

The Sermon on the Mount
Your Kingdom Come
Matthew 6:10
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One of the six or seven books that I'm currently in the middle of is Winston Churchill's biography, the definitive biography, the three volume set written by William Manchester. I'm actually in the third volume, which has just recently been produced. It was written after Manchester's death by a friend of his from his notes that he had amassed together, but it describes the war years. It describes Winston Churchill as the defender of the realm, the defender of the British Empire. Recently I was reading about the Battle of Britain in that volume. As you probably know, the Battle of Britain was the first battle ever fought in human history entirely in the air. It lasted from July to November of 1940. You may not be aware that every single day for two and a half months the Germans bombed London – often from dark until daylight the next day. Imagine spending your entire night in a city being bombarded with those amazing weapons of mass destruction. Some of the Britishers eventually grew tired of going to the air raid shelters and spending all of their nights there, and they just slept in their own beds, pulled up the covers when they heard the bombers come so that if the glass splintered it wouldn't cut them.

The outcome of World War II was in a large sense decided in the skies above Great Britain. It was the brave actions of those pilots who caused Hitler to move his sights from England to the east and to Russia, and postponed the war long enough, until a year later America entered the war. Churchill understood how crucial what these pilots did really was. You've probably heard those immortal words he spoke to the House of Commons in which he said: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." Actually, more than 450 British pilots gave their lives in the defense of the United Kingdom in the Battle of Britain. Throughout history, soldiers have been willing to give their lives for the kingdom which they loved and served. As I read that, I was reminded of the fact that as Christians, we also are part of a kingdom. We are part of a spiritual kingdom, and that kingdom deserves our noblest service and our highest devotion.

As Jesus lays out the priorities for us in prayer, He teaches us that next to the glory of God should come a commitment to see God's kingdom advance. We're seeing this in the Lord's Prayer. I invite you to turn with me again to Matthew 6. For those of you who are visiting with us today, you find us in the middle of a lengthy journey through the Sermon on the Mount, and

we've come to the Lord's Prayer. We've been here now for several weeks unfolding its richness, and today that continues. Matthew 6:9. Let me read for you again these familiar words. Jesus says,

Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'"

Now as we've discovered, there are essentially three parts of this prayer. There is the preface: "Our Father who is in heaven." Then there are six petitions, and that's followed by a conclusion. We're looking at the six petitions. And the six petitions really give us six categories in which our prayers fall. There is no request you will ever make of God that is not summarized in these requests. And six categories in which they should fall. This is a direction for how our prayers should go. This is a pattern. It's a model. Jesus teaches us in this model that we are to pray about six different categories of issues. First of all, we are to pray about the glory of God. Secondly, we are to pray about the kingdom of God. Thirdly, we are to pray about the will of God. Number four: we are to pray about the needs of life; number five: the confession of sin; and number six: the pursuit of holiness. Those are the categories in which all of our requests of God should flow. Now as I noted to you, half of these requests are about God and half of them are about us and our needs. And it's important to note the order. As you look at the order of those requests, notice that the first half are about God, about His glory and His kingdom and His will. Jesus is teaching us that our prayers should begin with and be preoccupied with God and what He desires. And only then are we truly ready to ask for the things that we need from Him.

Now last week, we studied the first category of prayer – the glory of God. Verse 9 says, Jesus says: "Pray this... hallowed be Your name." That word *hallowed* – don't let it get in the way. It's an old Anglo-Saxon word. The Greek word is a very familiar New Testament word. It's the word *to sanctify*; in this case, *to be treated as holy*. This prayer is: O God, may Your person and everything connected with You be set apart, may it be treated as holy, may it be glorified. We looked at a number of ways that God accomplishes that. If you missed last Sunday, I encourage you to go back and catch up because that first petition is foundational to everything else.

Today we come to the second petition, the second category in which our prayers should flow. It's in the beginning of verse 10. Just three words: "Your kingdom come." Those three simple English words are completely filled with the deepest theology and the richest meaning. In fact, buried within those three little English words are three great spiritual realities, that you and I must grasp if we're going to pray this petition with any degree of understanding. So today I want us to look at those great spiritual realities that are encapsulated in those three short English words.

