

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of theology today by continuing to examine soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. We are currently discussing the doctrine of sanctification and, more particularly, the means of grace. We have been examining the topic of prayer for some time and in our last two sessions we have been examining the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Spencer, how would you like to proceed today?

Dr. Spencer: Well, I want to continue our discussion of the Lord's Prayer. But, before we pick up where we left off, I think it would be good to read the whole prayer again.

Marc Roby: Very well. We are examining the version found in Matthew 6:9-13 which is, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."¹

Dr. Spencer: We have already covered the preface, which is "Our Father in heaven," and the first petition, which is "hallowed be your name". Last time we started looking at the second petition, which is "your kingdom come," and we had started to look at the answer to Question #102 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Marc Roby: And that answer is, "In the second petition, (which is, *Thy kingdom come,*) we pray, That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened."²

Dr. Spencer: And we had discussed the fact that the Bible speaks of all people as being members of one of two kingdoms, the kingdom of Satan or the kingdom of God, which is also commonly called the kingdom of heaven.

Marc Roby: And you had made the important point that Satan is entirely under God's control. His kingdom is contingent and its destruction is already certain. You used the parable of the weeds to show that God allows Satan to have dominion for a time, but in the end, God will separate true believers, represented by wheat in the parable, from everyone else, all of whom are represented by the weeds.

Dr. Spencer: And the terrifying conclusion to the parable is that the weeds are collected, bundled and burned, which is, of course, referring to eternal damnation. And so, we see that there are, fundamentally, only two kingdoms on earth. One is the kingdom of Satan, which is temporary and contingent and already defeated. Satan cannot do anything without God's permission. The other kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, is an eternal kingdom. Its earthly manifestation is, at this time, imperfect. God is using this period of history to call his chosen people out of the world. But

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² *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012, pg. 44 (English updated slightly)

when that work is finished, Christ will come again in glory and power to judge the living and the dead. At that time, Satan's kingdom will be cast into eternal hell and God's kingdom will be perfected. All of his children will be made perfect, will be given glorious resurrection bodies and will spend eternity with God in perfect peace and joy. And when we pray "your kingdom come", we are praying that God will continue this glorious work and bring it to completion.

Marc Roby: So, there is a sense in which the kingdom of heaven is already here, and yet there is also a sense in which it is yet to come.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. We see both of those senses clearly in the Bible. Here in the Lord's Prayer we are told to pray for God's kingdom to come, which makes it quite clear that it is not yet here in the fullest sense.

Marc Roby: It wouldn't make any sense to pray for the kingdom to come if it was already here.

Dr. Spencer: No it wouldn't. And yet it is here at least in part. In Matthew Chapter 12 we read about Jesus healing a blind and mute man and, in Verse 24, the Pharisees accused him, saying, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." To which Jesus responded, in Verses 25-28, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Marc Roby: That is quite clear. When Christ says "if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God" he isn't expressing any doubt, you could translate that as "Since I drive out demons by the Spirit of God", so his conclusion, which is in the past tense, is true; namely, that the kingdom of God "has come upon you".

Dr. Spencer: And that is a fine translation, but Greek verb tenses are different than English, so the English past tense doesn't completely convey the sense of the original. In the original Greek, the verb is in the Aorist tense, which, according to William Mounce, means that it leaves undefined whether or not the action has just begun, or is in the middle of a process, or is completed.³ In this case, it is clear from all of the statements made in the Bible about the kingdom of God that it is a process, which has begun, but is not yet completed.

Marc Roby: But it will be completed when Christ returns in glory. At that time Satan will be utterly defeated and God will create a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness as we are told in 2 Peter 3:13.

Dr. Spencer: That is true. The book of Revelation speaks about the final consummation of God's kingdom, but I want to defer any detailed discussion of that difficult topic until we get to discussing eschatology, which is the study of last things.

³ See William D. Mounce, Greek, pg 194 (Exegetical Insight), pg. 195 and his discussions of the "aspect" of a verb.

