

Praying For The Kingdom

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In Matthew 6:9-13 we have recorded what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." In this prayer Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. This prayer simply served to them as an example of prayer, and there is no evidence that it was ever intended that his disciples were to use the exact words here recorded. But for many years various religious groups have been reciting in prayer the exact words of this prayer. And in this prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come." People often repeat the words of this prayer without ever discovering the fact that they are praying for something to come that has already come.

The Kingdom Was Future

At the time the Lord taught this prayer to his disciples the kingdom was future. Many Bible statements reveal the truthfulness of this. In Luke 10:9, when Jesus sent out the seventy to preach, he said to them: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." From this language we must conclude that the kingdom had not yet come, but it was near. It had "come nigh unto them." It was future. Later on Jesus said to his disciples: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32. At this time it had not been given to them, but it was to be given. And on another occasion we read this statement: "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Luke 19:11. If the kingdom had already appeared, these did not know it, and Jesus spake a parable to prove otherwise; for the following verses show that the Son of man was to go into a far country to receive a kingdom. Certainly, the far country means heaven, and the kingdom was not received before he went to that country. And on the night of the betrayal Jesus plainly showed the kingdom to be future. He said: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Luke 22:18. Note that: "Until the kingdom shall come." Such language cannot mean the kingdom has already come. So during the personal ministry of Christ the kingdom was only near—it was still in the future. Hence he told his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." It was perfectly reasonable to pray for it to come as long as it had not come. But if, since the time that prayer was taught the disciples, the kingdom has come, it would certainly

be absurd to pray for it to come now.

The Kingdom Has Come

This is abundantly proven by the New Testament. Paul, in writing to the church at Colosse, said: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son." Col. 1:13. Both Paul, the writer, and the Colossian brethren, to whom he wrote, had been "translated into the kingdom" of the Lord. This proves the existence of the kingdom in their time. It was too late when Paul wrote to pray for the kingdom to come. What had formerly existed in a state of preparation now existed in reality. Christ, the nobleman, had already gone to the far country, heaven, and had received the kingdom. He was now reigning as king, and his disciples were the citizens of that kingdom. Therefore, after the ascension of Christ to his father's right hand and the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost in Acts 2, we never hear of men being told to pray for the kingdom to come. Why pray for that which has already come?

John's Testimony

The apostle John adds his testimony to the fact that the kingdom had come in his day. He said: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and

patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 1:9. John was not only in tribulation, but was also "in the kingdom of Jesus Christ." When John wrote the book of Revelation it was too late to pray, "Thy kingdom come." It had already come, and he was in it.

Not To Reign On Earth

Multitudes of religious people today are teaching that Christ is coming back to set up his kingdom and to rule over the entire world. There is no such promise in all the Bible. Jesus is now king, he is now ruling, and he now has the only kingdom ever promised him. The prophet Zechariah said concerning him: "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall be priest upon his throne: and he shall sit and rule upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Zech. 6:13. Note that he was to "be a priest upon his throne." Whenever you find him a priest, you find him on his throne; for he was to be a priest upon his throne. If Jesus is not now on his throne, he is not now a priest; but Paul declared him to be a priest in his day. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Heb. 3:1. Many other statements declare the same to be true. So Jesus is now our priest, and has been since the days of the apostles. So he has been on his throne all this time. But he was to "sit and rule on his throne." Therefore, all this time he has been ruling on his throne, and the kingdom and throne of Christ are not things that belong to a future age—they have already been established. Don't let men deceive you by telling you the kingdom of Jesus is to be established when he comes again.

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The death of Christ was for the remission of sins. That is, he died that we might be saved. He tasted death for all, but salvation is conditional. Paul said: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22) It was a sad day for the friends of Jesus when Joseph of Aramathea took the body of Jesus and buried it. The devil rejoiced at the open sepulchre. The enemies of Jesus hoped that the career of the man of Galilee had ended forever, but their hopes were shattered when Jesus arose from the dead on the third day. He struggled with power of darkness, but the victory was gained. His death and burial would have been worthless if he had not been raised from the dead. He remained in the tomb on the Sabbath day, but on the first day of the week he arose. What a wonderful victory! When we are baptized for the remission of sins we picture that victory. We are planted together in the likeness of his death or burial, and we are raised in the likeness of his resurrection. We walk in a new life after our burial and resurrection. That is one reason for saying that salvation is after baptism.—E.M. BORDEN.