The first of those great realities is this: we must be aware of the conflict between opposing kingdoms. Notice verse 10: “Your kingdom come.” That tiny word *Your* contains a universe of meaning because if we want God’s kingdom to come, what are we admitting? We’re admitting that we live in a world that can only be described by an enormous conflict of opposing kingdoms. Do you really believe that? Do you believe that as you sit here today, the universe as we know it is in a state of war? That’s the mindset that lies behind this second petition. When we pray, God, may Your kingdom come, we are acknowledging that there exists all around us a cosmic struggle between opposing kingdoms.

Now what exactly are these opposing kingdoms? The first is the most obvious; it’s the kingdom of Satan. Now, in even saying that, I realize that I have immediately made myself an anachronism--completely out of touch with the times in which I live, because very few people today believe there is such a person. In fact, in November of 2001, there was a national survey of Americans. 68% of those surveyed said that they believed in God as the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator. That’s a pretty shocking statistic actually. Sixty-eight percent believe in a personal Creator God. But only twenty-three percent of the people surveyed in the U.S. believed that Satan is a real person as opposed to merely a personification of evil. As surprising as that is, it’s frankly shocking to learn that in 2008 George Barna did a survey of professing Christians and found that only 35% of self-described Christians believe that Satan is a living person rather than a symbol of evil. Now *self-described* is the key expression. I think many of those people probably are not in Christ. But regardless, of professing Christians in the U.S., only 35% believe that Satan is a real person. Regardless of what the majority of Americans might believe, or by those statistics, the majority of professing Christians might believe, the Bible is crystal clear. There exists a spirit being of great power, of incredible intelligence, and of unimaginable evil. He is engaged in a titanic conflict to unseat God and to destroy God’s rule on this planet. As far-fetched as that may sound, that is exactly what Jesus our Lord Himself taught. Turn over to Matthew 12:22.

A demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus. He healed him so that the mute man spoke and saw. The crowds were amazed, and were saying, ‘This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?’ (*This isn’t the Messiah, is it?*) But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, (*No, don’t even think that.*) ‘This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons.’

Now the Pharisees here evidenced that they believed in a personal being who oversaw other personal beings and were set against and opposed to God. Jesus goes on to affirm that view. Look at verse 25:

And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, ‘Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.’ (*Abraham Lincoln was not the first one to say that just so you know. Verse 26.*) If

Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; (*notice Jesus is describing Satan, the adversary, as a real person*) how then will his kingdom stand? (*Jesus says Satan is a real person and he has a kingdom. Verse 28*) “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

So here Jesus acknowledges the personhood of Satan, the reality that he has a kingdom, and that his kingdom is set in complete opposition to the kingdom of God. Verse 29: “How can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.” Satan is alive and well on planet Earth. He is called in John 12:31 “the prince of this world.” In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he’s called “the god of this world.” Now that does not mean that Satan has complete control of the created order, the created world. God does, the Scripture’s very clear about that, and He has delegated that control to His Son, Jesus Christ. But there is an aspect of this cosmos (that’s the word that’s used, this world) that Satan does control. It is the world system. Here’s how one lexicon, Bishop Trench, defines this idea of the cosmos in this sense. It’s not the physical world; instead, “it is that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, impulses, aims, and aspirations at any time current in the world.” Let me summarize it this way: the cosmos that Satan rules is the floating mindset of any age. Every age has its own way of thinking, its own values, its own ideas, the things that it promotes. Our age is no different. And in every age, Satan is the god of that mindset of the age in which we live. He shapes it. He defines it. He pushes it. He promotes it. Now this world system, the set of values and ideas that are at any point present in the world – that is his domain, but his subjects are twofold. His subjects are, first of all, a huge number of angels. In fact, Revelation 12 tells us that when God threw Satan out of heaven, he took with him a third of the angels – those powerful beings created by God to serve God and to serve mankind. A third of them went with Satan. They are now fallen angels, or they are also called demons. Satan rules over those fallen creatures – powerful, intelligent creatures.

