

THE LORD'S PRAYER Chapter 3 The Second Petition

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Transcript

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Chapter 3

The Second Petition

"Thy Kingdom come"

Matthew 6:10

The second petition is the most brief and yet the most comprehensive one contained in our Lord's Prayer. Nevertheless, it is strange and sad that, in some circles, it is the least understood and the most controverted. The following questions call for careful consideration. First, what is the relationship between this petition and the one preceding it? Second, whose Kingdom is here in view? Third, exactly what is meant by the words, "Thy Kingdom"? Fourth, in what sense or senses are we to understand the words, "Thy Kingdom come"? The first petition, "Hallowed be Thy name," concerns God's glory itself, whereas the second and third have respect to the means whereby His glory is to be manifested and promoted on earth. God's name is manifestatively glorified here only in the proportion in which His Kingdom comes to us and His will is done by us. The relationship between this petition and the former one, then, is quite apparent. Christ teaches us to pray first for the sanctifying of God's great name; then He directs us to pray subsequently for the means thereto. Among the means for promoting God's glory, none is so influential as the coming of His Kingdom. Hence we are exhorted, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). But though men ought to glorify God's name upon earth, yet of themselves they cannot do so. God's Kingdom must first be set up in their hearts. God cannot be honored by us until we voluntarily submit to His rule over us. "Thy Kingdom come." Whose Kingdom is being referred to here? Obviously, it is that of God the Father, yet it is not to be thought of as something separate from the Kingdom of the Son. The Father's Kingdom is no more distinct from Christ's than "the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. 3:15) is something other than the Body of Christ, or than the "Gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1) is something different from "the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16), or than "the Word of Christ" (Col. 3:16) is to be distinguished from the Word of God. But Christ does mean, by the words "Thy Kingdom," to distinguish sharply the Kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan (Matthew 12:25-28), which is a kingdom of darkness and disorder. Satan's kingdom is not only opposite in character, but it also stands in belligerent

opposition to the Kingdom of God. The Father's Kingdom is, first and more generally, His universal rule, His absolute dominion over all creatures and things. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all" (1 Chron. 29:11). Second, and more specifically, it is the external sphere of His grace on earth, where He is ostensibly acknowledged (see Matthew 13:11 and Mark 4:11 in their contexts). Third, and more definitely still, it is God's spiritual and internal Kingdom, which is entered by regeneration. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Now as the Father and the Son are one in nature, so is Their Kingdom the same; and thus it appears in each of its aspects. Concerning the aspect of providence, we read, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17), signifying cooperation in the government of the world (Heb. 1:3). Christ now holds the mediatorial office of a King by virtue of His Father's appointment (Luke 22:29) and establishment (Ps. 2:6). When the Kingdom is viewed very specifically as a reign of grace set up in the hearts of God's people, it is rightly called both "the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 4:20) and "the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Viewing the Kingdom in regard to its ultimate eternal glory, Christ says that He shall drink the fruit of the vine with us "in [His] Father's Kingdom" (Matthew 26:29), yet it is also called "the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11). Thus it should seem perfectly natural to us when we read these words: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev. 11:15). One may ask, "Which aspect of the Kingdom is here prayed for as yet future? Certainly not its providential aspect, since that has existed and continued from the beginning. The Kingdom must, then, be future in the sense that God's reign of grace is to be consummated in the eternal glory of His Kingdom in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13). There is to be a voluntary surrender of the whole man—spirit and body—to the revealed will of God, so that His rule over us is entire. But if we are to experience and enjoy the eternal glory of God's Kingdom, we must personally submit to His gracious reign in this life. The nature of this reign is summed up in three characteristics: "the Kingdom of God is... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). A person experiencing this present reign of grace is characterized by righteousness in that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him as one who, by faith, has become His willing subject; furthermore, he also possesses the righteousness of a good conscience because the Holy Spirit has sanctified him, that is, has set him apart to a new life of holiness to the glory of God. Such a person is also characterized by peace: peace of conscience toward God, peaceful relations with God's people, and the pursuit of peace with all his fellow creatures (Heb. 12:14). This personal, godly peace is maintained by attention to all the duties of love (Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:8). As the result of righteousness and peace, such a person is also characterized by joy in the Holy Spirit, a delighting in God in all the states and vicissitudes of life (Phil. 4:10-14; 1 Tim. 6:6-10). There is a threefold application when we pray, "Thy Kingdom come." First, it applies to the external sphere of God's grace here on earth: "Let Thy Gospel be preached and the power of Thy Spirit attend it; let Thy Church be strengthened; let Thy cause on earth be advanced and the works of Satan be destroyed!" Second, it applies to God's internal Kingdom, that is, His spiritual reign of grace within the hearts of men: "Let Thy throne be established in our hearts; let Thy laws be administered in our lives and Thy name be magnified by our walk." Third, it applies to God's Kingdom in its future glory: "Let the Day be hastened when Satan and his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when Thy people shall be done with sinning forever, and when Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). God's Kingdom comes progressively to individuals in the following degrees or stages: (1) God gives to men the outward means of salvation (Rom. 10:13-17); (2) the preached Word enters the mind, so that the mysteries of the Gospel are understood (Matthew 13:23; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:32); (3) the Holy Spirit regenerates men, so that they enter the Kingdom of God as willing subjects of His

gracious reign (John 1:12, 13; 3:3, 5); (4) at death, the spirits of the redeemed are freed from sin (Rom. 7:24, 25; Heb. 12:23); and (5) at the resurrection, the redeemed shall be fully glorified (Rom. 8:23). O Lord, let Thy Kingdom come to us who are strangers and pilgrims here on earth: prepare us for it and conduct us into it, that be yet outside of it; renew us by Thy Spirit that we may be subject to Thy will; confirm us who are in the way, that our souls after this life, and both soul and body in the Day of Judgment, may be fully glorified: yea, Lord, hasten this glorification to us and all Thine elect (W. Perkins).

We say again that, though this is the most brief of the petitions, it is also the most comprehensive. In praying, "Thy Kingdom come," we plead for the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit to attend the preaching of the Word, for the Church to be furnished with God-given and God-equipped officers, for the ordinances to be purely administered, for an increase of spiritual gifts and graces in Christ's members, and for the overthrow of Christ's enemies. Thus we pray that the Kingdom of grace may be further extended till the whole of God's elect are brought into it. Also, by necessary implication, we pray that God will wean us more and more from the perishing things of this world. In conclusion, let us point out some of the uses to which this petition should be put. First, we ought to bewail and confess our own failures to promote the Kingdom of God, and those of others. It is our duty to confess before God our wretched, natural depravity and the awful proclivity of our flesh to serve sin and the interests of Satan (Rom. 7:14-24). We ought to mourn the sad state of the world and its woeful transgressions of God's Law, by which God is dishonored and the kingdom of Satan furthered (Ps. 119:136; Mark 3:5). Second, we are to earnestly seek those graces that will make our lives a sanctifying influence in the world, in order that God's Kingdom might be both built and maintained. We are to endeavor to so subject ourselves to the commandments of Christ that we are wholly ruled by Him, always ready to do His bidding (Rom. 6:13). Third, having prayed for God's enabling, we are to perform all the duties appointed to us by God, bringing forth the fruits that pertain to God's Kingdom (Matthew 21:43; Rom. 14:17). This we are to do with all diligence (Eccl. 9:10; Col. 3:17), using all the Divinely appointed means for the furthering of God's Kingdom. This second petition is well summarized in The Westminster Shorter Catechism: In the 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.

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