

Concerning the Kingdom's Requirement

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| <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. (<i>Hymns</i>, #941)</p> |
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When we touch the significance of this hymn, written by Witness Lee, concerning the kingdom of God, we enter into a crucial aspect of the economy of God—the kingdom of God. Unfortunately, this aspect of God's goal and purpose in relation to His creation has been greatly missed, neglected, or misunderstood and misinterpreted by Christians throughout the ages. God's kingdom with His throne is the supreme authority and the unique initiating source of all government in the universe. Ultimately, every authority in all creation is appointed by God and every creature in the entire universe is under His divine sovereignty. Hence, the Scripture exalts Him as

the blessed and only Sovereign..., the King of those who reign as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen nor can see, to whom be honor and eternal might. Amen. (1 Tim. 6:15-16)

Let every person be subject to the authorities over him, for there is no authority except from God, and those

which exist are ordained by God. So then he who resists the authority opposes God's ordination, and those who oppose will receive judgment to themselves. (Rom. 13:1-2)

A number of significant features of God's kingdom are revealed—either by direct reference or by implication—through this hymn. First, God's kingdom is actually God Himself—His very person defines all authority. He works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). When He brought forth the angels at the beginning of His creation process, His authority began to be manifested. Eventually, all creation sprang into being at the word of His command. Every element of His detailed arrangements in the heavens or on the earth or under the earth came into existence by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). The universe was framed by the word of God (11:3). Hence, the psalmist admonishes, "Let all the earth fear Jehovah; / Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. / For He spoke, and it was; / He commanded, and it stood" (Psa. 33:8-9).

Under His rule, all things stand in a proper and ordered relationship to Him and to one another. It is normal, therefore, that all things in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth exist and remain in subjection to Him. Before He made man, however, God's system of government was challenged and violated. One of the created angels, Lucifer—meaning “son of the dawn”—who had been delegated as the authority over the world and its environs, repudiated God's governmental order and introduced rebellion into the universe, challenging the universal authority of God (Isa. 14:12-15). Lucifer became Satan, the adversary of God, and he led a group of rebellious angels to reject God's ruling authority and to establish a rebellious world order.

Because God will never allow challenges to His governmental authority to stand, His economy, initially recorded in the Scriptures in relation to His creation of man, includes the recovery of His kingdom on the earth. To accomplish the restoration of divine order in the universe, God created a corporate man not only to express God in His image but also to represent Him by exercising His dominion over all things (Gen. 1:26-28). On the one hand, man was made to express God with a spirit, soul, and body to be a living vessel to contact, contain, and be joined to God organically for His expression. On the other hand, man was given dominion over the created world with the express purpose of subduing God's enemy, Satan, recovering the earth which had been usurped by Satan, and establishing the kingdom of God on the earth. Among all creatures, this corporate man was uniquely qualified to exercise God's authority over the earth so that God's will would be done on earth and His glory would be fully displayed in the universe (Heb. 2:6-8; Matt. 6:9-13). Regrettably, instead of allying himself with God to carry out His purpose, man fell prey to God's enemy and became a part of the rebellious world order under the usurping hand of Satan.

Some four thousand years after Adam's failure, Christ, the second man and last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47), came and accomplished the defeat of God's adversary and the destruction of his works (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). The execution of Christ's accomplished judgment of Satan on the cross will not be completed until the Body of Christ is built up as the one new man. The built-up church will be the bride of Christ who is joined to the Bridegroom—the glorified Son of God—to fully defeat Antichrist and his armies. After Antichrist's defeat, Satan will be bound and cast into the pit for a thousand years (Rev. 19:6—20:4). The divine intent to restore God's reign over all the earth then will be fulfilled as triumphantly proclaimed in the book of Revelation: “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns” (19:6).

As we consider the magnitude of the kingdom as unveiled in this hymn, we should join with the author to touch the intrinsic desire in the heart of God, musing on the essence, the significance, and the implied consequences of the kingdom of God as it directly relates to our living and walk on the earth as believers. The hymn begins, “God's kingdom is God's reigning, / His glory to maintain.” In the Scriptures the glory of God is associated with His kingdom and power. The kingdom is the realm, the domain, in which God exercises His authority and power in order to express His glory. Glory is the unique expression of God; what He is in His greatness, power, splendor, and majesty is manifested either in Himself or in His creatures who reflect Him. So David exalted Jehovah:

David blessed Jehovah in the sight of all the assembly. And David said, You are blessed, O Jehovah, God of Israel our Father, from eternity to eternity. Yours is the greatness and the power and the splendor and the victory and the majesty, indeed all that is in heaven and on earth; Yours, O Jehovah, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as Head over all. Both riches and glory proceed from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and it is in Your hand to make great and to give strength to all. (1 Chron. 29:10-12)

This reflects God's glorious person in His full sovereignty. In order to maintain His glory, He sovereignly, consistently, and eternally rules over everything, sustaining the proper order in everything. Nothing escapes His ordered purpose. When everything abides in its normal arrangement, the beauty of His person shines upon and within all that He has established.

The second stanza and the first half of the third present the scope of God's reigning in His kingdom. By His divine government He brings everything into line with His purpose. Under His dominion He works out every detail of His will. He is the unique One who maintains His headship and lordship to rule and reign over all things. God is God and everything must be properly related to Him.

