

THE King
IS ON
HIS
Throne

**TEACH
ME TO**
pray
**PART
FIVE**

THE LORD'S *prayer*





Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.

May your kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven
those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and
the glory forever.

Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13 - The New Living Translation



As you read the Bible it soon becomes very clear that much of it is about politics, power and control of people and the planet. In Biblical times, democracy as we know it was not yet invented. Nations were ruled by kings, or their equivalent - like Caesars, and most were dictators. So their empires were called king-doms.

WHEREVER THERE'S A KINGDOM THERE'S GOT TO BE A KING... AND SUBJECTS!

In the *Lord's Prayer*, Jesus tells us to pray - *May your kingdom come soon*. So God has a kingdom too! And he is asking us to pray that his kingdom comes. Now that raises a lot of questions. It means that even though he is a king over a kingdom that exists somewhere, there is still some sense in which the kingdom has not yet come. It can be confusing if we are looking for something visible and physical here on earth right now. To grasp what Jesus means in the *Lord's Prayer*, it will be helpful to first spend some time reflecting on what the *Kingdom of God* means.



THE KING HAS LANDED!

Just before Jesus began his public ministry, a man called John stirred all of Palestine with his powerful preaching. Great crowds went out into the desert to hear him, and although his message was simple it was also very confronting -

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. Matthew 3:1-2

The coming of God to set up his kingdom on Earth had long been prophesied in the Bible during the previous centuries -

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. Daniel 2:44

And also -

His [God's] kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. Daniel 7:27

John the Baptist's God-given role was to prepare people for the coming of the God-king - also called the Messiah - who was about to step into human history. When John met Jesus and baptised him in the River Jordan, God showed him that Jesus was indeed that promised king. (See John 1:29-34) From that moment onwards Jesus went throughout Palestine proclaiming the good news of God. All the previous prophecies mentioned in early Bible writings were pointing to this very time. (See Daniel 9:24-27 as an example)

The time has come, he [Jesus] said. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news! Mark 1:14-15

Everywhere Jesus went he healed the sick, cast demons out of people, raised the dead to life, and on many occasions even controlled nature. He turned water into wine, miraculously provided food for thousands of people, and calmed furious storms. He was giving people a glimpse of the awesome power at his control as king of this kingdom of God.

GET INVOLVED

How would you have reacted to Jesus if you met him and saw him doing all these things?



The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established... not with the clash of arms and the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice.

- *Desire of Ages* p.217

The religious leaders felt threatened as they saw their control, power and influence over the people slipping away. Increasing numbers were following Jesus instead of them, and so they accused him of being a fake, illegitimate or demon-possessed. Not daunted, Jesus challenged them with the statement -

If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. Luke 11:20

Ultimately, he chose to bring things to a climax by doing what every king in Israel in previous times had done. He mounted a donkey and rode into Jerusalem with his followers. The crowds of common people grasped the significance of that dramatic event, and immediately shouted their support exclaiming - *See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey.* (Matthew 21:5)



WHAT ON EARTH DID WE DO TO THE KING!

Because Jesus had stepped over the line in the leaders' thinking, they devised a plan to kill him. They captured him one night, and accused him before the Roman ruler Pontius Pilate of being a traitor.

The ruler asked Jesus - *Are you the king of the Jews?*

Jesus asked him - *Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?*

Pilate replied - *Am I a Jew? It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?*

Jesus said - *My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.*

Pilate said - *You are a king, then!*

Jesus answered - *You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*
(John 18:33-37)

