

LORD'S DAY 48

123. Q. What is the second petition?
A. *Thy kingdom come.*
That is:
So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit
that more and more we submit to Thee.¹
Preserve and increase Thy church.²
Destroy the works of the devil,
every power that raises itself against Thee,
and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word.³
Do all this
until the fulness of Thy kingdom comes,
wherein Thou shalt be all in all.⁴

- 1 **Psa 119:5** Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!
Psa 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
Psa 143:10 Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness.
Mat 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
- 2 **Psa 51:18** Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem.
Psa 122:6-9 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. 7 Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces." 8 For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, "Peace be within you." 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.
Mat 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
Acts 2:42-47 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- 3 **Rom 16:20** And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
1 John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.
- 4 **Rom 8:22-23** For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.
1 Cor 15:28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.
Rev 22:17,20 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

In the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's kingdom to come. A kingdom is the realm over which a king or queen rules, the sphere over which he exercises his dominion.

What exactly do we mean when we speak about the kingdom of God? Can we include the whole world in the kingdom of God? Or is God's kingdom restricted only to the church?

God's Kingdom and the World

In the beginning, God exercised His dominion over the whole world. God's law was the only law and God was the only ruler. Man was to submit himself to God as King. Satan was there, but he had no subjects on earth, and thus he had no kingdom on earth.

Then man fell into sin. Man decided to obey Satan rather than God. As punishment, God handed man over to the tyranny of Satan. Man became a slave of sin and the devil, and could not free himself from Satan's power and dominion. With the fall into sin the world changed allegiance and became the kingdom of darkness, and Satan became the ruler of this world (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, Eph 2:2).

Although the world has fallen into sin, God has not relinquished (given up) His sovereign kingship. God remains king over all creation. He continues to rule over the realm of nature. We speak here of God's providence. Rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, health and sickness, earthquakes and hurricanes—God continues to rule over all these things. He continues to rule the animal kingdom as well. He commanded the locusts which swarmed over Egypt, the ravens that fed Elijah, the lions which did not kill Daniel. No creature can so much as move without His permission.

Furthermore, God continues to rule over the hearts of all men, even the ungodly. He ruled over Pharaoh. One moment, Pharaoh allowed Israel to go free, and the next he pursued them to recapture them. This was the work of God, who softened

the heart of Pharaoh one moment, and then hardened it the next, (cf. Rom 9:17,18). King Cyrus of Persia was also God's servant. God put it into his heart to let Israel go free from captivity (cf. Ezra 1:1,2). From Proverbs 21:1 we learn that God continues to rule the hearts of our governors: *"The king's heart is like a stream of water in the hand of God; He turns it wherever He wills."* God rules over the hearts of all men so that they accomplish what He has planned. God even rules over Satan with the result that Satan can only do what God permits Him to do.

In all these different ways we see that in one sense God is still King of this fallen world. But fallen man no longer acknowledges God as King. Fallen man refuses to willingly bow before Him and worship Him. Neither does fallen man willingly obey God's commandments. But man does willingly acknowledge Satan, and obeys Him. In this sense, Satan is the ruler of this world. He commands the hearts and minds of fallen man.

It was God's wish to re-establish His Kingdom on earth—a kingdom where men would acknowledge Him as King and submit to Him willingly. But before this could happen, atonement had to be made for man's sin and rebellion. Only those would be released from the tyranny of Satan and restored to God's kingdom whose sins were paid for.

In order to make this atonement, and to re-establish His kingdom, God sent our Lord Jesus Christ. God's kingdom was re-established on the foundation that Christ lay at Golgotha. God's kingdom was re-established at the cost of His only begotten Son.

In order that Christ might establish the kingdom of heaven, God has given Him all authority in heaven and on earth (cf. Matt 28:18). He is *"the ruler over the kings of the earth"* (Rev 1:5). He is Lord of all earthly lords, and He is King of all earthly kings (cf. Rev. 7:14). God has given Christ the kingship over all creation in order to enable Christ to gather and defend His church. Christ rules all events

so that they promote the gathering of His church. He rules all forces, even those of darkness, so that they cannot thwart His church gathering work. Christ will continue to wield the sceptre over all creation until the day comes when all the elect have been gathered. Then Christ will return the kingship of the world to the Father (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28).

God's Kingdom and Believers

In His grace God has "*delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Col 1:13). We are now ruled by Christ rather than by Satan. Christ is now our Lord and Master, not the devil. He rules us with His Word and Spirit.

There is a major difference between Christ's rule over the unbeliever and Christ's rule over the believer. Christ rules over unbelievers, although they do not acknowledge Him nor willingly serve Him or submit to Him. You might say that Christ subconsciously and powerfully directs their hearts to do His will. But for whatever reason they do it, it is not because they acknowledge Christ's authority, nor willingly submit to Him. Think of how God ruled Pharaoh, so that Pharaoh's actions fit God's plans perfectly. Christ's rule over believers is different, however. Believers willingly acknowledge Christ's authority, and they willingly submit to Him with all their hearts.

