

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)

#14-2009

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August 23, 2020

Kingdom of God: God's Family

To change the pace a bit from much of what I have written of late, there has been a thought rolling around in my brain dealing with the concept of the kingdom of God. I'll keep it short.

It is a sure thing that many books and commentaries have been written about the *kingdom of God*, which in scripture is described in many ways, especially the *kingdom of heaven*, solely presented in Matthew thirty-two times. Some stress that the kingdom is a form of government based on spiritually applying the pattern given to ancient Israel. Given this, we must seek for answers given under the old covenant interpreted through the new. Others stress that it is similar to the pattern of the US Constitution and a free-enterprise, capitalistic system with gold and silver serving as money and a 10% taxation system. And yet, others see the kingdom as righteousness reforming existing institutions of government, without fundamentally changing their purpose. This scenario requires that Christians take charge of these institutions.

Undoubtedly, the concept of a kingdom (or: reign of a king) is a major tenet that runs throughout scripture and will remain so in the oncoming ages until Christ completes His work of heading up all things in heaven and on earth. Some might think that when Jesus manifestly returns, His kingdom will change everything overnight; however, the most likely scenario will be a gradual change or transformation of the world and the way it operates. Paul tells us that Jesus must reign until He has subjected all under His feet. Surely, this will take some time.

But what follows when Christ gives up the kingdom to His God and Father? Based on Paul, perhaps the concept of a kingdom, as we currently perceive it, is the means to the ultimate purpose of God, but not its endpoint. However, if it is part of the endpoint, then what is its essence?

Yet each in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence;" thereafter the consummation, **whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power.**" For He must be reigning until He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy is being abolished: death. For He subjects all under His feet. Now whenever He may be saying that all is subject, it is evident that it is outside of Him Who subjects all to Him." Now, whenever all may be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also shall be subjected to Him Who subjects all to Him, that **God may be All in all.**" (1 Corinthians 15:23-28 CLV [bold added])

Giving up the kingdom to God does not tell us what happens to the kingdom or what it looks like at this point. Does the concept of a kingdom even continue after this? Or, is the kingdom to be defined in a way that is much different from the way we view God's kingdom today? What we do know is that God's purpose is to be all in all, meaning His entire creation will be an expression of the Father, whose primary essence is love. Interestingly, Paul also wrote, as a present reality, that there is **one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all** (Ephesians 4:6). I'll leave this for others to sort out, but we can be assured that this is the ultimate reality, regardless of the label attached to it.

With God being love and in union with all His creation as Father, when all is said and done (as far as we have been given to know) and God is truly all in all, it seems that the best description of the reality of that day is expressed in the word *family*.

God will be the *paterfamilias*, the Father of a glorious family, patterned fully after His Son. Paul captures the heart of this in Ephesians 3:14-15: **For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father—from Him every family in heaven and on earth receives its name.**

In this light, it would make sense that there will probably be no more monetary system, including capitalism, meaning there will be no more taxes, as well; family needs none of this to thrive. No more sin, no more death, no more covetousness, no more stealing, no more political systems, no more structured-pyramidal systems, no more divisions, no more social and economic *isms*, and you can add to the list.

Love drives family! Father with many sons and daughters brought to glory.

This might be difficult for some, perhaps many, to comprehend; after all, we have never experienced such a thing and we have not been taught along these lines. Our focus has been on a kingdom that we see through the lens of either ancient Israel or the "good" governments that mankind has been able to cobble together and maintain for a season until they have failed, as we see happening in our world today.

It's even harder to imagine such a thing given the sad state of affairs of the family in many places in the world, but especially here in the United States. Many children are raised in broken families, often without a father. When such ones are told there is a heavenly Father who loves them, they have a difficult time comprehending such love. Over the years, I have met a good number of people who are like this.

Some might be challenged because they think this goes outside of scripture (what many call *the word of God*) that reveals all there is to know about God's plan and purpose. As intimated elsewhere, scripture, as we know it, is not the complete story. God's story did not end with the 66th book of the Bible. The end of the story is not about humanity walking on golden streets and living happily ever after. In many respects, it appears to be the beginning of a multitude of glorious stories yet to unfold. Surely, glory will be a bliss beyond our wildest imaginations, and there is nothing static about glory.

How do we know? We know because God says: ***Behold, I am continuously making and repeatedly creating all things new.*** The implication is that there is no end to the all-new.

Now, back to the original point and in light of the above—either the concept of family is greater than that of a kingdom, or alternatively, family actually defines the true nature of God's kingdom. Either way; God is creating an all-new family in the image of His Son and He has a grand purpose for His family that He has yet to reveal. When all authority and death is ultimately abolished and all have been brought unto reconciliation, the new humanity will be one family with one Father who is over all and in all.

Let us never lose sight of the fact that God's Son, our Lord Jesus, has made the way for the glory that is coming that will keep unfolding until He has completed His mission for His Father. Today, He is known as King Jesus, but the day will come when all will be brought into union with the Father and the Son as a happy and glorious family. As we see this glorious truth unfold in greater clarity, let us testify of His kingdom in the light that God is building a family filled with His love.