

Thy Kingdom Come

Matthew 6:10

I am being neither clever nor original when I declare that the Kingdom of God is already here but it is not yet come. I am not speaking in words of paradox either, trying to impress you by insisting on two contradictory things at the same time. Actually, there is nothing contradictory here at all, because the Kingdom of God must be considered from several different perspectives. So in one sense, a very real sense, the kingdom has already come. It is already here, a present reality.

And yet, in another sense, much more fully, it is not yet come. Thus we are taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Yet, in order to pray that second petition with a proper understanding, you need to understand both of those perspectives, the “already” and the “not yet.” So let me begin with a declaration of,

I. THE PRESENT REALITY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

If you are going to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” then you first need to know how and in what way the kingdom is already here. And that is to say, there is a present reality to,

A. The reign and rule of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is king. Now. He rules over the whole world, now. Already. God says of Jesus, “I have installed my King!”

Psalm 2:1 “Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.” 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.”

The Son then responds.

Psalm 2:7 “I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

Then we receive a warning.

Psalm 2:10 “Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

So when was King Jesus installed? When was his kingdom inaugurated? Well, when was this Psalm quoted in the New Testament? First, at Jesus's baptism.

Mat. 3:16 “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

So as Jesus' earthly ministry was established, reference was made to his kingly authority. And that was made quite explicit by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Acts 13:26 “Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. 27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. 28 And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to

death. 29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead. 31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”

So when God raised Jesus from the dead, he installed him as King! That is precisely what Paul teaches in,

Eph. 1:19 “...and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”

So Jesus is King. He rules “far above all principality and power and might and dominion.” In this age, already. The kingdom has come. And Jesus knew it, for he spoke explicitly in this language himself.

Luke 11:20 “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

And so it has! But even further, there is a very important aspect of that kingdom that is often missed or downplayed in our day, and that is the relationship between the kingdom and the church. And I mean, the visible church. The local church, which gathers together every Lord’s Day under the oversight of the Elders. The local church, where there are actual church members, where there is a local body observing the sacraments

of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, where there is the preaching of the word. In other words, the church as we are constituted here today. Not a vague reference to the universal church or invisible church. Not an indefinite reference to the body of Christ as if that body had little in common with a local congregation. But the church which is most often identified in the New Testament with particular reference to both church members and church officers. And the point is that the present reality of the kingdom of God makes evident,

B. The prominence and power of the visible church on earth.

Some of you might be tempted to look at our church and conclude that we are weak. And you might become depressed from that sense of weakness. Because the church is somehow less glorious because of our size, or the measure of our influence. But the present reality of the kingdom of God gives quite a different picture. Look again at Ephesians 1, the end of the chapter.

Eph. 1:22 “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

So Jesus is king, but for what reason? Jesus is head over all things, exercising authority above all others, but for what reason? Look at verse 22, “to the church.” I think it is even clearer, “for the church.” For the benefit of the church. Jesus’ rules in authority over all things for the sake of the church! Jesus reigns as king, from the right hand of the throne of God, for the benefit of the church.

In fact, we have been raised with Jesus. We are ruling with him, in all of his authority.

Eph. 2:6 “...[God] and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Now, why is this so important? Well, in terms of the prominence and power of the visible church today, what is it that we are supposed to be doing? As we worship God together, we are called to be a witness to the world, to the end of the earth. And we have encouragement to do just that, in terms of this kingdom authority of Jesus. Consider what we so commonly call the great commission in,

Mat. 28:18 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”

That’s the commission of the church. And the basis of our prominence as a church is that all authority has been given to Jesus as our head, all power has been given to him for our sake, so that we might go to all the nations and make disciples. Those nations belong to Jesus, and they belong, therefore, to the church. Satan can no longer deceive the nations. Why, because the kingdom has come. Jesus is king. I believe that is precisely the meaning of the thousand year millennium referred to in Revelation 20, a reference to the whole of this present age.

Rev. 20:1 “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.”

The thousand years has reference to the Great Commission. And the church lives out the authority of King Jesus when we go

to those nations. Satan cannot stop us. So this is what Jesus says in response to the 72 men whom Jesus sent out into the harvest.

Luke 10:17 “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” 18 And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Satan fell. Satan was bound. Jesus is king. The church has his authority to go to all the nations. That’s the present reality of the kingdom of God. But what then, are we praying for in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Kingdom come.” And I would answer, simply this, that we might see the fullness of that reality of Jesus’ kingdom made evident. In other words, that the kingdom would grow and expand in all those nations. That the influence of Jesus would increase to the end of the earth. That is yet,

II. THE FUTURE ANTICIPATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

We pray that the present reality of the kingdom would be made full, that every knee might bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. This is how our Shorter Catechism explains this second petition, “We pray that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.”