Now it is especially for this kingdom of God that we are taught to pray "*Thy kingdom come!*" But hasn't the kingdom come already? Scripture clearly teaches us that the kingdom of God **has come** (cf. Luke 17:21). In fact, the kingdom of God already existed in the old dispensation. Then it was identified with the nation of Israel. Israel was a theocratic nation, which means that it was a nation *ruled by God*. God was the king of Israel (cf. 1 Sam 8:7, 12:12). In the NT, the kingdom of God is found wherever God rules - in the hearts of believers, in their homes, in the organisations which they establish.

But if the kingdom of God has come, why do we pray, "*Thy kingdom come*"? Because the kingdom of God has not yet come **in fullness**. This is true in three ways:

1. In the first place, we who have been made citizens of God's kingdom do not yet fully submit to our king. We are still beset with sins and weaknesses. There remain remnants of our rebellious nature in us. Therefore we pray, "*So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to Thee.*"
2. Secondly, not all the elect have been brought into the kingdom yet. Therefore we pray, "*Preserve and increase Thy church.*"
3. In the third place, the kingdom of darkness has not yet been destroyed. It continues to occupy a place and to wield its power in this world. Therefore we pray, "*Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee.*"

We will discuss these three aspects of this petition in greater depth.

So Rule Us

There is an urgent need for God to rule us. By nature we are rebellious. By nature we refuse to bow the knee and acknowledge that God is King. We refuse to be ruled by Him. By nature Satan rules our hearts.

By God's grace in Christ, those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit have been set free from the dominion of Satan. Satan no longer rules us. Rather, we have Christ as Lord and King. Yet even we as believers are not always obedient to God's kingdom law. Remnants of our old nature cling to us against our will, which induce us to do what is against God's law.

For this reason we pray that Christ may rule our hearts more and more, so that we submit to Him with ever greater obedience.

Notice that Christ rules us by His Word and Spirit. These are the same instruments which God uses to work faith and conversion in our hearts. Through the

Word we learn of the grace by which we have been delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of God. We also learn what is required of us as citizens of God's kingdom. It is through the working of the Spirit that we come to respond to our gracious inclusion with heartfelt obedience.

If we are genuine in our desire to have Christ rule our lives more and more, we will not only pray this petition. We will also be busy with the Word of God, through which the Spirit works in our heart, and through which Christ rules our heart.

Preserve and Increase Thy Church

The kingdom of God should not be equated with the church as if they are identical, for they are not. The kingdom is much broader than the church, although the church is included in the kingdom. In fact, the church is central in God's kingdom.

The **kingdom of God** can be defined as **that realm over which God is acknowledged as King**. Besides the church, the kingdom includes all other institutions which are ruled by Christ. Every home which is ruled by Christ is included in the kingdom. Every school which is ruled by Christ is included as well. All facilities which care for the elderly and the frail, or which care for the mentally or physically handicapped and which are established and maintained on the principles of Scripture are included in the kingdom. Every business which operates according to the norms of God's Word can be included as well. In general, every institution which acknowledges Christ as King and which submits to His Word is included in the kingdom of God.

Although the kingdom is much broader than the church, the Catechism only mentions the church. This is due to the fact that the church holds a primary place in the kingdom of God. This is true for a number of reasons:

1. Firstly, the church has an important place in God's kingdom because God has given the Church the keys of the

kingdom. By means of these keys the kingdom of God is opened and closed. By means of these keys men are admitted and expelled from the kingdom. By means of these keys, the kingdom of God increases in size. These keys are the preaching of the Word and church discipline (cf. LD 31). Through the preaching of the gospel, the Spirit brings many to acknowledge and submit to Christ as King.

Besides the preaching of the gospel in church, this petition involves the work of mission at home and abroad. For the kingdom of God is not only increased from within (believers and their children). The kingdom is also increased through the addition of those outside the church. Thus this prayer for the increase of the kingdom includes the that the gospel may be brought to all peoples. For it is God's plan to "*make disciples of all nations*" (Matt 28:19). This mission mandate has been given to the church.

The gospel does not only need to be preached in far away places by missionaries; it needs to be preached in our own country. For there are many who have not really heard the gospel, and many of those who have heard of it have only a superficial understanding of it. All Christians have a task to share the gospel with their neighbours, for all Christians share in Christ's prophetic office. We all have the mandate to profess Christ before men in words and deeds in the hope of winning them for Christ. In this way the members of the church are actively involved in the increase of God's kingdom.

