

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. Preserve and increase Thy church. Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee, and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word. Do all this until the fulness of Thy kingdom comes, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come...”

What did he mean by “God’s kingdom”?

If we look at the prayers of the Old Testament
we can see a significant part of what this meant to Jesus and to his disciples.

Psalm 145 is a good place to start.

Psalm 145 speaks of God’s kingdom three times in verses 11-13,
and addresses God as King in verse 1.

Psalm 145 is another acrostic Psalm –
in this case each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

But while there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet
(or 23 if you count the *sin* and the *shin* as different letters),
there are only 21 verses in Psalm 145.

Why is this?

There is a textual problem in the middle of the Psalm.

You may see in your Bibles in Psalm 145:13 an extra couplet in brackets.
This is because in *most* Hebrew manuscripts the “n” (nun) is missing.

Either there was originally a “nun” verse or else the author left out the nun intentionally.

One Hebrew manuscript includes this “extra” verse,
and scholars debate whether this was in fact the “missing” verse,
or whether it was a later addition by a scribe who sought to remedy the omission!

I don’t know, but it doesn’t affect the meaning of the Psalm,
so I don’t think it really matters.

But I think that it is important for you to understand that there are a few places like this
where we don’t really know what the original text of the Bible says.

None of them are particularly important,
and none of them affect the meaning or teaching of the scriptures as a whole,
so many pastors tend to ignore them.

But often these textual matters can be used by the unscrupulous
to undermine the faith of the unwary,
so I try to mention it from time to time so that you will understand.

But what does Psalm 145 teach us about what it means to pray,
“Thy kingdom come”?

We saw last time that we learn about who God is from what he has done.

Indeed, Psalm 111 taught us that the study of history –
and particularly of what God has done in history –
teaching us both what we are to believe concerning God (our theology)
and what duty God requires of us (our ethics).

Psalm 145 also begins with the holiness of God’s name.

*I will extol you, my God and my King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.*

And only then, in verse three, does David then actually *use* the name of Yahweh:

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

And then in verses 4-7, David says that not only will he praise the LORD,
but also future generations.

We see here how David himself was so thoroughly convinced that we should pray “our” Father –
sometimes, when we are in secret, we pray alone.

But there is another sense in which we never pray alone!

*One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

Listen to this variety of ways that David attests to the works of God:

Your works, your mighty acts, the glorious splendor of your majesty,
your wondrous works, the might of your awesome deeds, your greatness,
the fame of your abundant goodness, your righteousness.

When I compare this rich vocabulary of praise to my own,

I realize that the problem is one of laziness.

I do not take the time to pray as I ought.

I pick a few themes and stick with them

But David reflects on the glory of the kingdom of God and declares his praise to his King.

But what is the kingdom of God?

There is a very real sense in which the Kingdom of God began at Sinai.

The Promise of the Kingdom can be found in Genesis,

but the Presence of Kingdom only begins when God takes a people for himself
and rules them.

God said to Pharaoh,

“Israel is my son, my firstborn, let my son go that he may worship me.”

The son of God cannot rule as God’s vicegerent as long as he is a slave.

And so it is at Sinai that God said,

“you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.”

And David reflects on this when he remembers what God revealed to Moses at Sinai:

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made. (v8-9)

This, you might say, is the central affirmation of God’s kingdom.

It was originally stated in the context of Israel’s rebellion.

Israel had sinned at Mt. Sinai, by making a golden calf.

And not only had Israel made an egregious theological error,
but their practice, both liturgical and moral, followed.

Idolatry and adultery were both rooted in their failure to worship God.

And yet the LORD was gracious and merciful.

He did not destroy Israel, but listened to the voice of Moses,

and when he caused his glory to pass by Moses,

he declared these words:

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The kingdom of God is founded upon that statement.

Our King is just – but he is also merciful,

and his mercy is over all that he has made.

And so David sings,

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,

and all your saints shall bless you!

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,

to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,

and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

The language of verses 4-7 will echo through the remainder of the Psalm.

It can be a useful practice for you in your prayers.

Pick a theme – like God’s mighty deeds, the glorious splendor of his kingdom!
And weave that theme throughout your prayer,
praising him and magnifying his holy name at first –
and then praying that God’s glorious kingdom
would indeed be made splendid in us –
and that we might make known to our children God’s mighty deeds.

