

## THE OBSERVATION SERIES

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### Observation 3 – Embrace Governance

It's not the most popular item on the menu these days: government and governance. We like the sweet taste of self-interest. In fact, it's an anathema that continues to manifest worldwide as rebellion against all authority. We are in the age of chaos when everyone thinks they're right in their own eyes. It's called anarchy.

We have modernism to thank for that, especially postmodernism whose theorists gave us the fiction of expression. We think we are free to judge for ourselves when in fact we are enslaved to technology and media that do the thinking for us. We believe it's self-consciousness towards emancipation and illumination, yet we are blind to the illusions of progress.

Needless to say there are countries that have managed a reasonable semblance of democratic rule but the lines are shifting backwards towards totalitarianism. Despite walls that have come down and curtains that have been lifted, communism is far from dead, as well as the religions that practice the same totalitarianism. Needless to say there is a faith that believes in absolute rule of God, yet offers the only lived-experience of true freedom. Therefore, the pundits have conceded in part that postmodernism is no more than an accurate description of a new period of disillusionment.

In that chaos, to embrace governance has become an unwelcome conversation.

Even when those who embrace governance of the Kingdom of God appear to be free indeed. It therefore begs the question of what exactly is governance of the Kingdom of God. To begin, it's governance that not only promises; it also delivers.

I can testify to that after forty years of living by faith subject to that governance. I have never been more free: free to be who I am, free to do what I love and love what I do, and free to receive from God everything I need without begging or manipulating others to give to my "cause" with persuasive advertising and strategic marketing.

If that's not true, I am a liar. But I am not.

However, it's a decision others must make to think critically about what I say, at the risk of an experience that tugs at their conscience. Because if it's true why is the Kingdom of God such a "hard-sell," as I have experienced over 40 years of teaching it and living it? Be sure, I am not bragging.

It's not an achievement of epic proportions of my human will, or vast fortunes at my disposal, nor the outcome of a "*yes you can*" mantra. Nor will I boast about my dark nights of the soul, periods of doubt and confusion, or the anxieties when God seems to "come through" just after the 11th hour.

Nevertheless, I am compelled to speak about governance, the Kingdom of God, the King, and a determined willingness to submit and obey. From fallow fields to many abundant harvests I have lived the seasons of preparation of the ground, sowing seeds, patience to allow roots to grow deep, nursing the seedling, protecting the tree, to enjoy the blossoms as a sign of fruit to come, and at last harvest the fruit. But, metaphors and myths they are not. The experience is real in real time among real people. And here is a secret now revealed:

Not only do I enjoy that that fruit and share it with others as is humanly possible, I also enjoy that that fruit and share it with others as is humanly *impossible*.

Human possibilities fail because of conditions we have applied to the fruit and because we think we have the right to judge who is to be a worthy recipient of such fruit.

When our capability to extent spiritual fruit of kindness (goodness, gentleness, benevolence – especially to our enemies) is impossible as practice, it is made possible as fruit of the Spirit of God, who empowers us to be kind even to those who do not like us, or disagree with us, even hate us.

It is a mutual relationship in which I embrace governance. That's the heart of the Kingdom of God. I feel so confident about that relationship, I've printed it in bold.

**Over time it has all come down to Christ the King and I in a mutual relationship of governance, that is, to accept by faith that His governance is not designed to punish me, but instead *to expose me to myself through an examination of the Spirit*, who reveals to me a new governance that exposes the hindrances that stand in the way of my total freedom. This has but one outcome: to show me the ways to overcome the hindrances and thus enter into the rest of His peace, joy, love, and genuine freedom.**

No more; no less.

Then why is it so difficult to teach the Kingdom of God, that is, the kingship of Christ? I know that history has not been kind to accepting Kingdom truth. Many have and continue to rail against Christianity citing their favourites: the Crusades, the Inquisition, Missionaries who brought plagues to native communities, and everything else done "in the name of God." However, most of the critics have been blind to the difference between Christianity and Christendom, or between religion and relationship.

Suffice it to say that nearly all of the wrongs ascribed to the followers of Christ have been mistaken (or wilfully denied) because they were not Christianity's legacy. They were the practices of those who were determined to build an earthly kingdom or domain called *Christendom*. It was all in the name of politics, power, and money.

