

## Thy Kingdom Come

Matthew 6:10

By [Rev. Kevin Chiarot](#)

We continue this morning looking at the Lord's Prayer in the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. We pray (in the preface) to our Father in heaven, we pray (in the first petition) that his name – his divine glory - be hallowed, and we come today to the second petition: Thy kingdom come. And there is a world of richness in those three words. In one sense, they sum up the story of the Bible, they distill the yearning of creation, they are the hope of the people of God.

Jesus made the kingdom of God utterly central to his preaching, indeed to his whole ministry: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at a hand" is the banner over his mission. The gospel he preaches is the gospel of the kingdom. Even after his sufferings, he appeared to the disciples for forty days, speaking about the kingdom of God. It's a topic, apparently, which required a lot of time to unpack. And the risen Jesus, patiently, slowly unpacked it for the apostles.

We, too, here, have an opportunity to stop, to pause, to ask ourselves: just what is this mystery of the kingdom? And to let Scripture speak and shape us -- and our praying. So, we will make three main points – there will be a some subpoints along the way – but three main points. Why, what and when. Why the kingdom? What is the Kingdom? When does the kingdom come?

### I. Why

First, then, why. In the Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 191 is: What do we pray for in the second petition? The long and marvelous answer begins:

A. In the second petition, (which is, Thy Kingdom come,) acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed.

So there is another kingdom. Another dominion, another realm. The kingdom of the world, the kingdom into which we are all born. What Paul calls the kingdom of darkness, the realm of the prince of the power of the air. In the catechism's words: the dominion of sin and Satan.

Sin itself, the Bible, is often viewed, not merely as lawlessness, but as a kind of power, a principality. An enslaving, cruel master. A dominion which we are naturally under. And Satan, though defeated by Christ's cross, still prowls seeking to destroy, he still has a realm, a kingdom, one under which the vast majority of humanity has lived and does live. For the god of this world, Paul says, blinds the minds of the unbelieving. The whole world, John tells us, lies in the power of the evil one. Though defeated, the evil one still holds devastating sway through the whole world.

It is this backdrop – often muted – lest we sound unsophisticated. Too much like those demon-obsessed people. It is this backdrop, dark and foreboding, of being arrayed against supernatural intelligences, which places Christian existence into a theatre of both danger, and constant spiritual warfare. We do not wrestle with flesh and blood, with mere humans, but with something much more malicious – these principalities and powers in the heavenly places. And the power of sin in our very own members. And it is because we seek the full and final and complete obliteration of sin and all the powers, the destruction of the kingdom of sin and Satan, that we pray: They Kingdom Come. That is the why.

## II. What

Secondly, then, what. What is the Kingdom of God? In one sense it's a puzzling petition. Thy kingdom come. For, isn't God already king? Isn't everything under his dominion? Has he not been reigning over all from the beginning? The answer to all this is, of course, yes. So, what are we praying for then? Here we must make a basic distinction, made by the church through the ages, based upon a careful reading of Scripture.

When we speak of the kingdom of God – we must distinguish between - reign and realm. God reigns over all. Period. But not all that he reigns over is a holy, consecrated realm. Another way to put it: Not all that he reigns over is sanctified by the glory of his saving presence. Just as an earthly king might reign over a whole nation, yet pockets of it might not abide his rule, his laws, and may even live in open defiance. So it is here.

For example: God reigned over all during the Old Testament, but only Israel was a holy, theocratic realm, the special dwelling place of God's presence in the midst of his people. The holy realm is a unique, holy, saving manifestation of his reign. And it is *that* which we are praying for here. We are praying for God's saving reign to break into this world and consecrate it, as his holy realm.

DA Carson: the kingdom (here) is that aspect of God's sovereignty under which there is life. That's another way to put it. The kingdom of God is the realm in which there is spiritual life.

Here's Calvin on this petition: We must first make sure of the definition of the KOG. He is said to be reigning over men, when they subdue their flesh to his yoke, and their own desires are laid aside, so that they willingly bind and give themselves over to his rule.

Again – Jesus reigns over-all, but the kingdom – in the sense its being spoken of here – is the place, the realm, he savingly rules. So that is what the kingdom is. And now that know that, we can ask: who is in the kingdom, and where is the kingdom (who and where – subpoints under our second point).

## **Who**

First, who. Who is in the kingdom? Well, if the kingdom is the realm over which Christ sovereignly rules, this means that the Kingdom is the realm of the Spirit. And the Spirit, is the power of the age to come. Which means the kingdom is the realm of eschatological life. It is the realm of the new creation. It is the presence of the future. The kingdom of God, Paul tells us (Rom. 14), is righteousness, peace and joy IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This is just what Jesus taught about the kingdom, when he told Nicodemus: Unless you are born again, born from above by the Spirit, you cannot enter or even see the Kingdom of God. The kingdom is the realm of the regenerate. The place where God reigns by Word and Spirit. In short, the church is the kingdom of God. In the sense in view in our text.

Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 25, the chapter on the church, says that the visible church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God.

How could it be otherwise? The kingdom of God is life in the Spirit. Who is in the kingdom? Believers, born again of the Spirit. The church is the kingdom of God. Thus, we are called a kingdom of priests by Peter. And John, in Revelation 1 says: he made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. Revelation 5, the song to the Lamb, says: you purchased people for God from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, and you have made them a kingdom – and priests to our God.

