

Thy Kingdom Come

Revelation 11:15-19

Thy Kingdom Come... We pray that prayer every Sunday in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the Kingdom of God to come. And so, we ask for God to bring His kingdom.

What does it mean to ask for the Kingdom of God to come?

The Shorter Catechism breaks it down into three basic requests:

WSC 102 What do we pray for in the second petition?

In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come) we pray,

1. That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed;
2. and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it;
3. and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

The writers of the Catechism made a distinction between the "kingdom of grace" and the "kingdom of glory". When they did this, they were not speaking of two separate kingdoms. They were describing the one Kingdom of God in two ways, as it presently exists and as it will exist when Jesus returns to the earth.

In the last few verses of Revelation 11, we are brought to the very moment when the Kingdom of Grace becomes the Kingdom of Glory.

It is the moment for which every believer has been waiting for all history. Adam and Eve are waiting for this moment. As are Noah, and Job, and Abraham, and Rahab, and Ruth and Moses, and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and John the Baptist and the Disciples and Christians throughout the entire Church Age.

In this passage we are brought to the 7th Trumpet.

The seventh trumpet brings us to the same moment as the 7th Seal and the 7th Bowl. The similarity of language makes this clear.

Look at verse 19.

There were
flashes of lightning,
rumblings,
peals of thunder,
an earthquake,
and
heavy hail.

The Seventh Seal used the same language.

Revelation 8:5 ⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

The Seventh Bowl will also use the same language.

Revelation 16:17-18 ¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake.

While the Seals and Trumpets and Bowls all depict the entirety of the period from the resurrection of Christ to His return, they all end with Christ's Return.

And they all view this return from different angles.

The Seventh Seal focused on all men being silent before God's holy verdict.
What is the focus of the seventh trumpet?

The seventh trumpet focuses on the visible reign of God upon the Earth.

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom
of our Lord
and
of his Christ,
and he shall reign forever and ever."

The questions for each of us:
How should the coming of this day cause us to think differently?
How should the coming of the day affect our feelings?
How should the coming of this day alter how we live?

Are you asking Jesus for this day to come?
Revelation ends with this very prayer: **Revelation 22:20** Come, Lord Jesus!

Read Revelation 11:15-19.

Why does the Catechism speak of something called "a kingdom of grace"?
Because in one sense, the kingdom of God exists in the present.
After Jesus' resurrection, he ascended to the throne of God in heaven and is reigning now from there.

Jesus rules His kingdom from the heavenly throne.
He gives the keys of the kingdom to the leaders of his Church.
And His kingdom advances every time another soul is snatched away from Satan's kingdom of darkness and brought into the Christ's kingdom of light.

Christ's Kingdom also advances when saints make progress in sanctification by the working of the Holy Spirit in our heart and lives.

But, while Jesus is ruling in the present, He does so while the kingdom of this world continues to exist. This is why Christians continue to be mocked and persecuted by the rulers of this world. This is why the name of Jesus is not exalted in every heart throughout the whole earth. This is why saints continue to struggle with sin.

So, while it is good to remember that Christ conquered Satan at the cross, we are still waiting for the moment when "the kingdom of the world, will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

Verse 15 recognizes only two kingdoms.

The Kingdom of the world.
The Kingdom of our Lord.

Even though there have been many kingdoms that have come and gone throughout history, they all can be spoken of as the one "kingdom of the world."

And they can only exist up until the moment of Jesus' return to earth. When Jesus descends to the earth, all other kingdoms will cease. Only His kingdom will remain. And it will remain for all eternity.

The anti-Christian powers and rulers that we fear are on the rise in our own land will be destroyed. They will either be destroyed due to the ebb and flow of the nations. Or they will be destroyed at Jesus Return.

The Kingdom of the Lord and the Kingdom of His Christ are one and the same.
We can speak of the Kingdom of God.
Or we can speak of the Kingdom of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned here, but the fact that the Church is the Bride of Christ and reigns with Christ makes clear that the Holy Spirit also is reigning. The Holy Spirit indwells the Church, including both the Old and New Testaments. In our passage she is represented by the 24 elders.

For now, just remember that God's kingdom is Jesus' kingdom.
They are one kingdom because the Father and the Son are one.

How does the Church react to Jesus' open and visible reign upon the earth?

16 And
 the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God
 fell on their faces and worshiped God,
17 saying,

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and
begun to reign.

The 24 elders fall on their faces in worship.
While I believe these are 24 real leaders, I also believe that they represent the entire people of God, all saints throughout all the world, throughout all of time.

What will Christians do when Jesus openly and visibly reigns on the earth?
We will fall on our faces, and we will worship Him.

Falling on our faces is a symbolic way of describing hearts that are submissive to His rule over us.

Don't just think of the physical action. Think of what the physical action symbolizes: Jesus ruling over His people, and His people willingly submitting to His rule.

It is important to reflect upon this for a minute. The Kingdom of God is a land where Jesus rules over all His people in righteousness.