2. The church has an important place in God's kingdom because the church equips the citizens of God's kingdom with the armour which they need in order to fight against and overcome the devil. Without this armour, the citizens of God's kingdom would be left vulnerable to the attacks of the devil and would be destroyed. But through the church, the citizens are fitted with that necessary armour to fight the

spiritual battle against sin and the devil (cf. Eph 6:11-17).

3. A third reason why the church has a primary place in the kingdom is because the citizens of God's kingdom come to know how they are to live as upright citizens through the proclamation of God's Word in church. They take what they hear in church and apply it to their daily lives. The church is like the hub of a wheel, from which many spokes go out. Out of the church grows the Christian home, the Christian school, the old age home, the home for the handicapped, the political societies. In all these organisations and institutions, the hub and centre remains the church, which directs what we teach our children, how we care for our elderly, what should be our political "platform," and so forth. When we pray for the coming of God's kingdom, we pray for all these organisations which all have the purpose of promoting God's kingdom in the hearts of the individuals and in the world in general.

Destroy the Works of the Devil

Satan is bitterly opposed to the increase of God's kingdom. The reason is simple: the increase of God's kingdom in this world necessarily means the decrease of Satan's kingdom. For God gathers his kingdom out of the midst of this world of which Satan is ruler. Naturally, Satan is not pleased to see his kingdom diminish in size or numbers. Thus he does everything possible to destroy God's kingdom. It is no wonder, then, that when we pray for the coming of the kingdom of God we also pray for the preservation of the church and the destruction of the works of the devil.

Satan's works are many and devious. We can describe some of them:

1. He sows seeds of heresy in the church, thereby robbing the gospel of its power to work true faith. We have seen how important the preaching of the gospel is in the preservation and increase of

God's kingdom. Thus Satan strives to destroy this important instrument of the Spirit. Church history teaches us that Satan has been quite effective in this area. Time and again the Church of Christ became deformed by accepting heresy. For this reason we are taught to pray, "*Destroy every conspiracy against Thy Word.*" Thankfully, God answers the prayers of the saints and grants continual reformation to the Church.

2. The devil also tempts the saints in the hope of making them fall into sin and luring them away from God. We will speak about this more fully when we come to the sixth petition—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (LD 52).
3. Satan also uses the tool of persecution in order to destroy God's kingdom. He incites governments to hostility against the gospel, and induces them to persecute those who preach it and believe it. For this reason we pray "*Destroy the works of the devil; every power that raises itself against Thee.*" We also pray that God may rule the hearts of our government officials in such a way that the church retains its freedom to proclaim the gospel without persecution.

Of this we may be sure: that God will hear this petition, and His kingdom will come in all its fullness and all its glory. This will occur when Christ returns on the clouds of heaven. Then the kingdom of darkness will be utterly destroyed, and all its citizens cast into everlasting condemnation. Only those will remain on this glorified earth who in this life acknowledge and submit to Christ as King. On the day of Christ's return, God will become the all in all. That is, He shall be everything to everyone. All men will bow the knee to God and serve Him in all faithfulness.

Out of great longing for that day to come, the church eagerly prays this second petition, "*Thy kingdom come.*"



Questions:

1. What is a kingdom?
2. Who is the ruler of this world? Does this mean that God has relinquished (given up) His sovereign kingship over this world? What does He rule?
3. What had to happen before God could re-establish His kingdom on earth?
4. What has Christ received from the Father in order to establish His kingdom on earth? Over what does Christ rule? How long will Christ continue to rule this world?
5. Explain the difference between Christ's rule over the unbeliever and His rule over the believer.
6. Where do we see the kingdom of God in the old dispensation? Where do we find the kingdom of God in the new dispensation?
7. If the kingdom of God has already come, why do we still pray, "*Thy kingdom come*"?
8. In what three ways has the kingdom of God not fully come?
9. Are those who are regenerated still under the dominion and rule of Satan? Who is their king? Do they always obey their king? Why not? What does this make them ask God in prayer?
10. How does Christ rule us? If we are genuine in our prayer to have Christ rule us more and more, what must we do?
11. Is the kingdom of God to be equated with the church? Explain why or why not.
12. How can we define the kingdom of God? What institution is central to God's kingdom? Which other institutions are included in the kingdom?
13. What is the first reason why the church has such importance in the kingdom of God?
14. What are the keys of the kingdom? Besides the preaching of the gospel in church, where else must the gospel be preached? Whose task is this? What task do the members of the church have in promoting the kingdom of God? How do they do this?
15. What is the second reason why the church has such importance in the kingdom of God?
16. What is the third reason why the church has such importance in the kingdom of God? What is the relationship between the church and all other institutions in God's kingdom?
17. Why is Satan so bitterly opposed to the kingdom of God?
18. Describe three of Satan's devious works by which he hopes to destroy the kingdom of God.
19. What will happen when Christ returns on the clouds of heaven?