Secondly, he rules over every single human being who has not repented of his sins and embraced Jesus Christ. If you’re here this morning and you’re not a Christian, according to Jesus Himself you are under the control of Satan, whether you feel it or not, whether you sense it or not. Jesus said in John 8:44 of those who were not believers, He said, “Your father is the devil.” You’re under his control. Ephesians 2:2 says that prior to conversion, every single person on the planet walks in lockstep with the prince of the power of the air. They think they’re living life on their own completely free, but they are in slavery to his kingdom. So understand then Satan is a king and his kingdom stands diametrically opposed to God, but here’s where I don’t want you to misunderstand. Unfortunately, there’s a lot of bad teaching out there that has given Satan way too much power. A lot of it comes to us through the charismatic movement. Understand this: Satan’s kingdom poses no real threat to God and His kingdom, okay? We are not, we don’t believe in some kind of dualism in which two fairly equal forces are in conflict with each other and the outcome is uncertain. Star Wars makes for great entertainment, but it is not a picture of reality on this planet. Satan is not sovereign in our world either. God is. Martin Luther was

absolutely right when he said: “Satan is God’s devil.” Picture Satan like a bad dog on a leash completely under the control of God. Satan can do absolutely nothing without God’s permission. You see this in the scripture. You remember in the first chapter of Job, Job 1:12, where Satan comes before God. “And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that Job has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him. (*personally, on his body*)’ So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.” Satan shows up, he asks God’s permission to deal with Job. God gives him permission but only so far. And Satan goes and does only that until he comes back for more permission. He’s God’s devil. He’s on a leash. Jesus describes it this way in Luke 22:31. He says, Peter, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I’m not going to let that happen. It’s not going that far. You’re going to be tempted, you’re going to betray Me, but your faith will not fail. Satan is not all-powerful, he is not all-knowing, he is not sovereign. But he and his kingdom stand in violent opposition to our God. If you doubt that, just turn on the television, pick up a newspaper, read a magazine, or go attend a few classes at the local college. Or better yet, go back to your alma mater which you thought was okay in your day, and sit in the classes and listen to what you hear. We must remember that the battle in which we are engaged, however, is not a battle against people. Christians often miss this. You know, somebody is championing abortion. Some person is championing homosexual rights or, or same-sex marriage or whatever it is, and that person becomes the enemy. Listen. That person is not the enemy. They are enslaved to Satan and his world system. That’s why in Ephesians 6:12, Paul says “we wrestle not against (*what?*) flesh and blood, (*it’s not people*) but rather against spiritual forces.” That’s where the real battle is happening.

So one opposing kingdom to God’s kingdom is Satan’s kingdom, but his is not the only kingdom. This may shock you. Satan’s is not the only kingdom in our world that is in opposition to God. You say what’s left? You got God, you got Satan. What else could there be? Another kingdom that is opposed to the reign of God is the kingdom of self. It is true that all unbelievers are part of Satan’s kingdom whether they realize it or not. There is also a sense in which we could say that there are as many opposing kingdoms in the world as there are people, because every person who has refused to bow his or her knee to Jesus Christ has set up his own kingdom and declared whom to be king? Himself. In the final book of the Chronicles of Narnia, *The Last Battle*, a false Aslan, a false Christ is presented as the real thing. Really it’s Satan in disguise in the sort of imagery that Lewis uses. A faithful few remain loyal to Aslan, the true Christ, but most of Narnia falls for the deception and follows the false Aslan, really follows Satan. But in a brilliant insight that is so common to C.S. Lewis, he describes one group, the dwarves, that simply refuses to take sides in this cosmic struggle. When they are asked to join the battle against the usurpers, the dwarves answer with these really chilling words. Here’s what the dwarves say: “You can’t take us in. We don’t want any kings. The dwarfs are for the dwarfs.” Tragically, this is how most people are. This is how most human beings are. They’re under the control of Satan, but they don’t know it; instead, they’re their own king. Reminds me of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30. You remember? He was walking around his palace and he was reflecting and he said, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might

of my power and for the glory of my majesty?” Nebuchadnezzar was for Nebuchadnezzar. He wasn’t nearly as concerned about building Babylon as he was building a kingdom for himself. That’s really what it was all about. There are millions of people in the metroplex who think exactly like this.

And so when you pray “Your kingdom come,” when we pray that, we are acknowledging the reality that we live in the middle of kingdoms in conflict. Do you really appreciate the reality that you live in a world of ideas and values that are dominated by Satan himself? Do you understand that this world in which we live is overrun by seven billion little fiefdoms, little kingdoms of self, individuals seeking to establish their own rule at the expense of Almighty God, their Creator? And all those kingdoms are at war with the kingdom of God. That lies behind this petition. To fully understand this petition, we have to understand the conflict between opposing kingdoms.