To be clear: **Christianity** embodies the true followers of Christ who are *in this world but not of it*. Theirs is a relationship that embraces the heart's examination with joy and gratitude because it's not a punishment of works (legalism) or judgement (eternal).

**Christendom**, however, embodies the manifest destinies of those who are in this world *and* of it. Theirs is a contest (with much bloody conflict) to spread an ideology that claims they are the heirs to an earthly domain (imperialism) under the guise of preparing this kingdom for a soon-coming Christ. It has been precisely that ideology which gave the world slavery, conquest, subjugation, imperialism, abuse at the hands of church organizations, dictatorship, and capitalism, all in the name of religion, a word which means "back-to-the-law," or more succinctly, "back-to-bondage."

Kingdom faith is not about getting but about giving: giving allegiance to the King, which embodies living according to His governance and not a world governance of human institutions, culture, and traditions.

But, can it be both? A blend of human and Divine governance?

No, but neither is it one or the other. We are taught that governments and their leaders (obviously not all) are ordained by God. But that does not mean governments

can “lord it over us.” So, it’s not a blend but a matter of priority. If human governments embrace governance of the Kingdom of God, they will be good governments.

The acid test? Evidence of fruit of the Spirit especially total freedom as is humanly *impossible*. The judgment of history stands as a mute witness to “how it’s been working for us?”

For many people that sounds and feels like a return to the laws of religious institutions, autocratic governments, crippling dogma, misguided “works” from the pulpits of “churches” of the wrong kind, and manipulative doctrines.

And that they refuse to do. And rightly so.

Through it all, God, (in their understanding), remains a spiteful, vengeful, angry, hard-taskmaster, who contradicts the very idea of kindness and love.

To conclude: Freedom in Christ is the essence of faith – freedom through allegiance to the King. Yet, it also means that in all that freedom which we proclaim, it does not mean we are without sin, that is, a propensity for doing things “our way,” right down to roots of rebellion.

We still rebel. That selfishness is still in us, dating back to a core orthodox belief of Christianity knows as the Fall when humankind initiated the first rebellion against God. Even though born-again in spirit, the Fall still remains in our bodies until death parts us from it. Even though our minds are being renewed day after day and our spirit is declared a new creation in Christ.

It’s the great paradox: sinners who by faith and grace may declare themselves as if without sin, holy and right before God, yet be imperfect in the flesh, but perfect, That is, complete in Christ.

This opens the door to a theology of kindness and not a theology of harshness which promotes a “faith” that can seem “harsh” when judged by human standards of success, wealth, fortune, healing, etc., complete with “proof-texts” from Scripture.

As such, a theology of kindness is governance of the kingdom, allegiance to the King who is kind and ready, by His Spirit, to teach us and correct us.

He shows us a better way to freedom by revealing ourselves to ourselves so that we may see and acknowledge the hindrances we have placed before our feet and by repentance (turning the other way) enlightens us to see the better way – freedom.

But there is an enemy of our faith. He is known by many names but “enemy” will suffice. Either way, he knows no theology of kindness.

Our response is to let our embrace of governance “shine as light”, the evidence of which is our lived-experience of a life of the Spirit.

But that can be dangerous.

The visible evidence of the “light” of Christ in us and through us also reveals and exposes ourselves to the enemy, who otherwise cannot see that we have the light. If our light does not shine we are of no interest to the enemy because he doesn’t want us; he wants to steal our “light.” We have that light in fullness yet also in “measure,” like a lightbulb. If the enemy can steal enough “lightbulbs” he believes they will add up to the fullness of the Spirit, which he desperately wants because he believes he can then enter the city of God and take one more “shot” at dethroning Christ and be king of the heavenlies himself – the ultimate delusion.

He cannot steal our salvation, therefore he cannot destroy us. He cannot keep us from the city of God. But can he steal our measure of faith if we enslave ourselves to

governance of the world and quench the Spirit. That is, if our light is not shining, he has no interest in us and he knows very well all he has to do is watch and see that when left to our own devices (governance) we heap enough misery on ourselves without his doing.