

God's Kingdom—Reigning and Supplying with Life

- 1 God's kingdom is God's reigning,
His glory to maintain;
It is His sovereign ruling,
His order to sustain.
He exercises fully
His own authority
Within His kingdom ever
And to eternity.
- 2 Upon the throne, the center
Of government divine,
God reigns, and with His purpose
Brings everything in line.
God's headship and His lordship
He only can maintain
As King within His kingdom,
O'er everything to reign.
- 3 By reigning in His kingdom
God worketh all His will,
And under His dominion
His purpose doth fulfill.
'Tis only in God's kingdom
His blessing we may know;
'Tis from His throne almighty
The stream of life doth flow.
- 4 Submitted to God's ruling,
All virtue thus will win;
Rebellion to His Headship
Is but the root of sin.
The evil aim of Satan—
God's throne to overthrow;
Our aim and goal is ever
His rule to fully know.
- 5 Within God's sovereign kingdom
His Christ is magnified;
When Christ in life is reigning,
The Father's glorified.
When God is in dominion,
All things are truly blessed;
When Christ for God is reigning,
God's glory is expressed.
- 6 In fulness of the seasons
God's Christ will head up all,
Then all will own His reigning
And worship, great and small.

Such reign in life and glory
The Church e'en now foretastes,
And to His rule submitting
Unto His kingdom hastes. (*Hymns*, #941)

In the above hymn Witness Lee speaks of several crucial aspects of the kingdom of God. Although the kingdom is clearly unveiled in the Scriptures, its intrinsic significance related to our living as believers has been hidden and remains obscure. A clear understanding of the meaning, purpose, and goal of the kingdom will have a great impact on our lives, empowering us to live a life in oneness with God's purpose and intention.

In a general way, the kingdom of God is God's ruling over all people, things, and matters in the universe. He is the unique God, and His rule is with all power and authority. Christ preached the kingdom of God as the ruling and reigning of God in life with much blessing and enjoyment, a spiritual reality that rescues fallen man from the dominion of death and darkness under the usurping hand of Satan and that brings man into a realm of life and light under God's grace.

Although the kingdom ultimately will be manifested, God's dominion is not seen on the earth today. It is present, however, as a realm of life in which the organic element of God's life operates in and through all His redeemed, regenerated, and sanctified people. As participants in the kingdom in reality, they have become factors to bring in the manifestation of the kingdom. This hymn focuses on the revelation that the reality of the kingdom as life in God's people today has the special function of bringing in the manifestation of the kingdom. The kingdom is both a present reality and a coming reward to those who are exercised to live in oneness with God against the persecution and often fierce opposition of God's enemy.

The Definition of the Kingdom

The kingdom is revealed in the New Testament not primarily as a place but as a realm, a sphere in which God reigns and carries out all matters and things according to His intention in His economy for His eternal glory. Stanza 1 of this hymn testifies that the kingdom is a realm

in which God maintains His sovereign government and sustains order in the universe with a view to expressing His glory. God rules in His kingdom for the purpose of expressing His glory. When everything is in order, God is honored and glorified. God's kingdom is His personal and absolute reigning, His sovereign administration, which upholds order to express His glory in the universe.

However, God's kingdom is not without challenge. Although the entire creation is under the governing and administrating will of God in His kingdom, a competing will is actively opposing the authority of God. The Bible shows that a rebellion among the angels of God was initiated by the archangel Lucifer, who then brought his rebellious intentions to the earth, bringing all of humanity under his usurpation. Because of ignorance and unbelief, God is often maligned for the circumstances, strife, and corruption that are the consequences of Satan's dark dominion over the fallen creation.

In contrast to these manifestations of darkness, this hymn underscores the unwavering fact that God's kingdom is the realm of His dominion. He is the unique Sovereign in the entire universe. In an uncompromising definition of the kingdom, this hymn resolutely confirms that the kingdom of God is a matter of His absolute authority for the purpose of expressing His glory, maintaining His sovereign rule, and upholding His order in the universe both now and for eternity.

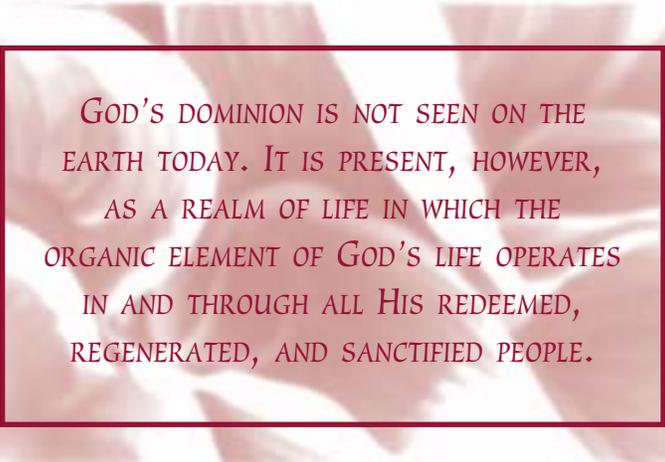
The Definite Status of the Kingdom

God is the absolute Ruler seated on the throne at the center of the divine government from which He reigns in His sovereign lordship and headship over all people, matters, and things to secure His purpose. Stanza 2 is very closely related to stanza 1; it declares that the kingdom constitutes a domain in which God on the throne is the absolute Ruler; He is the center of the divine government. God is depicted as being seated on the throne in His sovereign lordship and headship over all people, matters, and things. The first stanza emphasizes God's rule for His glory; the second stanza concentrates on His purpose in His government. God's glory and purpose are intimately related to the goal and working of the kingdom.