It is not a land where Jesus takes a poll to decide how to rule.
It is not a democracy where we can change our leaders if we get tired of them.
It is a land where Jesus rules all the time.

I am saying this in a somewhat terse way to make the point.
Of course, Jesus' rule is not oppressive and entirely good and full of blessing.

But there is no denying that it is a place where His will is the law of the land.

Think for a moment how often that you resist His will over you. If you think that you never struggle with His will, then you are not paying attention.

We struggle with His moral will at times.
But we regularly struggle with His providence over us.
We do not like the trials that he calls us to endure.
We question His goodness or His love for us all the time.
If you pause to reflect upon the inner feelings of your heart, you will see that submission to His rule over you may be more difficult than anything else in life.

In fact, I believe that this is one way that distinguishes believers from unbelievers.
Christians want Christ to rule them.
Non-Christians want to throw off Christ and rule themselves.

Christians grieve over and hate the remaining rebellion of their hearts.

Christians are often tormented within as they strive to submit their conflicting feelings to God.

But in the end, the Christian has a new heart that truly wants to be ruled by Christ.

And that is why the thought of the coming of the Kingdom of God is so appealing. It is the moment when the transformation of our heart will be complete and we will for the first time ever “only and always perfectly submit to our Lord and Savior.”

Are you looking forward to that Day?

Are you asking that the Holy Spirit continue His work of crucifying the independent spirit within you?

Are you thankful that Jesus Christ has joined you to Himself for this very purpose?

In my struggles to submit my heart to Christ, it is the Scriptures that give me hope.

1 John 3:1-3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Philippians 3:12-14 ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6 ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Are you looking forward to the day when the last dregs of your old nature are consumed, and you will “fall on your face” before Christ in the fullest sense?

Then you are ready for that Day.

While that Day will bring about the perfection of worship in the saints, for the rest of the world it will only produce a more bitter hatred of Christ and His rule.

18 The nations raged,
 but
 your wrath came,

Even, at the moment, of Jesus' return, the nations will still be raging against Him. They will never lay down their arms. They will only be forcefully subdued.

It is true that the “kingdoms” of this world come and go throughout history. But they are always replaced by another kingdom of this world. Not until Jesus returns will there be an end to the “kingdom” of this world, never to rise again.

The establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah has been a long time in coming.

This kingdom was subtly promised in Genesis 3:15 when God promised to crush the serpent's head by a son of Eve.

God again promised this kingdom to Abraham when He promised to make of him a great nation in Genesis 12.

In the time of Moses, God again reaffirmed His commitment to make Israel into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Of course, obedience to the Lord, was always a problem. Rather than Israel becoming the Kingdom of God, she acted more like a kingdom of the world.

Because of His covenant faithfulness, God rips the kingdom out of the hands of Saul and gives it to David, a man after His own heart.

And then God promises to raise up one of David's own sons to become the true Ruler of God's people.

1 Chronicles 17:11-14 ¹¹ When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹² He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, ¹⁴ but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever."

For several hundred years, not one of David's children meets the criteria for being God's promised Ruler. And yet, God makes clear to His people through His prophets that He would be faithful to bring this anointed Ruler.

Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Nothing can stop the zeal of the LORD from accomplishing His eternal kingdom. Therefore, all the nations should take notice. If you will not serve the LORD, you are doomed to perish.

Isaiah 60:12 ¹² For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste.

Even while Daniel and his friends are exiled in the mighty kingdom of Babylon, God continues to make clear that Babylon is the kingdom that is doomed, not the Kingdom of God.

Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his

dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Finally, John the Baptist is raised up by God to proclaim that Jesus is the One who will rule God's eternal Kingdom.

But even though Jesus came as the rightful ruler of the Kingdom of God, the fullness of that kingdom would still have to wait.

He taught his disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come".
If His kingdom had come in its fullness that would be a strange thing to pray.

Jesus also taught that it was the duty of every man to...

Matthew 6:33 ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

If you already have the kingdom, it would be strange to seek the kingdom.

No other Gospel contains so much of Jesus' teaching on the coming kingdom of God as Matthew.

Jesus taught clearly that we all must stand before Jesus on the Day when He returns to establish His kingdom.

Matthew 7:21-23 ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Jesus had no problem telling the existing leaders in Israel that the Kingdom of God would be torn from them and given to others.

Matthew 8:10-12 ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Church's mandate to preach the Gospel to the whole world continues until the moment when Jesus returns.

Matthew 24:14 ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes the Sacrament of Communion partly to help the disciples to maintain their hopes for the coming kingdom of God.

Matthew 26:29 ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Jesus told his disciples to expect suffering in this world before they would enter into His kingdom.

Luke 22:28-30 ²⁸ "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

But no teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God was more earth shattering than what He said to Pilate before His crucifixion.

John 18:36 ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

This is probably the most difficult of lessons for us to learn about the Kingdom of God.