For now, it will suffice to point out two things. First, we are clearly told that Satan, his demons and all who follow him will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur at the end of this age. In Revelation 20:10 we read, “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” And in Revelation 21:8 it says that “the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Marc Roby: While clearly metaphorical, a lake of burning sulfur is a terrible end to contemplate.

Dr. Spencer: It is horrible, but the ultimate destruction of Satan’s kingdom is certain and terrible and, as the catechism says, is part of what we pray for when we pray, “your kingdom come”. In addition, according to the catechism, we pray that the “kingdom of glory be hastened.” Which refers to the new heaven and the new earth as you noted a minute ago.

In John 14:2-3 Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Marc Roby: That is a wonderful promise. And so, when the catechism speaks of the kingdom of glory, it is talking about the ultimate, permanent and unchangeable state of the kingdom of God.

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. And when it says that we pray “that the kingdom of grace may be advanced”, it is speaking about God’s kingdom in this present age. We live in a wonderful time. Christ has already come and saved his people. It is finished as Christ himself said from the cross (John 19:30). We have his promises about the future and we have his Word completed, nothing needs to be added to the Bible. This is a time for all Christians to declare the gospel to the world. This is the gospel of grace, which declares that we may be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Marc Roby: And the catechism also says that in this second petition we are praying that we ourselves, along with others may be brought into the kingdom of grace, and kept in it.

Dr. Spencer: In other words, it is praying for the success of the church of Jesus Christ. In the great commission, Jesus commanded us to go into all the world and make disciples. This petition, in part, is praying for the success of that endeavor.

Marc Roby: There is a lot more included in the simple petition, “your kingdom come”, than is evident at first glance.

Dr. Spencer: And that’s true of the entire prayer. I also think it is important in this antinomian and anti-authoritarian age to point out that the kingdom of grace, while most certainly gracious, *is* still a kingdom. And a kingdom implies rule and authority. When a person is born again and confesses Christ, he confesses him as Savior *and* Lord. You can’t have one without the other. But in this age, Christ rules in his people mostly through the internal operation of the Holy Spirit.

I like what the Heidelberg Catechism says here. Question 123 asks, “What is the second petition?”

Marc Roby: And the answer begins by saying, “*Thy kingdom come. That is: so rule us by your Word and Spirit that we may submit ourselves more and more to you*”⁴.

Dr. Spencer: And that statement captures what I’m talking about perfectly. God’s kingdom implies God’s rule. A kingdom without rule is not a kingdom. The church has great authority, it is symbolized by the keys. The church has authority to put people out of the church, but it has no authority to put people in jail or to put people to death. God’s rule is primarily a voluntary rule in the hearts of his adopted children, although he does discipline and deal with them as we read in Hebrews 12:6 and he is obviously sovereign over all the affairs of this universe, including over the actions of those who reject him.

Marc Roby: That is an important and comforting point.

And now let me read the entire answer from the Heidelberg Catechism. Question 123 asks, “What is the second petition?” And the answer given is, “*Thy kingdom come. That is: so rule us by your Word and Spirit that we may submit ourselves more and more to you; preserve and increase your church; destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalts itself against you, and all wicked counsels conceived against your holy Word, until the perfection of your kingdom arrives wherein you shall be all in all.*”⁵

Dr. Spencer: Which is very much the same as the Westminster Catechism answer about this petition. It says we are praying for the destruction of the works of the devil and everyone who opposes God and it speaks of the “perfection” of God’s kingdom, which is the kingdom of glory.

Paul speaks briefly about this in his first letter to the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 15:22-25 we read, “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

Marc Roby: Praise God that he offers us salvation. Rather than being enemies under his feet, we can be seated with Christ. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:6 that “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”.

Dr. Spencer: All I can say to that is hallelujah! God is good and his love endures forever.

Marc Roby: Yes, it does. Are we ready to move on to the third petition?

