

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 of God: Creator's Rights

A lot of people speak of the Kingdom of God as if its meaning is well established in the minds and hearts of God's people. But, frankly, over the years, when I have heard the term used I have not been so clear as to its meaning, at least through those who were using the term. I have concluded that the term *Kingdom of God* (or *of Christ*) has simply become Christian jargon like so many other terms that are bantered around in Christian circles, as if everyone clearly understands what it means. But do they? For that matter, do I?

Given this question, I have embarked on a quest to understand the Kingdom, not theologically or systematically, but in very simple, foundational terms with this goal in mind: If we were to explain the Kingdom of God to the person on the street that has no comprehension of its meaning, how would we go about it?

At the very core of the Kingdom is the Creator of all things, all things in heaven and on earth, and all things seen and unseen. If we do not establish the concept of a universal Creator right from the beginning, then there is no way we or anyone else will ever understand the true nature of the Kingdom. Consequently, people must be brought to the understanding or, even more so, revelation that there is a Creator behind all things, regardless of what we call this Creator. To this point, we need not make this complex with religious explanations; put all that aside.

Even the most cursory study of the things around us, that is, the things that we see that man has not made but which simply exist, causes one to marvel at the complexities, intricacies, and diversity in what we call *creation*. It is amazing. Take any plant and observe how it grows and what it produces, as if some unseen hand or force is directing it; it is beyond comprehension. Yes; scientists can offer explanations and theories, but at the end of the day, it is still a marvel. How did things get to be this way in the first place? Or, take the human body; it is without doubt the most amazing creation on the face of the earth. Recently, we had an eye doctor appointment and the nurse launched into an explanation of how the eye works; how it captures an image and changes it into a chemical and transmits it to our brain. Her conclusion to us was: How can anyone deny that there is a Creator God? Speaking of the human brain; it is so amazing that no computer of man can rival it, no matter how many accolades are presently being bestowed on AI (artificial intelligence). It is still artificial regardless of how much it can mimic the brain. Stepping back from it all and taking a broad brush look at creation, we also see that there are common elements to creation that run right through the whole. Just take the animal kingdom with man being the supreme being of animals with blood coursing through its veins. There is a common design that flows through all blood-bearing creatures. Some argue that this favors the whole concept of evolution apart from a Creator. But does it? It seems to me that it is proof that there is a genius behind it all who designed a certain concept (i.e., laws of nature) and incorporated it in a variety of ways as if it is the very signature of the Creator. Case in point; all the greatest artists in history are known by their particular technique, and to be sure people know it is theirs, they sign or initial their paintings. And so does our Creator.

Well, it is not my intent to prove this point beyond any doubt. After all; countless number of people have been arguing and debating this matter for centuries. The point is this: This is the starting point for the Kingdom, and without a foundational understanding or revelation that there is a creative genius behind creation who has left His signature on all that He has created (by the way; out from Himself), we will not properly understand the Kingdom of God. So, the first matter in this regard is that there is a Creator of all things. We call Him God. As Paul the apostle wrote: **There is but one God, the Father out of whom are all things** (1Corinthians 8.6).

The second point to understanding the Kingdom is that the Creator has rights over His creation. Stated another way is that **the Creator has Creation Rights**, meaning He has the right to call the shots, so to speak, that is, to set the rules, principles, laws, etc. as to how things are to work and what He demands or expects out of His creation. He also has the right to determine creation's purpose, whether it is the whole or components of it. We see this same principle throughout man's world. Take an engineer who designs a modern-day car with all its high-tech components operated through computer chips and software; the engineer designs the car within certain parameters to meet his or her expectations of how the car will look and perform. There is an expectation built into the design, and as long as one follows the design specs, it will perform as the engineer designed it. Contrarily, not following these design specs and not doing what is needed to stay within them will mean the car will fall short of the engineer's concept and most likely will fail along the way, sooner rather than later. As this argument goes, the Creator by definition (i.e., as a creator) has the right to the design and the performance of His creation, meaning He not only builds His creation but He also determines the very principles or rules by which it is to operate. If creation, at any level, deviates from this, then that portion of creation will ultimately fail to reach or attain to the peak performance and purpose for which it was designed.

As an aside, take the matter of sin. Ask preachers what sin is and for the most part they will offer some religious/theological explanation. Frankly, I find most explanations too complex, for they are either filled with seminarian speak or too critical of God Himself. Case in point is Jonathan Edwards famous and often quoted line "sinners in the hands of an angry God." Many such explanations leave people in fear of God and drive them away from a Creator God who is love. The good news is that sin (or transgression) is easy to grasp if we understand that the Creator has rights over His creation. He has set the rules, knowing what is best for His creation in order for it to operate as He designed it and to achieve His ultimate purpose for creation in the first place. As the old television show titled *Father Knows Best*, He alone knows what is best for His creation and its creatures. After all, again, He designed it! Thus, sin at its fundamental core is simply not following God's specs for His creation or individual components of it. As for humanity, sin is harmful behavior that not only affects us individually but potentially others around us that could extend to all of humanity (e.g., world war initiated by a madman). Another way of defining sin, at least in relation to man, is that we fall short of God's design for us. Spiritually speaking, we fall short of His glory, but this may be a bit too complex for the man on the street. Falling short means we are impaired or, using mechanical terms, broken in some way that keeps us from reaching our design potential and, in a broader way, the corporate design potential of humanity. Look around you today; broken humanity abounds.

So, the Kingdom is more than an acknowledgment that there is a Creator; it requires an acknowledgement that the Creator has rights over His creation and that creation, especially we as humans, must line up with His rights that are incorporated in His design specifications and performance.

This leads to a third point that expands on the first two; **the Kingdom of God is the government of God.** In the general sense, **government is the exercise of authority over any organization from small to large**, from a club to a business to an institution to a nation to the entire world. Anything that is organized to perform a certain purpose has some form of government to ensure it reaches its intended potential. Now, as for God, since He is the Creator and He has the rights over His creation, that is, Creation Rights, He exercises authority over His creation. Thus, **the Kingdom of God is God's authority over His creation**, meaning He exercises authority in whatever manner He so chooses to ensure His creation fulfills its purpose for it being brought forth in the first place.

Again, as pointed out in point two, God exercises His rights over creation, and He does this in governing according to the rules or laws that He sets forth. Every nation on earth today tries to control its populace through rules, regulations, and laws. Simply, these are put into place for the good of all, to ensure the benefit of all; that is, assuming they are done righteously and not for the benefit of a few who have power and money, an especially acute problem in our day. On the grander scale of all of creation, God sets the rules and laws by which all things are to operate and this constitutes God's government. Some might shake a fist at God and demand that His government is too demanding and restrictive on mankind. Does the pot quarrel with its maker, the potter: "What are you doing?" Such a one does not know God, especially the God whose essence or nature is love. The love of the Creator expressed through the exercise of His authority has only one goal in mind, and that is to ensure His creation receives what is best for it. Ultimately, this reveals the heart of God which is love. Love is the heart of the Kingdom of God.