Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Praying for God's Kingdom to Come
Scripture: Matthew 6
Code: BQ041112

Thy kingdom come. (6:10a)

Frances Havergal wrote these beautiful words of tribute to her Lord in her hymn “His Coming in Glory:”

Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning,
Thee, my own beloved Lord.
Every tongue Thy name confessing,
Worship, honor, glory, blessing,
Brought to Thee with glad accord.
Thee, my Master and my Friend,
Vindicated and enthroned,
Unto earth’s remotest end,
Glorified, adored, and owned.

Our greatest desire should be to see the Lord reigning as King in His **kingdom**, to have the honor and authority that have always been His but that He has not yet come to claim. The King is inseparable from His kingdom. To pray **Thy kingdom come** is to pray for the program of the eternal Deity to be fulfilled, for Christ to come and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. His program and His plan should be the preoccupation of our lives and of our prayers.

But how self-centered our prayers usually are, focused on our needs, our plans, our aspirations, our understandings. We are often like tiny infants, who know no world but the world of their own feelings and wants. One of the greatest struggles of the Christian life is to fight the old sinful habits, with their constant and unrelenting focus on self.

Even problems and issues outside of ourselves can cloud our supreme concern for God’s **kingdom**. It is our responsibility to pray for our families, pastors, missionaries, national and other leaders, and for many other people and things. But our prayers in every case should be that God’s will be done in and through those people, that they would think, speak, and act in accordance with God’s will. The best we can pray for any person or for any cause is that God’s **kingdom** be advanced in that person

or that cause.

The holy purpose of the divine Father is to exalt Christ in the consummation of history when the Son rules and reigns in His **kingdom**. The Talmud is right in saying that if a prayer does not name the **kingdom** of God, it is not a prayer (*Berakoth* 21a).

The greatest opposition to Christ's kingdom, and the greatest opposition to Christian living, is the **kingdom** of this present world, which Satan rules. The essence of Satan's kingdom is opposition to God's kingdom and God's people.

Basileia (**kingdom**) does not refer primarily to a geographical territory but to sovereignty and dominion. Therefore when we pray **Thy kingdom come**, we are praying for God's rule through Christ's enthronement to come, His glorious reign on earth to begin. Come translates the aorist active imperative of *erchomai*, indicating a sudden, instantaneous coming (cf. Matt. 24:27). It is the coming millennial **kingdom** (Rev. 20:4) of which the Lord is speaking, not an indirect effort to create a more godly society on earth through the progressive, human-oriented work of Christians.

To pray **Thy kingdom come** is to pray for God's kingdom, the kingdom over which He, and He alone, is Lord and King. It will be a kingdom on earth (v. 10a), but it will not be a kingdom of this world-that is, of this present world system. "My kingdom is not of this world," Jesus told Pilate (John 18:36). No human kingdom could dovetail with God's kingdom, even partially. Sinful man could not be a part of a divine reign. That is why we do not advance God's kingdom by trying to improve human society. Many good and worthy causes deserve the support of Christians, but in supporting those causes we neither build the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ or bring it closer. Even the best of such things are but holding actions that help retard the corruption that will always and inevitably characterize human societies and human kingdoms-until the Lord returns to establish His own perfect **kingdom**.

The kingdom of God, or of heaven, was the heart of Jesus' message. He came to "preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43). There is no other gospel but the good news of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Always and everywhere He went, Jesus preached the message of salvation as entrance to the kingdom. He even stated that He "must preach the kingdom … for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). For the forty days that Jesus remained on earth between His resurrection and ascension He spoke to His disciples "of the things concerning the **kingdom** of God" (Acts 1:3).

God’s kingdom is past, in the sense that it embodied Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:11). It was present in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, in the sense that the true divine King was present “in the midst of you” (Luke 17:21, lit.). But the particular focus of our praying is to be on the **kingdom** that is yet to **come**.

God now and always has ruled the kingdom of the universe. He created it, and He controls it, orders it, and holds it together. As James Or comments, “There is therefore recognized in Scripture … a natural and universal kingdom or dominion of God embracing all objects, persons, and events, all doings of individuals and nations, all operations and changes of nature and history, absolutely without exception.” … (cited by Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* [Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1980], p. 22). God’s is an “everlasting kingdom” (Ps. 145:13), and even now “His sovereignty rules over all” (Ps. 103:19; cf. 29:10; 1 Chron. 29:11–12; etc.).

But the most obvious fact of life is that God is not now ruling on earth as He rules in heaven (Matt. 6:10c)-and it is the divine earthly **kingdom** we are to pray will **come**. Our praying should be for Christ to return and to establish His earthly kingdom, to put down sin and enforce obedience to God’s will. The Lord will then “rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 2:27; cf. Isa. 30:14; Jer. 19:11). After a thousand years His earthly kingdom will blend into His eternal kingdom, and there will be no distinction between His rule on earth and His rule in heaven (see Rev. 20–21).

The Greek of this verse could be translated “Let **Thy kingdom come** now.” There is therefore a sense in which we pray for God’s **kingdom** to come presently. In a present and limited, but real and miraculous way, God’s kingdom is coming to earth each time a new soul is brought into the kingdom.

First of all, the kingdom comes in this way by conversion (Matt. 18:1–4). So prayer should be evangelistic and missionary-for new converts, new children of God, new kingdom citizens. Conversion to the kingdom involves an invitation (Matt. 22:1–14), repentance (Mark 1:14–15), and a willing response (Mark 12:28–34; Luke 9:61–62). The present existence of the kingdom on earth is internal, in the hearts and minds of those who belong to Jesus Christ, the King. We should pray for their number to mightily increase. Praying for the kingdom to come, in this sense, is praying for the salvation of souls. Every believer should seek others who can sing, “King of my life, I crown Thee now, Thine shall the glory be” (“Lead Me to Calvary,” by Jennie Evelyn Hussey).

The **kingdom** for which we are to pray, and of which we now have a taste, is of infinite value. “The

kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field” or a “pearl of great value” which a person sells all his possessions to buy (Matt. 13:44–46). Its value is so great that each of those parables emphasizes that the procurer sold all he had to purchase salvation (cf. Matt. 10:37).

Second, the kingdom comes now through commitment. The desire of those already converted should be to respond to the rule of the Lord in their lives now so that He rules in them as He rules in heaven. When we pray as Jesus teaches, we will continually pray that our lives will honor and glorify our Father in heaven.
The call for the kingdom to come is also related to the second coming of the Lord. John says in the last chapter of Revelation: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (22:20).

In that day, our prayers will finally be answered. As the hymn by Isaac Watts begins, “Jesus shall reign where’ere the sun does its successive journeys run. His kingdom spread from shore to shore, ’til moon shall wax and wane no more.” Paul emphasizes that waiting for the kingdom to come in its final form is not so much looking for an event as for a person-the King Himself (1 Thess. 1:10).

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