## **Where**

So, to our second subpoint, where then is the Kingdom of God? This one is easy. It is in the hearts of believers. It is in the invisible realm of the Spirit. It is beyond the reach of the civil magistrate. When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied:

*“The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.” It is within you.*

The Westminster Larger Catechism says, that in praying “thy kingdom come,” we pray that Christ would rule in our hearts here. The hearts of the saints are the seat of the kingdom.

Now, he doesn’t mean it has no effects, or no impact. But he does mean it is not the kind of visible kingdom the Pharisees, and the disciples, and American Christians expect. Thus, this kingdom language is not referring to any earthly or political kingdom. Jesus’ spiritual reign is not a kingdom of this world. If one wants to see it and taste it, it is found among the poor in spirit, among the meek, and among those who are dispossessed, the powerless, the slandered and the persecuted. It is found where the fruits of the Spirit are. It is found among those living the life of the beatitudes.

As Origen, the third c. church father, put it: *The one who prays for the coming kingdom of God, rightly prays that the kingdom of God might be established in himself, that it might bear fruit and be perfected in himself. Every saint, being ruled by God as king, dwells within this kingdom.*

We need a lot more passion on the kingdom being established and perfected and bearing fruit IN US – and a lot less politicized chatter about the kingdom being established elsewhere. To be passionate – in a rightly ordered way – about the kingdom, is to be passionate about the fruits of the Spirit in the depth of our own hearts. For, to repeat: The KOG is righteousness, peace, and joy in the HS. The kingdom of God is within you.

### **III. When**

Our third point, then, is when. When does the kingdom come. Like everything in the Christian life, it comes now (the already) and later (in the not yet). And these are not two separate things. What happens NOW is just the bleeding edge of what happens later.

#### **Now**

First, now. The kingdom has come in Jesus, and this means that the kingdom of sin and Satan has already been plundered. It has already been dealt a fatal blow through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Though Satan continues his sway, though he blinds the minds of the unbelieving, though he engages in rear-guard actions. He is doomed. Though dangerous, He is an already defeated foe. He cannot stop or thwart the gathering of God’s elect. Sin itself, which we

struggle with in this life, sin itself, has also had its dominion broken. Not obliterated. But broken.

This decisive victory of Christ is the fruit of the kingdom having invaded the realm of the ruler of this world – and having bound him and cast him out. And this means people have been summoned out of this kingdom of darkness, into the light of God’s holy realm, the church. Thus we pray for the church to increase in the world. In the words of the WLC which we cited earlier, when we pray for the kingdom to come, we pray for:

The gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrates... That the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up those that are already converted.

The whole prayer is about the prosperity, the well-being, the purity, and the growth of the church. For the church is the kingdom. This is what the Shorter Catechism calls the kingdom of grace. But we also pray, the Larger Catechism says, that Christ would hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him forever. That the kingdom of grace would give way to what the Shorter Catechism calls the kingdom of glory.

## **Later**

This brings us to the “later,” the not yet. And, as usual that future is the emphasis here. When Jesus institutes the Supper – itself a pointer to the eschatological feast – he says he won’t eat or drink until all is fulfilled *in the Kingdom of God*. He tells the apostles they will eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. In Matthew he says that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places, at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *in the kingdom of heaven*.

The eucharist itself, by which we remember our Lord, points us to the future. To the kingdom of glory. To be citizens of this kingdom is to share in Christ’s rule – now in weakness and suffering – later in splendor and glory. Now the cross, later the crown. Thus, Paul: Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

John tells the churches in Revelation. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, faithful shepherds will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Crowns are for Kings, and crown language in the NT is language of the future, of the kingdom of glory.

We are to pray for this glory to be hastened. The appearing of Jesus, the kingdom in its fulness is at the heart of this prayer. We aspire to this because we love Christ. And we want to see his face. Praying for the kingdom, is praying for what the church has called the beatific vision – the day when all is well, and the saints behold their Lord in face-to-face splendor, in the fulness of untainted joy.

And there is no splitting of the prayer, such that we pray for the kingdom of grace to advance; but forget, or merely tack on as an afterthought, the kingdom of glory. A lot of people sound like this: they want to see the kingdom advance; they are much less interested in seeing the king. (Come Lord, but: kids, marriage, grandkids, church, business, nation – where all the passion lies).

So, while we speak of two phases, an already and a not yet, it's important to remember: There is one kingdom, in the realm of the Spirit, and to yearn for it, is to yearn for the whole enchilada or not at all. After all, we are not interested in mere incremental changes, we want the holy realm of heaven to be projected over all the earth. Not some or even most of the earth. All the earth.

We want the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness, and nothing but righteousness, dwells. As Calvin puts it: as far as iniquity holds the world in sway, so far is the kingdom of God absent, for complete righteousness must come in its train. To seek ye first, the kingdom of God, and its righteousness, is to groan for glory, for the obliteration of all evil, past and present. If we pray for the kingdom, and we seek the kingdom, we will find ourselves, with the ancient church, crying out for the king himself: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus. The Spirit and the Bride say Come! Amen.

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