Secondly, we have to understand the character of God’s kingdom. In verse 10, Jesus says, “Pray this... ‘Your kingdom come.’” What exactly is this kingdom for which we need to pray? Well, it’s obvious, when you read the gospels, that this idea of the kingdom was a crucial part of the ministry of Jesus. In fact, Mark records as Jesus’ first sermon (it wasn’t His first sermon chronologically, it’s the first one Mark records) in Mark 1:15 - “The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand; (*Jesus said. It’s here. It’s right around the corner*) repent and believe in the gospel.” This was at the core of Jesus’ message. It also was at the core of the message of His disciples. In Matthew 10:7, Jesus sends the twelve out to preach and He says, “As you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” That was their message. It was a message of the kingdom. Even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ in those forty days between His resurrection and His ascension, according to Acts 1:3, Jesus spent those forty days teaching His disciples about the kingdom of God. The kingdom continued to be a part of the ministry of the rest of the New Testament church and the apostles, there in the early church. Turn to Acts 8. Let me just walk you through how pervasive this theme was. He taught them about the kingdom in those forty days between the resurrection and ascension, and so this became their message. Acts 8:12. Philip in Samaria: “When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.” This was Paul’s message as well. In Acts 19, in Ephesus, we read this. Acts 19:8 “He entered the synagogue there and continued speaking out boldly for three months, (*and here was his message*) reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.” In Acts 20:25 as Paul is saying farewell to the Ephesian elders, he says: “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, (*he was there for three years*) you will no longer see my face.” For three years, he was preaching the kingdom to them. Paul continues this as the theme of his ministry even during his first Roman imprisonment. Turn to the very end of the book of Acts – Acts 28:30.

He stayed two full years (*there in Rome*) in his own rented quarters (*this is the first imprisonment*) and he was welcoming all who came to him, (*and what was he teaching and preaching? Verse 31*) preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

So this was and continued to be a huge theme of both Jesus and the apostles into the New Testament.

Now let's go back to Matthew 6. The word translated *kingdom*, there in verse 10, occurs 162 times in the New Testament. Most of those references are in the synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke. Most frequently when the word *kingdom* appears, it is used in the phrase the kingdom of God, but Matthew prefers to use an expression the kingdom of heaven. Now I grew up in more heavily dispensational circles than I'm comfortable now. I am as my mentor likes to say, I'm a leaky dispensationalist. I believe that Israel is not the church and I believe that there are yet promises that God has promised to fulfill to the ethnic descendants of Abraham. That's where my dispensationalism stops. But for some, where I grew up, they wanted to see between these two expressions-- the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven--and this was true for the Scofield Reference Bible that I grew up with. They wanted to see something different. Those two phrases were describing something different. But when you examine the parallel passages, one of which I'll show you in a moment, it becomes clear that in reality the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven describe exactly the same thing. So why would Matthew say it differently? Why would he say the kingdom of heaven? Well, he's writing to Jewish people who have a predisposition against saying directly the name of God. That's why, for example, Jesus puts in the mouth of the young Jewish boy we call the prodigal son – what does he say? "I have sinned against heaven." What does that mean? It's a polite and respectful way to say God, who lives in heaven. So understand then that the kingdom of God is the same as the kingdom of heaven where God rules.

But what is this kingdom? Well, it refers to the rule or the reign of God. Or more precisely, let me give you this definition. The kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is the realm over which God rules. That's all it means – the realm over which God rules. Now, when we examine the New Testament evidence, we find that there are two distinct forms this kingdom takes. First of all, there is the present form of this kingdom, the kingdom of God. There is a sense in which the kingdom of God is already here. In fact, it was already here when Jesus was on the planet two thousand years ago. In Luke 17: 20 it says: "Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming. (*When's it going to be here, Jesus?*) He answered them and said. . . 'Behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.'" It's here. It's already here right now, Jesus said. But its present form is not a geographical kingdom. It is not a geopolitical kingdom. And Jesus made this very clear to Pilate in John 18:36. You remember? Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. (*He said, 'Listen, Pilate. Let me make sure you understand. I am a King, but I am not a king and I don't have a kingdom, in the sense you're*