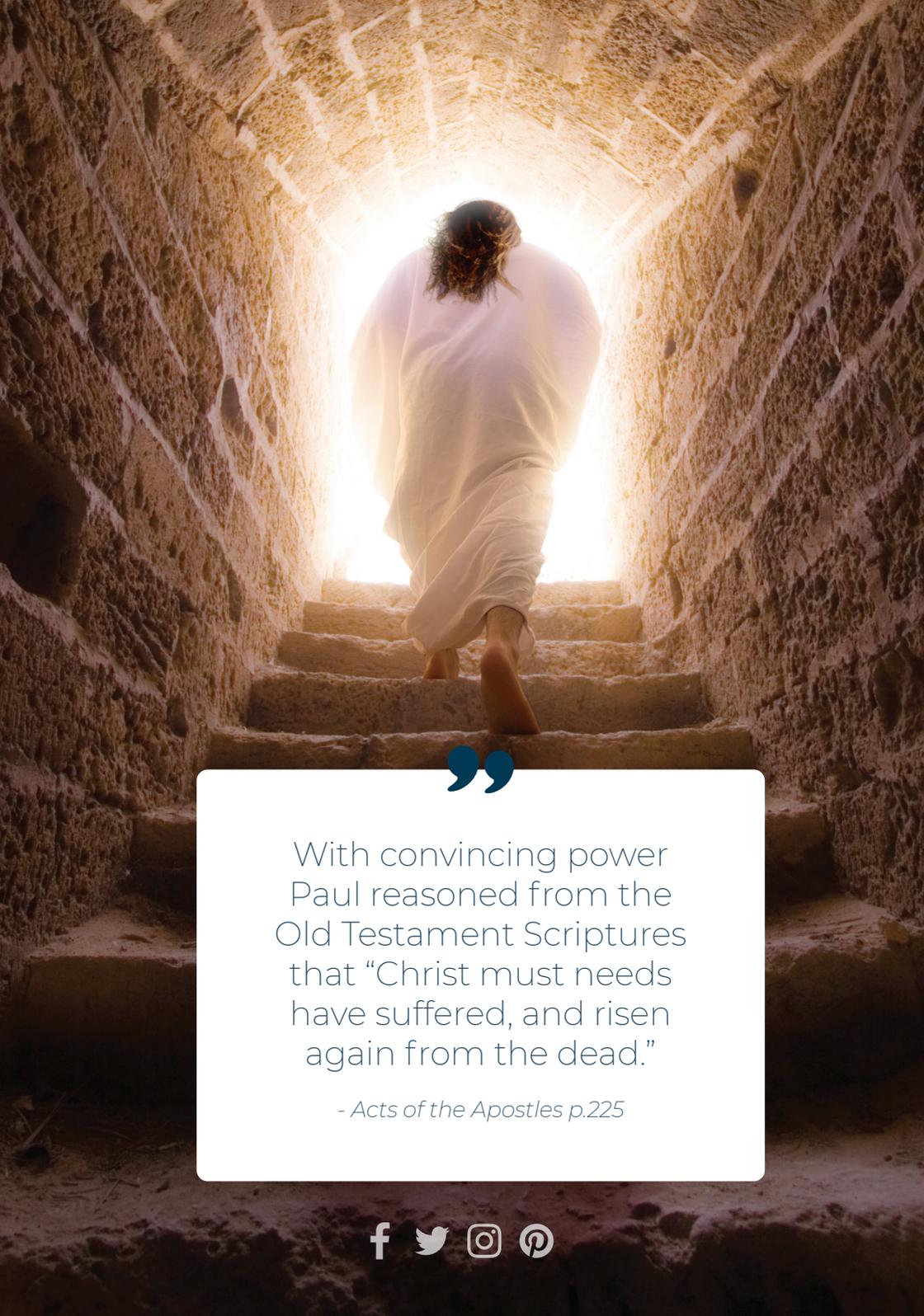
This statement by Jesus sheds a lot of light on what his kingdom was all about. Although it would ultimately impact political kingdoms here on earth, it was primarily a spiritual kingdom, and we become his subjects when we receive him as king over our minds, our emotions and our behaviours. We become loyal to him rather than to the powers controlling our earthly world.

The Roman ruler saw exactly what Jesus meant, but he was a weak man and buckled under the pressure of the religious leaders. He ordered that Jesus be put to death, and hung a notice over the place of his execution that read - *JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.* (John 19:19)

As he hung there dying, Jesus' last words were - *It is finished!* (John 19:30) To a first-time reader this might appear to be a cry of failure and defeat. In actual fact though, it was exactly the opposite. It was a cry of victory! It was for this purpose that he, as God, had left heaven and come to earth. A few days earlier Jesus explained plainly the incredible significance of his death by saying -

It was for this very reason I came to this hour . . . Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die - lifted up on a cross. John 12:27-33





With convincing power Paul reasoned from the Old Testament Scriptures that “Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.”

- Acts of the Apostles p.225



THE GATECRASHER

It becomes clear from this statement that another prince had set up his own kingdom on earth. (See John 12:31; 14:30 and 16:11) Jesus is referring here to Satan, and tells us something of his beginnings. Initially he was created as a perfect angel and always lived in God's presence. We don't know how or why, but eventually he became proud in his heart, and wanted the universe to worship him instead of God. He slandered God's name and created war in heaven. For strategic reasons, God isolated him to this earth to ultimately expose the truth about his rebellious character before the whole universe. (See Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:7-9; Ephesians 3:10)

When God created our world, he made the first man and woman to be rulers over the whole earth. (See Genesis 1:26-27) The book of Genesis tells the tragic story of how Satan deceived the couple and introduced death onto our planet for the first time. He seized the rulership over this planet which had once been theirs, and became *the prince of this world*. (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) Every man and woman who has ever lived has had to eventually die because of Satan's rule. That's what his kingdom is like - it's full of darkness and death. That's what we see around us all over the world today.

When Jesus left heaven and came to this earth, he came to destroy Satan's kingdom and finally restore it again to the human race. Realising what was at stake, Satan tempted Jesus to take the easy way out. The Bible says -

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Jesus said to him - Away from me, Satan! For it is written, worship the Lord your God, and serve him only. Matthew 4:8-10

GET INVOLVED -

How has evil affected your life?

