

We do not, of course, equate the church with the kingdom, but recognise that praying for the kingdom, requires prayer for the work and health of the church.

The petition that God's kingdom come, brings with it, as indeed all the petitions of this prayer do, the personal commitment to set ourselves to the work of the kingdom. It becomes our goal and purpose in life.

[Matthew 6:33]

Our prayer, our desire to see God's kingdom come and bear fruit, is not sufficient of itself, it leads us to ask what we must do to see that kingdom come, and what we should do to seek it with all our hearts.

Next week we look at the third petition which closely relates to the desire to see God's kingdom come, namely that God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.



Reflections on The Lord's Prayer

"Thy kingdom come"

Last week we saw how the knowledge of God as our father leads to the desire to hallow his name. That is, to glorify him, and desire to see him glorified in the attitudes of others.

We considered the greatness of God's glory, and our interest in it.

We saw that the hallowing of God, the seeking of God for his own sake, and not for his benefits, is a characteristic of God's children.

One may even say, that it is this concern which separates us from those in the world who only come to God as a means to an end, as a solution to some problem or other, and not simply because God is wonderful and worthy.

The desire for the magnification of God's glory, is the greatest aim of his children, and the petitions that follow all serve to build upon that desire. All further petitions are subsumed within the greater purpose of God's glory.

Our desire is one thing, of course, but real desire is accompanied by action. Our desire to see God glorified brings along with it our commitment to glorify him in our lives.

The prayer does not leave it there. There are two more petitions that concern God's glory.

So how does the prayer develop from here?

Today we look at the second petition which builds on our desire to see God's name hallowed, and God's person glorified.

“Thy kingdom come”

The second petition expresses the desire that God's kingdom come.

By the word "kingdom" we mean neither a country, a geographical location in the world, nor the church, as is it manifest among us today.

Of course, in an absolute sense, God is already sovereign ruler of the entire creation. He is Lord of all, and everything that exists is subject to God's will and purposes.

[1 Chronicles 29:11]

But like the fatherhood of God, which is manifest in a special way to his people, there is also a way of understanding the kingdom, that is again relevant expressly to God's covenant community.

In fact, there are a couple of ways we can think about the kingdom; one as a present reality and one as something yet to come.

Firstly, the kingdom of God refers to God's rule and authority. Wherever people submit to God's rule, wherever people love God and seek his glory, where people have entered into a new relationship with God, there God's kingdom is present. This kingdom of course is to be identified with the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and it is only in, and through, Christ that anyone can enter into that kingdom.

This is sometimes referred to as "The Kingdom of Grace," which is hidden in the world among God's people.

[Luke 17:20. 21]

The second way of thinking about the kingdom, is as the future culmination of all God's purposes, when God will be fully vindicated in the eyes of all people everywhere. Where God will reign among us all. This is often referred to as "The Kingdom of Glory."

[Matthew 25:34]

This kingdom too, of course, is part of Christ's kingdom, being his reward from his father, for his obedience and for the great work he did in sacrificing himself for God's people.

When we pray that God's kingdom come, it is both the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory, that we are seeking. The absolute rule of God over all creation is already a given reality.

When we pray for the Kingdom of Grace to come we are praying for the work of God's people in the world: the work to speak the gospel of truth, to establish Christian churches and communities, and to spread the good news of the offer of forgiveness in our Lord Jesus Christ. To open the way for as many people as possible to enter into the new covenant relationship with God.

When we pray for the Kingdom of Glory to come, we are looking further ahead to a time when the work will be complete, and when God will be honoured among all people, in the person of Jesus Christ.

This should be the prayer of all God's people: the desire that God's work be completed in the world, that God be honoured and respected, that Christ be recognised as his only true Son and as the Saviour of men and women everywhere.

When we pray this petition we are asking that we be enabled to play our part: that God's kingdom be established, and grow and thrive within us, in an attitude of loving obedience to God. That God, by the power and grace of his Holy Spirit, keep us rooted and established in that kingdom, and that he protect us from all that would seek to draw us away from him.

Over and above those personal considerations, we are also praying for the church: the body of Christ, doing the work of Christ in the world, We are praying for the protection of the church around the world, and for the gift of endurance and faith in those places where the church is particularly distressed.