

LORD, Teach Us to Pray – Part 3

As we have stressed throughout our study of the LORD's prayer, our praying to God is inextricably linked to Jesus' own practice of prayer. Our praying grows naturally out of the disciples watching and hearing Jesus pray to His Father. When He teaches us how to pray, He lavishes us with gifts, which are intimately tied to His own unique sonship. He is the unique Son of God. There is no one else who is the eternally begotten (*monogenes*) of the Father. Yet, Jesus invites you to call His Father by the same intimate, familial (household) name by which He addresses His Father, *Abba* (Papa; cf. **Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6!**)

Knowing how precious is this gift of the name of God, we very naturally, as His children, long for His name to be hallowed, or sanctified – to be set apart as holy. Who among us doesn't wish his own earthly father's name – the family name - to be honored and respected? How much more do we wish God's name to be honored and sanctified by every creature who walks the face of the earth?

This then leads us naturally into the second petition of Jesus' teaching on prayer – the longing or yearning for God's Kingdom to come here, on earth, where we are.

Your Kingdom Come (11:2; Matt. 6:10; WSC 102 – Second Petition)

As we begin looking at the second petition this morning, you will notice that it is missing a location, in fact two locations. When we ask God that His Kingdom would come, we naturally wonder where is it now and where do we wish it to be? We might ask, "Come where?" In Matthew's Gospel, the second petition is followed by a third petition which gives an answer to our question: your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven (**Matt. 6:10**). We then infer that God's Kingdom is in some way perfectly expressed in Heaven and what we are therefore longing for is to have it expressed here on earth just as perfectly as it is in Heaven.

This opens up a whole vista of new questions that we want to pursue this morning. The Scriptures are so wonderfully vast and unmeasured that no matter how much attention we give them, along with the whole church, surrounding the globe, who has been studying them for over two millennia (and even more as we consider the OT Scriptures) yet every time we come to a passage of Scripture we feel as if we are merely touching the very surface of its majesty!

As we consider God's Kingdom, as it is perfectly expressed in Heaven and as we long for it to be perfectly expressed here on earth, the very first question that arises is just what is the Kingdom of God? Though it is a term that is often used in the Gospels and Acts, it is very rarely used elsewhere in the New Testament and never in the Old Testament. However, the concept of the Kingdom of God is

literally found on every page of Holy Scripture. One might even say that it is THE THEME of Holy Scripture. Let me explain.

Let's begin by broadly defining our terms, "the Kingdom of God," as "the rule or reign of God." This is hardly a complete definition but it will do to get us started. God's Kingdom is present wherever and upon whomever He rules. In other words, it is where "God is King!"

Now, there is one sense in which God is King over His entire creation – He has always been King, He is King, and He will always be King. He is the King of all kings, the LORD over all lords. He always has, is presently, and always will exercise His royal power and authority over all that He has made and currently sustains, and will preserve for His own glory. In theology we refer to this simply as God's "providence" by which He preserves and governs all that He has made toward *His* appointed ends. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* beautifully defines God's providence as "His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions" (WSC Q. 11).

But there is another sense in which it doesn't appear to us, His creatures, as if He is in fact ruling over all things. Even the author to the Hebrews suggests as much:

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But **now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.** But **we do see Him** who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor (**Heb. 2:8-9**).

The preacher to the Hebrews is stressing the fact that Jesus is in fact currently King or Sovereign over all creation – God has made Him as such – even though we do not presently see all things subjected to Him.

The same was true in Yahweh's relationship to His people, Israel. There were times in Israel's history where she was glad that God was her king:

O clap your hands, all peoples; Shout to God with the voice of joy. For the Lord Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth. He subdues peoples under us and nations under our feet. He chooses our inheritance for us, the glory of Jacob whom He loves. God has ascended with a shout, the Lord, with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a skillful psalm. God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham, for the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted (**Ps. 47**).

When God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, He was in fact their King and He set them apart to make them into a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (**Ex. 19:6**). But once He brought them into

the Promised Land it did not take long for them to forget that Yahweh was their King (cf. **Judg. 21:25**). Soon, they began to long for a human king to rule over them like all the nations (**1 Sam. 8:5-6**). God warned Israel that they did not need another king because He was their King (**1 Sam. 8:7-9; 12:12**). But they rejected God as King and chose instead an earthly king to rule over them.

Without going into too much detail, the king Israel chose didn't turn out so well, so God chose a new king for them, very much **unlike** what they were expecting, but someone who loved God (**1 Sam. 16:13**). God loved this young ruler and promised to establish His throne forever (cf. **2 Sam. 7:12-14**).

It is absolutely KEY that you understand that in some way, God will for now and forever rule as King through His servant David. In **Psalms 2:6-7** we read the words which would have been read at the inauguration of each newly seated Davidic king on the throne over Israel:

“But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.” “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’” (**Ps. 2:6-7; see vv. 1-2, 4-9**).