THE KING'S MASTER STRATEGY

When Jesus said - Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out (John 12:31) - he was spelling out the ultimate and final judgment on Satan and every human being who decides to rebel against God. Jesus was actually taking the penalty onto himself and experiencing it to the full in his own death. He was stepping into our shoes and taking the consequence of human disloyalty.

What a marvellous God! What a great king to have! Does that inspire you as you learn that about the heart of God? This was Jesus' strategy in his struggle against the prince of this world. He chose to win us by love, rather than conquer us by power. He had re-established his original kingdom on the earth again. On the third day after his death, Jesus rose from the grave, saying -

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. John 10:17



The kingdom of God's grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love.

- Mount of Blessing p.108



YES! BUT WHAT DOES ALL THIS HAVE TO DO WITH PRAYER?

Knowing this, it will help us understand when it says in the *Lord's Prayer* - *May your kingdom come soon*. It is a cry from our heart asking God to extend his spiritual kingdom on the earth every day. The kingdom of God is the spiritual reality in our lives here and now. We are praying for the ongoing work that Jesus accomplished when he lived, died and rose again.

Also, we are praying that Jesus and his kingdom will ultimately break into our world visibly and physically some time in the near future. The Bible does not tell us exactly when that will happen, but it does paint a picture of conditions in the world just before it happens. (See Matthew 24) The sad fact is that not everyone will accept him or his kingdom at that time any more than they did when he first came. There are still people today who, like the religious rulers of the day, don't want him to be their king. They want to rule over their own destiny. The Bible tells us about a time when our world will come to a final crisis, and everyone will have to decide who they want to have as their king. It is said of those who reject Jesus -

They will make war against the Lamb [Jesus], but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings - and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers. Revelation 17:14

But we are not there yet. This world is not our final home. We still have to live with the evil that reigns in the world. But for the present, however, we are ambassadors of his spiritual kingdom as it presently exists, and more importantly, when it will exist in its ultimate form.

GET INVOLVED -

*Do you want to be part of God's kingdom here on the earth -
both now and in the future?*

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PRAY

These examples show how to pray now that God's kingdom is here, and will soon come in all its fullness!

This is one of the Apostle Paul's meaningful prayers on one occasion when he found himself imprisoned in a primitive Roman jail for preaching about the kingdom of God -

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:12-19

This prayer is contained in a letter to some Christians who lived in the city of Ephesus. Despite the rough prison conditions, Paul shares with them that he is not confined to the walls of his prison here on earth. Instead, he pictures himself right in the presence of God, kneeling before his Father in heaven. He knows God's heart for his whole family throughout heaven and earth, and on that basis prays for his own family in Ephesus. He asks God to strengthen them and open their eyes to the realities that exist in the spiritual realm of God's kingdom. This captures the essence of asking God's kingdom to come and be real in people's lives.

George Mueller was another such person. Throughout his lifetime in the 19th century, he provided homes and welfare for 120,000 orphans he saved from the cruel streets of Bristol in England. He did this without making any appeals for money, or using any fundraising techniques, but simply by prayer. He was convinced that God would provide for the needs of these children in his kingdom - and he did - he was as good as his word!

For a good read on prayer, see *George Mueller of Bristol* by A.T. Pierson. This is an excellent book on prayer, answers to prayer, and living in the kingdom of God now, as we wait for this kingdom to come in all its fullness.



GET INVOLVED -

Are you a member of God's kingdom now? Are you waiting for God's kingdom to come in its fullness? Can you make this part of the Lord's Prayer your own?



Why not make the following prayer your own -



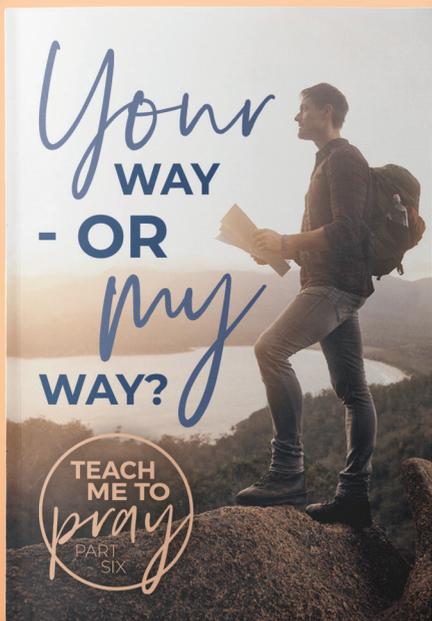
MY PRAYER –

My father in heaven,
I worship you for you alone are God.
Your name is holy. You are a good God.
Father, thank you for loving me.
Please help me to understand you better
and be more like you.
Please hear my prayer.
I ask in Jesus' name, Amen

This is my prayer right now.

Signed: _____





PART 6: YOUR WAY OR MY WAY

God has a plan for you - but He doesn't take away your free will. The choice to follow Him is always yours to make.

Email or call Hope Channel to receive Part 6 of the Teach Me to Pray series to continue in your prayer journey.

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