *ages* and special eras or periods of time within these ages. At times, it might have even appeared as if God were not ruling. If we had lived through the Dark Ages in certain places within Europe, we might have thought God was an absent landowner.

Frankly, I have struggled with this very issue as I look back over the last 100-plus years of history and consider where we are today. How can we say that **there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace** when we have had two world wars, along with the detonation of two atomic bombs to end it, as well as numerous smaller wars, skirmishes, and acts of genocide that have killed millions? Where is the increase? Some counter this with the thought that world conditions have been vastly improving as time has progressed. In many respects, this is true. But, one thing that has been lacking, and is quite apparent in its lack in our day, is an acknowledgement among the nations of the world and our leaders that there is only one king and His name is Jesus, the Son of God. For the most part, we are also lacking in righteous, just, and godly governments.

My struggle ended today as the Lord directed me to one of His psalms, which is quoted in several places in the New Testament (Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13; 10:13; chapters 5 & 7).

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; in holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew. The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country. He will drink from the brook by the wayside; therefore He will lift up His head. (Psalm 110:1-7 NASB)

The key is discovered in the phrase *rule in the midst of Your enemies*. When Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended to His Father's throne in heaven, He was given a kingdom as the **Son of Man**. In other words, a glorified and heavenly Man was given the kingdom of the world, which became His kingdom. Psalm 2 prophetically pointed to this day: **'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'**" Daniel saw what was proclaimed through David: **"I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed"** (Daniel 7:13-14 NASB). John saw the glory of the King in his Patmos vision and heard the loud voices in heaven proclaim: **"The kingdom of the world has become our Lord's and his Christ's and he shall reign for the ages of the ages"** (Revelation 11:15 WED).

These are not future declarations; they are proclamations of the victory of the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man. Today, this very day, Jesus is ruling in the midst of His enemies and He is increasing His kingdom. We know it by faith, and we see it through our spirit.

So, dear brethren, no matter what transpires on earth in the immediate future, let us be encouraged. Our King is ruling. **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You** (Psalm 89:14). **He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness** (Psalm 96:13). He has come, He is here, and He is coming. He is called **Faithful and True** (Revelation 19:11), and He will not fail to sum up, head up, or gather up all things in heaven and on earth so that His Father may be **all in all** (Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28), for He has purposed **through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven** (Colossians 1:20 NASB).