We want the kingdom of God to come in this life. We want the Kingdom of God to be "of this world."

How many of our yearnings have to do with our wanting God to produce the blessings of the Kingdom here and now?

But very often, in doing this, what we really want is God to establish our own kingdom.

We want to rule. And we want God to serve us.

The fact is that God often wants us to die to what the kingdoms of this world have to offer.

Illustration of the pearls. (Vonnette Bright)

The truth is that Jesus gives us many good gifts in this life. We are to receive these with thanksgiving.

And then, we are in submission to His will give them up to Him.

You see, in your present condition, you are not capable of receiving the fullness of blessing in the Kingdom of God.

Only in our resurrected bodies would the Kingdom of God finally be experienced.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

The fullness of the Kingdom of God belongs to the New Heavens and the New Earth. Our present bodies could not even take in all the glories of that kingdom.

So, we are called to keep waiting for Jesus to bring the kingdom. And in the mean time we are to expect suffering.

2 Timothy 4:18 ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

James teaches us that if we seem to miss out in this life, to not be too concerned. There is a kingdom that awaits in which we will not miss out.

James 2:5 ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

This brings us full circle to the book of Revelation. Remember, John is suffering on the Island of Patmos as he is given this glorious vision of the coming kingdom.

Revelation 1:9 ⁹ I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

So, when the saints fall on their faces it makes perfect sense. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, those who have believed have been waiting for this moment.

How about you?
Does the thought of this moment fill your soul with delight?
We will surely worship on that day.
But does the thought of that day, lead us to worship now?

I know that you are concerned about America. I am too.
I do not really want to endure the suffering that seems to be heading our way.

But this suffering cannot destroy our hope.
The Day when the Kingdom of the world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is coming.

And the certainty of this should lead us to bow before Christ.
And to tell those around us of their need to trust in Christ now.

Because when Jesus returns, there will be no time to repent and believe then.
There will only be the Final Judgment of all men.

and
the time
for the dead to be judged,
and
for rewarding your servants,
the prophets and saints,

and
those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and
for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

Jesus will judge those who do not know Him. This is a horrible thought. But a necessary one. Jesus' justice demands it.

But for those who are trusting in Jesus, his servants and prophets and saints, those who fear His name, both small and great, it will be the Day of giving rewards.

These are not rewards that we have earned according to Justice. They are rewards bestowed because of grace. The grace of God has worked in each of us and enabled us to obey our King in small or great ways. And God will acknowledge those deeds before everyone.

This is what should fill our hearts with joyous expectation.
Of course, the imperfection of our works will be burned up.
And the remaining sin will also be burned away.
But each true believer will have something done that is a good work created by God in advance for us to walk in. And we will receive rewards on that Day.

The third thing that John says is that the Destroyers of the Earth will be destroyed. The destroyers of the earth could refer to humans or to fallen angels.

The primary way that humans have been destroying the earth has been in their opposition to God' rule over them. And Satan has been fueling this rebellion in man all along. God no longer sovereignly rules over evil men and angels. He removes them from the earth entirely. He judges them to an eternal destruction in the eternal lake of fire.

Evil will be no more. Nor those who encourage evil.

But more than the destruction of evil, more than rewards, more than a renewed earth, more than any other good thing in the coming kingdom... the greatest blessing of the kingdom of God is having perfect access to the Lord.

¹⁹ Then
God's temple in heaven was opened,
and
the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.

I believe that this is a subtle reference to the Temple at the time of Christ's crucifixion. When Jesus died, the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. What was behind the curtain at that time?

Absolutely nothing! The ark of the covenant was lost generations before by the Babylonians. The Holy of holies was ever since an empty room.

But when the heavenly temple is opened it is not empty. The ark of the covenant is there. The ark was always the symbol of God's presence with His people.

The greatest beauty of that Day is that we will see the glory of God. We will see Him as He is. And we will be like Him.

There have been times when I have felt God's fellowship keenly. There have been other times when God feels incredibly absent. I yearn for the day when I will always know the beauty of the Lord.

Applications:

1. The Kingdom of God is not of this world. As you are concerned for America, remember that it is not the Kingdom of God.
2. Faith in Christ is your only hope to be given entrance into the Kingdom of God.
3. The Kingdom of God is coming. And when Jesus returns all resistance to His rule will be crushed.
4. Remember that bringing you into submission to His rule is one reason for which Jesus redeemed you. One way that He sanctifies you is by giving you trials and tribulations in this life.

Believing in the Coming Kingdom of God will affect how you think about the kingdoms of this world.

Believing in the Coming Kingdom of God should evoke feelings within you: greater peace and assurance... maybe greater inner struggle over your lingering resistance to His rule...

Believing in the Coming Kingdom of God should affect your actions: a willingness to hold more loosely even the good things of this life... a greater boldness in helping others to see our desperate need of Christ.

The Kingdom of the world "has become" the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

We will all say those words together one day!

Amen! Come Lord Jesus!