David weaves together the theme of God’s kingdom
(which has a very definite Israel-centered focus)
with the theme of God’s universal dominion
(which of course is the point of an Israel *centered* focus.
Israel is the center – but the center of what?
God’s universal dominion!)

The kingdom of God, after all, is not primarily a territorial designation
–as in the Roman Empire–
Rather, it refers to the reign and rule of God.
David confesses that the kingdom of Yahweh is an everlasting kingdom.

David’s son understood this well.

In 2 Chronicles 6, at the dedication of the temple for which David had prepared,
Solomon spoke of the establishment of the kingdom.
The LORD has fulfilled with his hand what he spoke with his mouth
in establishing the son of David on the throne,
and establishing a house for his name in Jerusalem.

Land and Seed have come together in Solomon’s day,
as the promise of the Land as a place where God meets with his people
has been focused upon this one house
and the promise of the Seed has been focused upon this one man.

But Solomon understands that all of this is but a type and a shadow.

He sees that while the kingdom has come – he sits on his father’s throne –
he still must pray for the kingdom to come,
*Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father
what you have promised him, saying
‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel,
if only your sons pay close attention to their way...’ (6:16)*

And so Solomon prays, “thy kingdom come!”

In Solomon's day, "thy kingdom come" is captured in the petitions of his prayer:

Will God indeed dwell with man on the earth?

Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you,

how much less this house that I have built!

Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God,

listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you,

that your eyes may be open day and night toward this house,

the place where you have promised to set your name,

that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place.

And then Solomon prayer takes all of the situations and possibilities of life

and brings them before God's heavenly throne.

Solomon's prayer provides a kingdom perspective on life.

It may be that one man sins against his neighbor (v22-23)

or it may be that Israel is defeated by their enemies (v24-25)

It may be a drought, famine, or pestilence (v26-31),

but whatever is the case,

the answer will be found at God's throne in heaven.

It is when God hears from heaven that he brings resolution to all earth's woes.

Do you believe that?

I know that we say we believe that,

but what does your prayer life say?

But before you get too discouraged, let me point something out.

Have you ever noticed that Solomon's prayer is focused on his own mediation?

His first petition is *not* that God will hear "his servants"

but "his servant" – Solomon, or better, the Son of David.

O God, hear the Son of David when he prays toward this place.

Praying toward the temple is important.

Think of it this way:

God dwells in heaven,

but he has promised to hear prayers that are made "toward this place."

Whose prayers?

The prayers of the Son of David.

The prayers of the anointed King.

And yes, as verse 21 says, "and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place."

But as God has made clear in the book of Samuel,

his purposes for Israel are focused upon David.

Israel had failed to live as the kingdom of God.

And so God called David to succeed where Israel failed.

If the Davidic kings are faithful, then God's blessing will come upon Israel.

But you know the story!

How did they do?

Not so good...

A thousand years later,

when John the Baptist declares, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

he is announcing that everything promised to Israel in the OT is about to happen.

The universal reign of Yahweh is at hand.

And the coming of the kingdom is seen in its full light as "the coming of God himself as king."

And this is what happens when Jesus announces that the kingdom of God is in your midst

The King himself has come.

And now God has elevated Jesus to his right hand.

We're not talking about an earthly shadow anymore.

The Son of David is now sitting at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly temple.

This means above all else, that God will hear Jesus when Jesus prays on our behalf.

This is no excuse for our lousy practice of prayer!

But it is a great comfort that we have an Advocate with the Father,

even Jesus Christ the righteous.

But it also means that we have no need of praying toward an earthly temple.

Indeed, if we would face Jerusalem when we pray,

then we should lift up our eyes unto heaven,

because Paul tells us that the Jerusalem above – she is our mother!

We lift up our eyes to the heavenly Jerusalem,

where the Son of David now sits in glory at the right hand of the Father,

and we pray toward that heavenly temple with full confidence!

But in that light –

in the light of the King who has come,

let's go back and finish Psalm 145,

the Psalm of the Kingdom.

David has just declared that God's kingdom

is an everlasting kingdom,

and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

But in light of the fact that Jesus is the one who brings this glorious and everlasting kingdom,

think of the ministry of Jesus as you listen to Psalm 145:14ff

The LORD upholds all who are falling

*and raises up all who are bowed down (think of how he healed the sick).
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season (think of how he fed the multitudes).
You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing (he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords).
The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.*

And what is more,
*The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
(those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth)
He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.
(come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden...)*

*The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.
(depart from me, I never knew you...)*

*My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

And so let me ask you:

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