Let me allow the Bible to speak for itself, as we come to understand the focus of this petition in the Lord’s Prayer. What are we praying for? First, for,

A. The universal glory of the kingdom.

In terms of the millennium, I am not a post-millennialist, thinking that the whole world will be christianized in some sort of golden age before Jesus returns again, but then again, I am optimistic about the spread and the success of the gospel through the ministry of the church. Now, to be sure, I don't measure that optimistic expectation by what I see in the evangelical church in the United States today, because what I see isn't very encouraging in so many ways. But I measure my expectations based on what I see in Scripture, and what I see is the universal glory of the kingdom. And so I pray, and pray earnestly, "thy kingdom come!" Or, in the words of,

Psalms 72:8 "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. 9 Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, And His enemies will lick the dust. 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles Will bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba Will offer gifts. 11 Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him. 12 For He will deliver the needy when he cries, The poor also, and him who has no helper. 13 He will spare the poor and needy, And will save the souls of the needy. 14 He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; And precious shall be their blood in His sight. 15 And He shall live; And the gold of Sheba will be given to Him; Prayer also will be made for Him continually, And daily He shall be praised. 16 There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, On the top of the mountains; Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; And those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. 17 His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; All nations shall call Him blessed. 18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! 19 And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."

Beloved, that makes me excited! "Let the whole earth be filled

with his glory!" That is why we labor so hard in foreign missions. In Uganda. In China. In Japan. In Haiti and Uruguay. Thy kingdom come! Let the whole earth be filled with his glory!

The glory of that kingdom is made especially plain in Isaiah's prophecy, a prophecy which I believe refers to the age to come, the eternal kingdom which follows the return of Jesus.

Is. 11:1 "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. 3 His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; 4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist. 6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. 7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea."

The curse shall be removed! The curse of death shall be ended. Even the animals will live again without death. There shall be a full and complete victory for the kingdom of Jesus. A universal glory that shall only be accomplished after Jesus returns. And for that, we pray, "thy kingdom come."

There is, of course, a second aspect to that universal and eternal glory of the kingdom. Namely,

B. The final judgment upon the wicked.

So don't miss the fact that when you pray "thy kingdom come," you are praying for judgment to come. Eternal judgment. As the catechism puts it, "We pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed."

One obvious passage which describes this final judgment in terms of the glory of Christ and the glory of his reign in his eternal kingdom is found in,

Rev. 19:1 "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! 2 For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." 3 Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

We pray for the destruction of the wicked, the judgment of those who are the followers of Satan. We pray for the destruction of his kingdom, and for his own eternal damnation. Thy kingdom come.

It is the prayer of,

Rom. 16:20 "...the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

And in that context, this coming judgment in the glory of kingdom is to be,

C. The personal expectation of all believers.

So when we pray, thy kingdom come, we are waiting for the fullness of this future glory. We are wanting to see it, wanting God's kingdom to be advanced. Even, hastened. Such is the meaning of the words we read in,

Rev. 22:17 "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. 18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

1 Cor. 16:22 "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!"

There the Greek is the word, Maranatha. Our Lord, Come! Come quickly! To put that into context, and to apply this thought to your own situation, consider as well,

2 Peter 3:7 "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand

years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Do you see Peter’s application? Verse 11, “Since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” So all of this has an ethical application. All of this biblical emphasis upon the expectation of Jesus’ second coming is put in the context of how you should live now. So when you pray, “Thy kingdom come,” when you pray for that day of judgment to come, as you wait for new heavens and a new earth, the question to ask is simple, “What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?”

So pray in this way. Pray that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced. Pray for the advancement of that kingdom, knowing that Jesus is already enthroned as king. And pray, thy kingdom come, knowing that all authority on heaven and earth is now given to us as a church. So pray for those who are still outside that kingdom, those among your friends and family who are not Christians. Pray for the work of the church throughout our country, and pray

for revival rather than wringing your hands in desperation regarding the current political situation.

Pray for those missionaries who go to other nations, and pray for those nations. Pray earnestly, and specifically. Pray without ceasing, and with great hope. As you pray, let this be your hope and your confidence, the words which the father spoke to the son,

Psalm 2:7 “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”

In other words, “thy kingdom come!”