thinking. There's not a piece of real estate right now that I'm claiming as My own. There's not a group of people on that real estate that I'm claiming as My own.) If My kingdom were of this world, *(Jesus goes on to say)* then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” Why? Because it is a spiritual kingdom. In its present form, it's a spiritual kingdom, not a geographical kingdom, not a literal political kingdom. Jesus makes this very clear over in Matthew 19. Turn there for a moment. You remember the story of the young rich ruler. This young synagogue leader, leader in his community, has already developed a great deal of wealth (maybe from his own industry, maybe from his inheritance), but he's concerned about eternal life. And he comes and throws himself down before Jesus and says, 'I want to have eternal life.' Well, Jesus knew this young man. He knew his heart. He knew that he had an idol, an idol that had to be torn down. That idol was what he owned, what he possessed. And so Jesus puts His finger on that idol and demands that he give it up. He says, I want you to go and sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and then come and follow Me. Look at his response in verse 22: “But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.” Now watch the conversation that follows: “Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man *(now notice His expression)* to enter the kingdom of heaven.” Alright, so here He uses the expression, kingdom of heaven, and He's talking about entering it. Verse 24: “Again I say to you, *(He's going to say it slightly differently, but the same basic content)* it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a *(literal)* needle *(in other words, it's impossible)* for a rich man *(and watch this expression)* to enter the kingdom of God.” So right here in two verses back to back, Jesus puts an equal sign between kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God, and He's talking about entering the kingdom. Now watch the disciples' response in verse 25: “When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and they said, ‘Then who can be saved?’” They understood Jesus to be talking about entering into salvation. So let me put it this plainly for you. In the present form, to enter the kingdom of heaven equals to enter the kingdom of God equals to be spiritually saved. The present form of the kingdom is the spiritual rule of God in the hearts of everyone who repents and believes in Jesus Christ. Here's a key text to remember: Colossians 1:13 – “God rescued us from the domain of darkness, *(that's another way of saying the kingdom of Satan)* and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. . .” If you're a Christian, at the very moment you believed and repented, at that very moment God snatched you out of the kingdom in which you had lived all of your life until that moment (the kingdom of Satan) and He transferred you into the kingdom of His beloved Son. The moment of salvation, you entered the kingdom of heaven, you entered the kingdom of God. It is the spiritual realm over which Christ rules. The subjects of the kingdom of God are all of those who have been rescued from their sins and forgiven by God. The kingdom of God includes, in this sense, this present form, the hearts of all of those who follow Jesus Christ. So when we pray then, “Your kingdom come,” we are praying that this present spiritual form of the kingdom will advance. Now let me drill down on that a little more. What do we mean? When we say 'let Your kingdom come' in this present spiritual sense, we are asking God that, by His grace and by the divine act of the new birth, that He will

bring more and more hearts to repent and to bow before Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Let Your kingdom advance in more hearts. Take over more hearts. It's a request that, just like He did with us, He will rescue many others from the domain of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of His beloved Son. It is an evangelistic prayer. The English Puritan Richard Baxter wrote this: "There was a time when I looked little beyond England in my prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the world. But now as I better understand the method of the Lord's Prayer (and specifically, this second petition), I cannot be affected solely with the calamities of the land of my birth, but also with the case of the heathen and the Muslim and the ignorant nations of the earth." He said, 'When I understood this request, it made me realize that, God, I want Your spiritual kingdom to expand in heart after heart after heart across this planet.'

But when we pray for the advancement of this current spiritual form of the kingdom, we're not only praying for new hearts to embrace the gospel. We are also praying that God's spiritual rule in the hearts of those who have already entered His kingdom – that His rule would be advanced in their hearts as well. It looks like this: 'Lord, You already are my King, my Lord. I am already under Your rule. And yet, I look in my own heart and I see that there are dark corners that as of yet are not fully subdued to Your rule and Your way. Let Your kingdom come in my heart. Let Your kingdom advance in its power, in its rule, in its reign over my decisions and my affections and my desires.' It's like that song that we sing (I really love it) 'O Great God'. You remember the lyrics? "O great God of highest heaven, occupy my lowly heart. Own it all and reign supreme, conquer every rebel power. Let no vice or sin remain that resists Your holy war. You have loved and purchased me, make me Yours forevermore." It's not only a prayer that God would retake new hearts, but it's a prayer that He would work in my heart as a believer, that He would ransack every dark corner and subdue it all to His reign and rule. Let Your kingdom come.

