

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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The Kingdom:

February 23, 2009

The Realm of the Will of God

It is interesting that some Christian groups speak a lot about building and advancing the kingdom, as if these were commands given to the ecclesia of God. However, Scripture never once calls the ecclesia into action in this regard. Scripture does speak of seeking the kingdom, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom, testifying about the kingdom, entering the kingdom, receiving the kingdom, belonging to the kingdom, being worthy of the kingdom, being called into the kingdom, and inheriting the kingdom; but it never speaks of building it. We are to pray for the kingdom to come; and when it does come upon us, good things happen, such as healing. Not only does the kingdom come, but it can be near us, it can be among us, and it can be within us. So, there is both a present and a future aspect to the kingdom. Also, there is a present transference into the kingdom and a future waiting for the kingdom.

Obviously, these references speak of various aspects or manifestations of the kingdom as revealed by the way the kingdom is described; for example, whether it is the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the heavens, the kingdom of the Son of His love, or the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Further, the kingdom can be spiritual in nature, which means that it is hidden from those who are not spiritual, or it can be manifested, which means it is visibly seen by all, regardless of their spiritual condition.

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, and the kingdom operates in accord with the will of the king.

The point that I want to stress is that the kingdom is not described as something to be built, for it is not a structure like a building or even a house but rather a realm and an authority. When He was questioned by Pilate, Jesus declared: **“My kingdom is not of this realm”** (John 18:36). Most translations state **not from here** or **not hence**. In other words, one cannot find His kingdom by looking at the nations of the world or at what is transpiring among the nations. And I might add, a kingdom is established when a king takes the scepter to rule and reign over his realm. Our Lord Jesus has not taken the scepter of the kingdom that is to come to this earth, and we are not commanded to build this kingdom, especially if the King has not sat down upon His throne and placed His kings, lords, judges, and administrators in positions of authority over the inhabitants of the world. In other words, the kingdom must come first, which means the King must come, and when He comes, He must also bring His conquerors (overcomers) to rule and reign with Him. If building the kingdom is a proper term, which I am not sure that it is, then it can only come about at this point and not sooner. Until then, we wait for the manifestation of the kingdom to come.

Now, I want to return to the statement that a kingdom operates in accord with the will of the king. But let’s make this statement more definitive: The kingdom of God operates in accord with the will of God, or the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ operates in accord with the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the very heart of the kingdom is doing the will of God the Father and His Son. If a person or nation is fully aligned with the will of God and is doing the will of God, then that person or nation has entered into the kingdom of God. To be more specific, if a person or nation is fully aligned with the will of God’s King, our Lord Jesus Christ, and is doing His will, then that person or nation has entered into the kingdom of Christ.

I believe that this is where so much teaching and emphasis on the kingdom go off the rail, so to speak. Among Christian groups that speak of building and advancing the kingdom, the emphasis is often on manifestations of power and authority, moves of the Holy Spirit, infiltrating every aspect of life with the kingdom, or getting people saved (more so with the ones who speak of advancing the kingdom). However, there seems to be a lack of emphasis on doing the will of God or being obedient to His word. I am not saying that it is totally absent, but from what I have heard, it is related to their emphasis only remotely, if at all.

Again, let me emphasize that the kingdom is about doing the will of God. If one does not do the will of God, then, arguably, that one is not in the kingdom but is a rebel of the kingdom, one that must be left outside the door, cast out into outer darkness, or burned up as a tare.

There are two kingdom verses that prove the point without any doubt.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. (Matthew 6:10 ASV)

In teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus most clearly defines the kingdom of God as the will of God. Notice that Jesus did not tell them to pray that God's will be done in heaven but that it be done on earth. This could be reworded: **As His will is done in heaven, may it be done on earth.** In other words, He made a very declarative statement that in the celestial or heavenly kingdom, the will of God is done. The heavenly host knows the will of God and obeys His will.

The challenge is getting the inhabitants of the earth to do the will of God, and this is the heart of the prayer. It is an acknowledgement that if the kingdom comes to earth, then the will of God will be on earth as well. Thus, Jesus has defined the kingdom for us. When the reign of God comes, the will of God is done, so the kingdom and the will of God are synonymous.

“Not every one saying to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of My Father, the [One] in [the] heavens.” (Matthew 7:21 ALT)

This verse not only adds more proof to the matter but makes it very personal as well. For one to enter the kingdom of the heavens, one must do the will of the Father who is in heaven. Thus, a prerequisite for even entering the kingdom is obedience to the will of the Father. Why is this so? It is so because, by definition, the kingdom is doing the will of the Father. How can one enter the kingdom if one does not learn to obey the will of the Father while living in the kingdom of the world?

Let us face the reality that even after we are born from above, we struggle to do the will of God. We must learn the will of God as we struggle through life and, especially, as we are held in Babylonian captivity. We learn to obey through the word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit worked out in our life experiences. This is the process of sanctification or, as some would say, the salvation of the soul. As James wrote, we are to **receive the word implanted, which is able to save your soul** (James 1:21). James was not referring to initial salvation of justification by faith through grace but to sanctification, which involves the soul. It is through this process that the laws of God are put into our minds and written on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10), and that will lead us into the kingdom.

Today, we have to think about the will of God as we go through life in Babylon, facing many situations and issues of life. But there is good news. Can you imagine the day in which you no longer have to think about or pray to know the will of God, but you know it and you do it with the same ease that you breathe in and out all day long? This is what life in the kingdom is all about. It is our very being doing the will of God. Another way of stating this is that we are a vessel of the will of God. We don't have to inquire as we do while in bodies of death; we just do it as a natural part of our being. This is the life of one who has been placed as a son of God in the kingdom of God. Sons know and live the will of the Father just as Jesus, the Son of God, knew and lived the will of God when He came to this earth proclaiming the kingdom of the heavens. Thus, the kingdom is the realm of the will of God.