God intends to establish His kingdom rule over all things

and to set everything in order by His reign. He, as the unique Head over all, has given the role of the restoration of His kingdom to His Son. All this is the result of His determined will. Furthermore, He has predestinated the believers in Christ unto divine sonship, which involves an organic relationship with the living God. This relationship came into being when Christ was raised from the dead. In resurrection He became the firstborn Son of God, the Brother of the many sons of God (Rom. 8:29-30; cf. Heb. 2:10-13). As the many sons, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17). Thus, we become a part of the heading-up process in Christ and with Christ to the praise of God's glory.

The eternal intention of God will be worked out in the universe through and with the cooperation of sons on earth who are organically one with Him, having no hidden motives and no self-interest. Their unique desire is that His kingdom come and His will be fully established in the earthly realm as in the heavenly realm (Matt. 6:10). This is God's purpose in His kingdom, and this is also our desire and goal.



GOD'S DOMINION IS NOT SEEN ON THE EARTH TODAY. IT IS PRESENT, HOWEVER, AS A REALM OF LIFE IN WHICH THE ORGANIC ELEMENT OF GOD'S LIFE OPERATES IN AND THROUGH ALL HIS REDEEMED, REGENERATED, AND SANCTIFIED PEOPLE.

The Determined Function of the Kingdom

The determined function and goal of the kingdom is to establish God's perfect will and His heart's desire through the dispensing of His life into believers who gladly submit to His kingdom's ruling. Stanza 3 is a pleasant unveiling of the rich flow of life that comes to those who are one with God in His restoration of the kingdom on earth. Only in God's kingdom may we know and experience His rich blessings. Here we enjoy the wonderful transfer out of the authority of darkness and into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 3:13). It is a delightful realm, full of the divine supply of life.

It is true that the book of Revelation reveals that the coming Christ will judge the rebellious Satan with the rebellious angels together with all those who have chosen to follow them, and that He will also judge the nations with a rod of iron as prophesied in Psalm 2:9 and in Revelation 2:27 and 19:15. It is significant, however, that the Lord Jesus, who will be the absolute Ruler in the millennial kingdom and for eternity, is shown to be a Shepherd. Just as He will be a Shepherd to the nations, He is a Shepherd to the believers. While the main component of His kingly shepherding of the nations will be a "rod of iron," the

main component of His kingly shepherding of us is a “stream of life” that “from His throne almighty...doth flow.”

The kingdom to us is not a realm of harsh discipline. The kingdom is a wonderful person, the Triune God Himself in Christ as life being imparted into us and establishing His reign in life within us; it is a sphere in which we are spontaneously subject to His desire and intention and are one with Him intrinsically. The life of God is the authority that operates in His redeemed and regenerated people. Through God’s life, we are qualified to enter into the kingdom of the heavens as a marvelous realm. With the divine life we are born anew into the kingdom, we see God, and we are called the children and sons of God.

Having entered into the kingdom through regeneration, we can participate in all the blessings of God’s flowing life. Revelation 22:1 presents a wonderful sign regarding this flowing life: “He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.” The life flowing from the throne is a picture not only of our future enjoyment of God as life for eternity but also of our present experience of God’s dispensing of Himself into us as believers. Whenever we submit under the throne of God in full subjection to His ruling presence within us, we enjoy the fresh supply of the flowing divine life.

An Ongoing Battle

Stanza 4 speaks of an ongoing battle to bring in and maintain God’s kingdom on earth. The attacks of God’s enemy, Satan, reveal an evil aim to overthrow God’s kingdom, in contrast to the goal of God’s people to fully know the ruling of God in His kingdom. Submitting to God’s kingdom rule produces a living that is holy and righteous, one that is full of blessing and virtue. Thus, there is a spiritual conflict because the direct and complete rule of God upon the earth has been temporarily affected by Satan’s rebellion. This world has become his kingdom, and his rule is described as the authority of darkness (Matt. 12:26; Col. 1:13). Every human being has been touched by this kingdom of darkness under the rule of Satan.

From this realm of gross darkness, however, the Father has delivered His redeemed and regenerated children, and He has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (vv. 12-14), making us strangers and sojourners on the earth (cf. Heb. 11:13). Thus, we are now engaged in spiritual warfare “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies” (Eph. 6:12).

