

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God
IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

#13-1912

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Your Kingdom Come

During 2007, an editorial appeared in a newspaper that read *Religion and Politics—Kingdom on Earth*. The article quoted a candidate who was running for his party's nomination for president. The editorial was about "the role of religion in the public sphere," and the use of religion by those who are on the political right and left. During our national elections, it is not uncommon for politicians to be invited to speak from the pulpit of what many would call *Christian churches*. This candidate told a congregation: *I am confident we can create a kingdom right here on earth.*

We can only surmise that what this candidate meant was that Christians or, perhaps, the religious can create a kingdom on earth through the political process; that is, we can have a political kingdom. Sound similar to a day long ago, say in the first century? Although this might make for good politics to woo a certain vote, there is one big challenge to such a notion: The United States is a republic of elected officials and laws set by Congress, not a kingdom with a king who is the law. There is no kingdom without a king, and the US constitution does not allow for the election of a king to govern us. Surely, this candidate knew the difference between a kingdom and a republic; but then again, one never knows! At any rate, this is a good springboard for discussing the kingdom that is coming that will end the silly politics of our era and usher in true righteousness and justice.

The word *kingdom*, as translated from the Greek word *basileia*, means "reign." It most often refers to the reign of a king, or "the realm ruled by a king or the territory, people, or sovereign power pertaining to it." By dividing the word into its two components, we see that it is made up of *king* and *dom*, which is the abbreviation for *dominion*, which means "rule or power to rule; sovereign authority; sovereignty." Thus, the word *kingdom* means that a king rules over a realm. There can be no kingdom without a king. Years ago, there were many kingdoms on earth, but many have been replaced with other forms of sovereignty in which the people rule through elections and set their own laws, rather than a king who is sovereign, ruling without equal in his realm. Generally, in a kingdom, the king is the law.

Reading this candidate's remarks should remind us of something that took place over 2,000 years ago when King Jesus appeared on this earth and preached *the evangel of the kingdom of the heavens*, "*Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand*" (Matthew 4:17, 23). The Jews according to the flesh heard this good news and figured that it was time for a political kingdom to come on earth with the Messiah, the king of Israel, seated on the throne of David. They were not looking for a Savior to die for their sins, nor were they looking for a spiritual kingdom; rather, they were looking for a king to deliver them from the rule of Rome and to establish the kingdom or reign of God on earth. They were looking for and expecting a political king. This is evident even in the reaction of the twelve disciples to their Master.

When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54 NASB)

And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. (Matthew 26:51 NASB)

In fact, they, along with others, thought they could take the kingdom by force, which prompted Jesus to declare: *From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force* (Matthew 11:12).

Matthew referred to the kingdom as *the kingdom of the heavens*, most likely, because the Jews did not pronounce the name of *God*; therefore, to some, *the kingdom of God* would not have been acceptable. But there might be another reason for using this expression in Matthew. *The kingdom of the heavens* speaks to the Jewish hope that heaven would come to earth. They never had a hope of going to heaven as so many Christians hold to today. Their expectation was that the Messiah of Israel would come and establish God's reign on earth, and all the nations of the earth would know that the rule of the heavens had come to this earth. Unfortunately for them, they rejected their Messiah. Truly, the kingdom did come when Jesus walked this earth, but not in the way the Jews expected. The kingdom came in the form of the person of the Son of God, God's king who is also the embodiment of God's kingdom.

When He walked amongst His Jewish brethren, Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, and He answered them: *The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, **the kingdom of God is in the midst of you*** (Luke 17:20-21). Some translations state the kingdom is *among* and others *within*, leading to the belief that the kingdom Jesus spoke of was spiritual and in residence within the Pharisees that rejected Him and His kingdom. For those who believe on Jesus, perhaps (but not conclusively) it could be said that the kingdom is within and it is spiritual, but this is not the context of Jesus' answer. Jesus, as the embodiment of all that the kingdom stood for, was standing in the midst of or among the ones that were expecting the kingdom and were being invited to enter. They were looking in the wrong place and for the wrong thing. In other words, they were missing the true nature of the kingdom. All they had to do was behold King Jesus, listen to His voice, and obey, doing the will of His Father: *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven* (Matthew 7:21). History tells us that many Jews in that day rejected the Messiah and king of Israel. They were blinded to the truth that stood right in their midst. When Jesus failed to offer them a political solution, they rejected Him, even to the point of demanding His death.

Dear saints, as we approach another national election in the US (2020), are we longing for a political solution to the many challenges our nation faces? Are we expecting to create a kingdom on earth as this politician promised back in 2007?

We can be sure that a kingdom is coming to this earth, but it will not come through the political process of the United States or through any candidate who proclaims he or she will bring it to this earth. And, it will not come about because we think if we put the right people in office, we can somehow establish God's kingdom on earth without the actual presence of our Lord. (Some foolishly believe we must change the world in order for Jesus to return.) It will come when King Jesus, the Savior of the world, comes out of heaven to this earth to resurrect and transform His called and chosen people to conform them to the body of His glory. This is us who believe! And, we will be the ones who will reign on earth, a kingdom of priests unto God the Father—the many sons of glory who will be imaging God's pattern Son, the Anointed One, our Lord Jesus, to the nations on earth and all the host of beings in the heavenlies.

God Himself has set the time for this day. What are we to do until then?

Pray: ***Your kingdom come!***