



The Lord's Prayer

Part 4 – The Already / Not Yet Kingdom

Mark 1:15

The second petition of the Lord's Prayer is, "your kingdom come." The nature of the kingdom of God is one of the most discussed and debated issues related to the study of Scripture. The various views are understandable. At various times the Bible describes God's kingdom as eternal, of having arrived in Jesus, and of still unfolding. The Bible makes it clear that God establishes his kingdom. Yet, Jesus tells us to pray for God's kingdom to come. None of this indicates contradictions, of course. Rather, the Scriptures point to the breadth and depth of the marvelous reality of the kingdom of God.

In the most basic sense, the kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. It is a genuine reign over a real kingdom. The kingdom encompasses both the spiritual and cosmic realms. And while the kingdom of God is eternal, established, and uncontested, our temporal perspective cannot fully behold these realities. From our perspective, God's kingdom is slow in coming and challenged by the kingdom of this evil age.

So, while it is true that God's kingdom is eternal and cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28) it is also true that we experience the kingdom within the unfolding of redemptive history. This two-fold reality is often referred to as "already / not yet." And so we can say with Jesus that the kingdom has come and at the same time pray for the kingdom to come. When we pray for the kingdom to come we pray that the unfolding reign of God in history would be demonstrated through the purity of the church, resistance against evil, and the salvation of sinners.

The Larger Catechism is helpful in understanding what we are praying for in the second petition:

"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, the gospel propagated throughout the world...the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption...and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him forever..."

Main Idea: Christians pray for God's eternal kingdom to be finally and fully established for His glory and the salvation of His people.

1. Understanding God's Kingdom

a) The Plan of the Kingdom

- God's people expected the Messiah to usher in the kingdom by force, crushing Rome, and setting up his throne in Jerusalem. But God's plan was radically different. His kingdom came into the world by the Son's incarnation in humble flesh. His power was established through the seeming weakness and foolishness of the cross.

b) The Purpose of the Kingdom

- God's people conceived of the kingdom in political terms. They expected their earthly rivals and oppressors to be conquered by the Messiah. But Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan. He came to save his people from sin and death. His throne would be built in human hearts.

c) The Progress of the Kingdom

- Jesus' first followers expected him to bring the kingdom quickly, in their lifetime. It seems each generation of Christians expects the end of the age and the consummation of the kingdom to occur in their lifetime. But God does not measure time in the way that we do. He is not subject to time. He does not experience the passage of moments as we do. God is outside of and reigning over time. Therefore, the kingdom will come in just precisely the right moment according to God's eternal decree. We must understand that each day the coming of the kingdom is delayed is an act of grace on God's part as he gathers in, through Christ, the full number of his people.

2. Praying for God's Kingdom to Come**a) God's Work**

Mark 1:15

Hebrews 12:28

Colossians 1:13

- The second petition of the Lord's Prayer is a reminder that it is God who brings his kingdom. We do not build or bring the kingdom. We pray for the kingdom to come. We live lives according to kingdom priorities. But it is God's work to bring His kingdom. God has called his church to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and make disciples. These things have always been considered scandalously weak and irrelevant by the world.
- When the church comes to believe that its efforts bring the kingdom of God it will inevitably be distracted from its essential calling to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of Jesus. God's ordinary means of grace will be eclipsed by activities it deems more practical for building the kingdom. The churches and denominations which have compromised the truth of Scripture and rejected the gospel have done so typically because of the belief that they are supposed to bring God's kingdom here and now.

* **Note:** We must not confuse the relatively narrow God-given mission of the church with the many different ways that Christians can be engaged in loving their neighbor and doing good.

b) God's Rule

Psalm 103:19

- Jesus teaches Christians to pray "*Your kingdom come...*" We must not be about building kingdoms for ourselves. It is not our name we seek to make great in this world. When we pray, "*Your kingdom come,*" we are petitioning God to establish his rule and reign in this world. God's rule is experienced in this world as the church remains committed to her mission and Christians go about living according to kingdom priorities. We live according to kingdom principles when husbands love their wives and vice versa. We live according to kingdom principles when we labor responsibly, act mercifully, and give generously. Through ordinary Christian virtues the world is given a taste of the kingdom to come.

c) God's Timing

Matthew 13:31-33

- Praying the second petition of the Lord's Prayer reminds us that the kingdom has yet to come in its fullness. On the one hand, the kingdom of God is eternal and comprehensive. God does not rule over a democracy. But, as we have seen, in terms of human experience and the progress of redemptive history God's kingdom is yet to fully arrive. So we pray for that day to come. Christians long for the appearing of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).