

ISSUE

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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

February 19,
2017

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Should We Pray “Your Kingdom Come” Today? By Kyle Pope

In Jesus’ model prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 He prayed, **“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”** (6:10, NKJV). At least as early as 1867 brethren wrestled with the question posed in the title of this article. Is it appropriate to pray this element of the model prayer or should we no longer make this request now that the Lord’s kingdom has been established in the reign of Jesus Christ? An anonymous writer published in *Lard’s Quarterly* (a paper edited by the respected Restoration preacher Moses Lard) argued for a personal application of the appeal of this prayer, claiming, “so long as there is one sinner unconvert-



ed, or one saint unsanctified; so long will we have need for the petition 'thy kingdom come'" (July 1867, 249). Moses Lard, recognizing the challenges some might offer to this, added a comment after the article rejecting this view arguing, "I cannot pray 'thy kingdom come;' but I profoundly can [pray], thy 'everlasting kingdom' come" (*ibid.* 252). J.W. McGarvey, another respected nineteenth century preacher argued, "it is improper to retain the words, and yet attach to them a sense different from that in

which Jesus employed them" (*Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, 65). In this he assumes that Jesus meant these words of the coming establishment of the Lord's kingdom, which came about on the Day of Pentecost. The question is, are we able to determine in exactly what *sense* the Lord originally employed these words? Later, in the same sermon Jesus used an individual rather than a corporate sense of *seeking the kingdom* (6:33). In this, Jesus commanded individuals to seek and submit their hearts to the Lord's kingship. Could that have been His meaning in the model prayer?

It may be significant that the appeal "**Your kingdom come**" is not repeated later in the New Testament in examples of apostolic prayer. Instead, we find phrases of slightly different emphasis. Paul would use the Aramaic phrase *marana tha*, "**O come Lord**" (1 Cor. 16:22). John, near the end of the great vision of Revelation cried out, "**Come Lord Jesus**" (Rev. 22:20). Yet, these very writers describe the kingdom as being in existence in the first century. Paul told the Colossians that God "**delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love**" (Col. 1:13). John wrote, "**He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen**" (Rev. 1:6, NASB). Do these statements show that the apostles recognized that it was no longer necessary to pray for the kingdom to come (in a corporate sense), but that we should pray for Christ's return?

It might be argued that, if "**Your kingdom**





come” is no longer applicable, it destroys the force of Jesus’ model as an example to Christians of all ages. We should note, however, that there are many things for which the emphasis in prayer has changed this side of the cross. McGarvey demonstrates as it relates to Jesus’ mediation on behalf of Christians. The model prayer makes no mention of prayer in Jesus name, but McGarvey notes, “We must also insert the name of Jesus as the mediator through whom we pray: for on the night of the betrayal he taught his disciples to thenceforward ask in his name (John 16:24; see also Col. 3:17)” (*Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, 65). This command of Jesus doesn’t rob the model prayer of its force, but it introduces the relationship of mediation that did not exist until after the cross.

People cannot remove themselves completely from the environment and culture in which they live and communicate. Words and concepts that attain a certain sense within a culture cannot be divorced from the meaning they hold within that culture. In our own day apostasy within the denominational world has so permeated our culture that many (if not most) in the religious world conceive of the

“kingdom” as a future, political, material, and geographically identifiable entity that will come some day in the future. John R. Rice, for example, in his commentary on Matthew expresses the typical premillennial view. Commenting on the meaning of the words **“Your kingdom come,”** he argues, “This is clearly a prayer for the reign of Christ on earth. That kingdom has not yet come” (105). This view ignores the fact that John and Paul (as noted above) said it *had* come in their day (see Rev. 1:6; Col. 1:13). Modern Jews hold a similar view to that expressed by Rice. Many still use, the *Kaddish*, a ritual prayer that



was originally recited at the end of a rabbinical sermon in the synagogue. Its use in early Judaism is attested in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sotah* 49a). Although it is preserved in different versions, a common form appeals “may his kingdom come in your lifetime.” If this appeal was offered in the first century it may indicate the force Jesus’ words

would have held to His Jewish audience. They were likely accustomed to the anticipation of an earthly political kingdom that was to come in the future. The Babylonian Talmud records that the first century teacher Johanan ben Zakkai taught that any ritual prayer must include mention of the kingship of God (*Berachoth* 40b). Modern Conservative and Orthodox Jews still continue to hope for such an earthly kingdom.

It is true that we must never allow human misconceptions to determine what we believe and teach. We must teach the truth about God’s kingdom whether it runs contrary to popular thinking or not. However, in every section of the model prayer, Jesus is not dictating the exact words that are to be spoken, but the general elements that constitute acceptable prayer to God. Given that the modern Jews and premillennialists apply this appeal in a corporate sense, the modern use of the words “**Your kingdom come**” (without any modification) could certainly give the wrong impression.



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