But there's not only a present form of the kingdom that we're praying for; there's also the future form of the kingdom. Just as it's clear that there is an aspect of the kingdom here and now already present, it is equally clear in the New Testament that there is an aspect of the kingdom that is still future. It's the tension that theologians refer to as 'already, but not yet'. Already there is one form of the kingdom, but not yet its full manifestation. There is coming a day when the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever. This was anticipated in the Old Testament. Turn back to the prophet Daniel in that famous prophecy that Jesus took to Himself at His trial - Daniel 7:13. Daniel writes:

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, (*this is Jesus' own title for Himself and He refers back to this very passage as I said at His trial, and claims it to be a fulfillment of Himself*) and He came up to the Ancient of Days (*that's the Father*) and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His

dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is the one which will not be destroyed.”

There is a future aspect of the kingdom in which Jesus will reign over all the earth, all peoples and languages and nations. Jesus referred to this future aspect of the kingdom often in His own earthly ministry. Let me show you one example. In Luke 22, at the Last Supper, Jesus alludes to this. Luke 22:16. Let’s start at verse 15:

He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’

He’s looking to something in the future at that point, even though He’s already said the present aspect of the kingdom already existed when He was on the planet. Verse 17, He passes the cup and He says share it. Verse 18: “For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes” Here we’re talking about this future aspect of the kingdom. By the way, this promise of a future kingdom was also the expectation of the New Testament church. In fact, think about how Paul ends his last letter, 2 Timothy 4. He knows he’s going to die, and listen to how he refers to his death. 2 Timothy 4:18 – “The Lord. . . will bring me safely (*through death*) to His heavenly kingdom;” He was in His kingdom here in a spiritual sense, but he was anticipating entering into His kingdom in heaven.

In the book of Revelation, we learn that this future manifestation of the kingdom will be initiated during the final judgment being unleashed on the world during a period of time the Bible calls the tribulation. Look at Revelation 11:15.

The seventh angel sounded; (*this is the seventh trumpet judgment. The seven trumpet judgments are all part of the seventh seal. The seventh angel sounds his trumpet*) and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.’

Here as the final judgments begin to pour out on the earth, just the bowl judgments are left. In rapid succession (these flat pan dishes) God pours out His wrath upon the earth. And then in chapter 19, Jesus returns. He defeats His enemies and He establishes a literal kingdom on the earth. Turn over to Revelation 20. Now I know there are some of our covenantal brothers who have a problem with this passage, but let me just say that they take everything from Revelation 19 and the return of Christ, through Revelation 22 and the new heaven and new earth, to have figurative language, but to describe real historical events and in consecutive order, except this one. They cut it out and put it over there. That’s not hermeneutically consistent, because here you have described an event that’s called a thousand year reign of Christ. During that period of time, notice verse 2, the devil, Satan, will be bound for that thousand years. Verse 4, believers

will reign. Notice the end: those who died “will come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years.” Verse 6: “they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” Verse 7 - this is clearly not the eternal state because “when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison” and he’ll come to deceive the world once more. And at the end of that, verse 10, then Satan is ultimately sent to the lake of fire where he will never exit, but will be tormented day and night forever and ever. This is the form of the kingdom that is still future – a literal, physical reign of Christ for a thousand years upon this planet. That will be followed by the eternal kingdom. By the way, let me just climb up on my soapbox here for a moment, a little pet hobby horse just so you know. We talk about going to heaven and that’s a great thing. Heaven is something we all anticipate, but understand heaven is not our final destination. We were not made to live permanently in heaven. In fact, we only live in heaven until God brings us back with Christ to live on this planet, renewed, for a thousand years. And then after that thousand years, He will destroy the universe as we know it, and He will make, according to Revelation 21 and 22, a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness is at home. We will live forever on a new earth. That’s the eternal kingdom.