The Dominion of God Being Entrusted to and Fully Established by the Lord Jesus

Stanza 5 reveals that our victory in this battle has been assured because the dominion of God has been fully entrusted to and established by the Lord Jesus, and this victory is also being carried out by the Lord Jesus who has been resurrected, ascended, and declared to be God even in His humanity. Now He is reigning in life for the glory of the Father. During His first thirty years, Jesus lived a normal human life, yet He was always under the authority of God in all things; He was never usurped by the satanic corruption in the world. He was without sin in every way. By means of the mysterious process of His incarnation, death, and resurrection, He brought the kingdom of God to the earth as a beachhead for the restoration of God’s rule over the whole earth. After His resurrection and ascension, He returned to meet with His disciples on the mountain and there He proclaimed that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him. He, in resurrection, then commissioned His disciples to go and disciple all the nations, conveying those who believe into the kingdom by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to observe all that He had taught (Matt. 28:18-20).

This extraordinary person, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the center of God’s governmental administration for the purpose of heading up the entire universe. There is now a man who has been exalted to the right hand of God on the throne. He is over all things, people, rule, authority, power, and lordship. He has acquired a name that is above every name (Eph. 1:19-21). A day will come when every tongue will openly acknowledge that He is Lord over all. His victory reaches every age and every level of existence not only in this age but in the age to come. To Him every knee will bow, not only of those who are on the earth but even of those in the heavens and those who are under the earth (Phil. 2:9-11). This great power and authority subdue all things, reinstate the authority of God’s kingdom in every place, and issue in eternal glory to the Father.

The Dominion of God Being Experienced and Hastened by the Church

Stanza 6 declares that the dominion of God is being worked out, fully experienced, and brought into the earthly realm by the church; Christ is heading up all things through His Body, the church. In the fullness of the times Christ will head up all things, and all people and things will acknowledge that He is Lord over all. The church is currently enjoying the reality of this kingdom reign as a foretaste of Christ’s coming reign in glory, and through our submission to His rule now, we can hasten

the manifestation of the kingdom. God has subjected all things under the Lord's feet and "gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). As the Head of the Body, the ascended Lord from His position in the heavens labors through and with His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people to build up the church for the full execution of His victory over Satan. The response of the church is a joyful and wholehearted submission to His inner ruling in life. Through our obedience of faith (Rom. 16:26), we are built together as His Body, the church, and we accelerate the appearance of the kingdom on earth.

If we see the vision of the kingdom, our living will be changed. The Bible clearly shows that God's intention is to fully establish His kingdom on earth. The means of accomplishing His objective is Christ and the church—the Head with His Body. Today Christ is ruling from the

throne in the heavens. At the same time in His omniscience, omnipresence, and eternal existence, He is heading up all things as the Head through His Body, the church.

In our experience the divine life that has been dispensed into us is moving in power within; as it moves, this life ushers us into the reality of the kingdom. Through and in Christ we are qualified to live the life of the kingdom. The capacity and even the motivation to live in submission to God's administration and authority are activated by the life of God in us. We must learn to live by the transforming and glorifying life of God as the source for our living. As we respond to the life of the kingdom, we will hasten the Lord's return and the manifestation of His kingdom.

by Gary Kaiser

Commentary on the Book of Revelation

"He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street" (Rev. 22:1).

The throne of God and of the Lamb, one throne for both God and the Lamb, signifies that God and the Lamb are one—the Lamb-God, the redeeming God, God the Redeemer. In eternity, the very God who will sit on the throne is our redeeming God, from whose throne proceeds the river of water of life for our supply and satisfaction. This depicts how the Triune God—God, the Lamb, and the Spirit, symbolized by the water of life—dispenses Himself into His redeemed under His headship (implied in the authority of the throne) for eternity...

The One on the throne is both the God who created and the Lamb who redeemed. Hence, we may call Him the Lamb-God. This means that He is the redeeming God. This redeeming God is on the throne of His administration that He may dispense Himself into all His redeemed...

The throne of God in the center of New Jerusalem is the unique source of the life supply. It is by His administration that God dispenses Himself into us as life, as the life supply, and as the eternal, absolute, all-inclusive grace. His dispensing of Himself into us depends upon His administration. For this reason, in the church life today there is divine authority and church government. There is a divine government in the church life today, and this government comes from the throne of God. The divine authority in the church is for God to dispense Himself into us as life, as the life supply, and as the all-sufficient grace. Only by submitting ourselves to God's authority, God's government, can we share in His all-sufficient grace.

The throne of God and of the Lamb in the center of New Jerusalem symbolizes the divine authority of God's headship in Christ. The life supply flows out of this authority, and the enjoyment of the life supply brings us under this authority. The flow of the water of life not only affords us the life supply, but also brings to us the divine authority. In the flow of the water of life there are the life supply and the divine authority with the fellowship in life. When we participate in the life supply, we are brought under God's authority in the fellowship of life.

I am sorry that some Christians utilize Brother Nee's book, *Spiritual Authority*, to make themselves an authority over others. This kind of authority is self-assumed. Genuine authority comes from the throne of God's administration in the center of New Jerusalem, through the enjoyment of the life supply in the fellowship of life with God.

From the *Life-study of Revelation* by Witness Lee, pp. 740-742