God will be the King who rules through King David, His Messiah (Anointed One). Yet, the Davidic kings who sat on the throne regressed/declined to a state of abhorrent idolatry before the LORD, until He finally removed them from the Promised Land (in exile), and for Himself, He chose to remove His glory from their midst and abandon the temple in Jerusalem (**Ezek. 8-11**). Over the whole nation was written, “*Ichabod!*” - the glory of God had departed from Israel (cf. **1 Sam. 4:21**)!

But remember that God loved His people and had promised to give an inheritance to Abraham, which would finally be established through the One who will sit upon the throne of King David forever. While His people broke the covenant with God and deserved to be cast away from God, yet because – *Great is Thy Faithfulness* (**Lam 3:23**) – God loved them and is true to His Word, He made a new, better covenant with them, which never again shall be broken.

The idea is that now through this New Covenant, all the promises to Abraham and David would be fulfilled and forever secure because **God Himself is coming to secure them!** This is KEY to understand where the Bible is going next. God will return as their King to secure the promises He has made to His people!

While Israel was still in exile something began to awaken in her heart and soul – as if old bones were about to live again (cf. **Ezek. 37**) - and she began to yearn for God to be her King! Her singing often expressed this longing:

Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns [The LORD is King!]; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.” Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the

sea roar, and all it contains; let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness (**Ps. 96:1, 10-13; cf. Pss. 10:16-18; 22:27-28; 44:4-5; 47:1-9; 74:12-13, 22; 93:1-2; 95:3-7; 98:9; 99:1-5; 145:1, 10-13**).

The Prophet Isaiah expressed the same yearning:

“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God. “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see *it* together (**Isa., 40:1, 3, 5**). How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, *and* says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” [Your God is King!] Listen! Your watchmen lift up *their* voices, they shout joyfully together; for they will see with their own eyes when the LORD restores Zion. Break forth, shout joyfully together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God (**Isa. 52:7-10; cf. Isa. 24:23; 26:21; 33:22; 1 Chron. 16:33; Micah 1:3; Zeph. 3:14-20; Mal. 3:1; cf. Day of the LORD – Isa. 13:6; Joel 2:1; Zech. 14:1, 9; Mal. 4:5**).

God often described His rule over His people like that of a Good Shepherd over His sheep. Aside from **Ps. 23**, the next famous Psalm declares:

Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture (**Psalm 100:3; cf. Ps. 23:1-3; 80:1-2; Isa. 40:10-11; Jer. 31:10-12**).

Now, an extremely important passage in the prophets of the Old Testament which draws many of these threads together into a glorious promise which God makes to Israel is found in **Ezek. 34**. One of the central reasons why Israel was cast into exile is because she was led astray by her leaders – who are denounced by God as “false shepherds,” one of the most terrible judgments to be declared by God (**Ezek. 34:2-6**). It was because of these false shepherds that God's people have been scattered throughout the earth. What is Israel to do? The only answer is that God Himself - Yahweh must come to earth to rescue them – to be the Good Shepherd for them (**Ezek. 34:11-12, 14-16**). He assures His people – He is on His way!

But then a twist is added to the promise – God is coming but, in some way, He will come in His Shepherd David – God will be King again through David (**Ezek. 34:23-24; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-16**). This Divine King will also be the human king and when God comes to rule through His Messiah the promise of the covenant will finally be made full and complete forever (**Ezek. 34:30-31**). In a very real

sense, which may not make a lot of sense all the way back here in the prophets, when God is King, David will be King – when David is King, God will also be ruling as King!

Now, this idea that the Divine King will somehow also be a human king is found in some pretty amazing passages scattered throughout the Old Testament. We saw one of them at Christmas time:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore (**Isa. 9:6-7**).

The prophet Zechariah writes similarly:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (**Zech. 9:9-11; cf. Dan. 7:14**).

Zechariah describes the Divine-human Messiah as extending His sovereign rule out from Israel into all the nations and peoples of the earth. It is the universal reign of God over the whole earth.

Now, you see what the angels were announcing as “good news” on the night Jesus was born (**cf. Luke 2:10-11**). It is what Jesus came to earth to proclaim – Jesus said, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; **for I was sent for this purpose**” (**Luke 4:43**). The good news Jesus came to announce was that what God has promised and what God's faithful people have yearned for is here! God Himself has returned as King! God is in charge now and this is what His Kingdom looks like! Jesus is the embodiment of Israel's God and He has come to earth to set up God's reign – His Kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven.

At that point, everything Jesus said and everything Jesus did was to inaugurate – to set in motion - God's plan and purpose for His entire creation – the establishment of His glorious reign over every inch of all that He has made. And though we may not presently **SEE** everything subjected to Him yet, you can rest assured that God has installed Jesus, His King – upon Mt. Zion and we, as citizens of that Kingdom, are to pray at all times until we **SEE** all things subjected to Him (**cf. Heb. 2:8; Ps. 2:8-9**), until He has put all His enemies under His feet; the last enemy that will be abolished is death and:

When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all (**1 Cor. 15:23-28**). **Amen! -SDG-**