So when we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are praying for two things. In the present sense, we are praying that heart by heart, the reign of Jesus Christ would be extended – that His current saving work and His current sanctifying work would advance in heart by heart. And we are praying in a future sense, that He will quickly bring about the day when Jesus will physically, literally reign over this planet – when every knee will be forced to bow and every tongue be forced to confess that He is Lord. Your kingdom come.

We’ve seen the conflict between opposing kingdoms. We’ve seen the character of God’s kingdom. Finally and just briefly, I want us to consider the cause of its advance. “Your kingdom come.” How does God’s kingdom come? How does it advance? Well, remember this is a prayer. Only God can cause this to happen. But what means does God use to cause His kingdom to advance? To pray “Your kingdom come” is to pray that God will use certain means to advance His kingdom. What are those means? Very briefly, consider these three. Number one: the kingdom of God is advanced when we communicate the gospel. Matthew 24:14 says: “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and (*only*) then will the end (*the future kingdom*) come.” You and I participate in the advancement of the kingdom when we open up our mouths and communicate the gospel. We’re bringing others to see that they’re under the rule of Satan and we’re asking them to bow the knee to their true ruler, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the kingdom is advanced when we make God’s kingdom our top priority. Matthew 6:33 - Jesus says, Listen. You know what the pagans do? They live for the stuff. They live for what they own, for their housing and for their clothing and for their cars, if they had cars then, for their chariots, whatever. They live for the stuff. He said don’t you be like that. Seek you first (what?) the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all that stuff that you need – God’ll take

care of that. Listen. Understand that you need to make God's kingdom your top priority. So many Christians frankly live as if God existed to advance their kingdom. The opposite is true. You live to advance His kingdom. Is it your top priority? Is it obvious in the choices that you make?

Thirdly, the kingdom advances when we're willing to make personal sacrifices to advance the kingdom. In Luke 18:28, Peter reminds the Lord that they have sacrificed their homes to follow Him. In Matthew's account, he says we have given up everything. And Jesus says to him, Listen. No one who's given up anything for the sake of My kingdom will fail to have a reward in this life and eternal life in the life to come. You have to be willing to make personal sacrifices to advance the kingdom.

When I was in college, it's the first time I heard the famous words of David Livingstone. You're familiar with David Livingstone. He came to Christ as a teenager and it wasn't long after that he began to think about medical missionary work. And he invested his life, sacrificed his life as a medical missionary on the continent of Africa. His wife died early in their ministry there. He faced constant opposition. Over the course of the many years that he served in Africa, he charted that he walked some 29,000 miles across that continent. When he died, the people to whom he ministered literally cut out his heart and buried it in the center of that continent because that's where his heart really was. A year later, they buried his body in Westminster Abbey there in London. I've seen his grave several times. It was his self-sacrifice, the fact that for the sake of the kingdom Livingstone gave up wealth and power and influence and personal comfort, that causes me still to be humbled by his words. Have you ever read the famous words of Livingstone in his diary? This is what he wrote: "Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever me from any tie but the tie that binds me to Your service and to Your heart. Lord, send me anywhere."

Is that your prayer? You ever prayed anything like that to God? Have you ever said, God, it's not my kingdom that matters, but Yours? Let me live and if necessary die for its advancement. Students, have you ever considered just telling God that if He were to so choose, you'd be willing to serve him as a missionary like a David Livingstone? Some of you young men, have you ever even stopped to say, God, if you were to gift me and to call me, I would give my life as a pastor if that was Your will? Parents, are you willing to love the kingdom of God more than you love your own family? Are you willing to encourage and support your children to serve God wherever that might take them, however far from Texas that might be? If God should direct you, are you willing to leave everything but God, and serve Him in some difficult place for the sake of His kingdom? May God give us the grace to be able to pray with all our hearts: Lord, may Your present spiritual kingdom advance heart by heart. And use me in whatever way You can, whatever it may cost. Only then can we pray for that future aspect of the kingdom as John did: "Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly (*and establish Your literal kingdom here on this planet*)."

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we are still bound by sinful thinking. Forgive us, O God, for living to advance ourselves and our own kingdoms like unbelievers do. Remind us, O God, that You do not exist to advance our kingdom, but we exist to advance Yours. May this be our prayer, may it be the cry of our hearts, may it be our commitment: "Your kingdom come." We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.