Dr. Spencer: Yes, we are. The third petition of the Lord’s Prayer is, “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Which is a request that also requires us to do our part. In his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism’s answer about this petition, G.I. Williamson correctly notes that “It is

⁴ G.I. Williamson, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1993, pg. 217 (English updated)

⁵ Ibid

right here that we see how God’s kingdom comes. It comes as we – together with all other believers – are brought by the Spirit and the Word of God to the obedience of faith.”⁶

Marc Roby: The “obedience of faith” is, of course, an expression that comes from the apostle Paul. In Romans 1:5 in the English Standard Version it says that through Christ, “we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations”.

Dr. Spencer: And this is a very important point often ignored or given short shrift in the modern church. Ephesians 2:10 says that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Notice that this verse gives the purpose of our salvation, it is to do good works. That is how we glorify God, which as the answer to the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism correctly says is our chief end.

Marc Roby: And that is also how Jesus said he glorified God. In his great high-priestly prayer to the Father, we read in John 17:4 that Jesus said, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”

Dr. Spencer: Oh, very true. The obedience of faith is critically important. If a person claims to have faith, but has no obedience to the Word of God, their claim is false. The person is a liar. As James says in James 2:26, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” And Williamson also pointed out in the quote I read that the kingdom of God comes as we work together with other believers. That is primarily accomplished within the context of the local church. Every believer has gifts and our gifts are to be used for the edification of the body of Christ, which is the church.

Marc Roby: In Ephesians 4:16 Paul wrote, in speaking about the body of Christ, that “the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” This is speaking about what is sometimes called the Church Militant, which refers to the fact that we have a war to fight.

Dr. Spencer: We could also look at what Paul wrote in Romans 12:4-6, where we read, “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.” And he then goes on to tell us to use our gifts faithfully. We are to fight this spiritual war together.

Marc Roby: Yes, wars are fought by armies, not by individuals.

Dr. Spencer: And we, as Christians, are to be diligent and faithful members of a local church. You can’t just go to church on Sunday, listen to a word preached, and then go home and have nothing to do with the church the rest of the week. That is an all-to-common perversion of

⁶ Ibid, pg. 221

biblical Christianity. Having no meaningful involvement with other Christians is, first of all, being disobedient to God⁷. But, secondly, it is unsafe. It leaves you vulnerable to Satan.

Marc Roby: It is the sheep that is off on his own who gets taken by the wolf.

Dr. Spencer: Precisely. We need each other and we need accountability. But let's move on to notice the rest of what the third petition says. We pray that God's will be done on earth, "as it is in heaven." It is important to note that there is a heaven even now. And God rules in heaven just as he does here on earth. But there is a difference. At this time, God sometimes allows people to disregard his commands here on earth. They will, ultimately, pay a price for their disobedience, but he doesn't always immediately enforce his rule at this time. But that is not true in heaven. In heaven, God is obeyed perfectly. Psalm 103:20 says, "Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word."

Marc Roby: The Westminster Shorter Catechism mentions the angels in the answer to Question 103, which is "What do we pray for in the third petition?" The answer given is that "In the third petition, (which is, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*), we pray, That God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven."⁸

Dr. Spencer: The angels who followed Satan in his rebellion have been cast out of heaven. They are now demons. And they, along with all of God's enemies, will ultimately be cast into the lake of burning sulfur as we noted earlier. But in heaven, God is worshiped and obeyed perfectly. When Christians die, they are immediately perfected in their soul and go to heaven to join in the righteous assembly, they become part of what is sometimes called the Church Triumphant. For them, the war is over. And, ultimately, when Christ returns, they will receive their glorified bodies and will spend eternity worshiping God perfectly. All sin will be gone.

Marc Roby: That is such a wonderful thing to look forward to. And I think with that we are out of time for today. Therefore, I'd like to remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org. We would love to hear from you.

⁷ e.g., see Hebrews 10:25

⁸ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012, pp 44-45