In the second half of stanza 3, we are reminded of the benefit of the kingdom to us: “'Tis only in God's kingdom / His blessing we may know; / 'Tis from His throne almighty / The stream of life doth flow.” These lines underscore a point of neglect among many who bear the name of Jesus Christ. We fail to realize that the throne of God is the intrinsic source of all blessing and every spiritual experience in life. The book of Revelation affirms that the river of water of life flows from the throne. Hence, being under and remaining within His reign determines the meaning and purpose of our human existence. If we wish to be the beneficiaries of God's grace, we must never lose sight of the unique place that God's throne occupies in our personal and corporate universe.

If we would serve God and be well pleasing to Him, we must learn to know and recognize His authority in all things. First, God created man with the goal of expressing Him and of bearing His authority to subdue the earth. Second, man fell to the subtle temptation of God's enemy and was fully usurped to become useless to God's purpose until redemption was accomplished in the shedding of Christ's blood. Through the saving grace of God in Christ, we have been transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:12-13). Our purpose here is to join ourselves to the Lord to establish God's kingdom in all the earth. To do this we first must come under God's authority. The strategy of Satan is to keep us ignorant of the fact that God's kingdom, as a present reality in our daily living, is the driving force toward the completion of God's New Testament economy. Satan is in a fierce struggle with the Lord to prevent the full restoration of the kingdom in us.

Stanza 4 clarifies and further develops various aspects of our experience of the kingdom: "Submitted to God's ruling, / All virtue thus will win; / Rebellion to His Headship / Is but the root of sin." This is a solemn consideration: rebellion to His headship is the root of sin. Every virtue, the intrinsic essence of every action able to win the Lord's approval in our living and conduct before Him, depends on our submission to God's ruling presence; this is a very subjective matter. Outward practices and objective rules of conduct, apart from a corresponding inner humbling under the hand of God, will never commend us to God (1 Pet. 1:6-7). The Lord Jesus amplified the subjective nature of God's intrinsic rule in His people when He warned in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens." This indicates that we may be very much in rebellion even while we are in the process of doing "many works of power" in His name (v. 22). According to the Lord, many will protest in the day of judgment because the Lord will not recognize that they spoke in His name or did many wonderful things in His name. His response will be stern and unyielding: "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (v. 23). The footnote in the Recovery Version of the Bible observes,

To enter into the kingdom of the heavens, we need to do two things: call on the Lord and do the will of the heavenly Father. To call on the Lord suffices for us to be saved (Rom. 10:13), but to enter into the kingdom of the heavens, we also need to do the will of the heavenly Father. (v. 21, note 1)

The worth of our labor in the Lord's vineyard is determined by the extent to which it is aligned to the Father's will. Unless we realize and acknowledge the preeminence of our heavenly Father in the very center of our being and

in all our living and action, we will be workers of lawlessness no matter how much we outwardly may accomplish.

As a steward of the grace of God, it is important to acknowledge God's governmental authority, not allowing our liberty to be an occasion for the lawlessness of the flesh. Watchman Nee speaks to this point.

Those who are saved in this age must learn the fundamental lesson of not frustrating God's government with His grace. I need to repeat this word in an emphatic way: Do not frustrate God's order in His government with the grace that He dispenses to you. God's intention is that man would respect His government; He has no intention for man to annul His government. If you are oblivious to God's government, you are lawless in the eyes of God; you are totally ignorant of the fact that, in addition to the church, there is also the kingdom. You must see the system of government. The system of grace perfects the system of government. The system of government is not for the system of grace; rather, the system of grace is here to perfect the system of government...

From the very beginning, God has been trying to usher in His governmental system. He will continue this work until the very end. Grace always goes along with government. Because man fought and rebelled against the system of government, the system of grace was brought in. The system of grace brings us to salvation and restoration so that we will obey God's system of government. Grace is given to supplement God's system of government. (749-750)

This thought should cause us to be sober-minded concerning our consecration to God and to turn our entire being over to the Lord as a living sacrifice on His altar (Rom. 12:1) We need to learn obedience and submission in all things even as our Lord committed Himself in obedience to the Father for His kingdom (Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:17—3:7; Heb. 12:3-10). The learning of obedience in submission is a focal point in the spiritual warfare that encompasses us on a daily basis (2 Cor. 10:3-6). The second half of stanza 4 emphasizes the point that the battle between God's enemy and God's people centers upon the issue of the supremacy of God's throne: "The evil aim of Satan— / God's throne to overthrow; / Our aim and goal is ever / His rule to fully know." Satan's aim and goal is to overthrow God's ruling authority and establish his own throne; our aim and goal must be to fully know and firmly establish God's rule on the earth.

The centrality of Christ in carrying out the divine economy is the focus of stanza 5. After the Lord Jesus passed through incarnation to bring God into man, through human living to show forth a human life absolutely under the throne of God, and through crucifixion to decisively and all-inclusively defeat God's enemy,

God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

Christ is now the center of exaltation in the Father's kingdom, and this exaltation is to the glory of the Father, indicating that the Father's glory is seen in the Son's full oneness under the Father's reign. This thought corresponds with the Lord's prayer in John 17:1-6 and with His declaration in 13:31-32 that He would be glorified in the Father and the Father would be glorified in Him. In the triumph of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus declared, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). As the only Begotten of the Father, He eternally had all authority. But His statement in the Gospel of Matthew confirms that all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Him as a man after His resurrection. As a man, He has been highly exalted by God, and now He is seated at the right hand of God. When Christ reigns in life, the Father is glorified.

The final stanza affirms that "In fulness of the seasons / God's Christ will head up all." God's economy is to "head up all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). The apostle John, in his first Epistle declares that the whole world lies in the evil one, that is, the whole world is occupied by Satan as the ruler of the authority of the air and the god of this age (5:19; Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Cor. 4:4). For this reason, it is necessary that God's Christ will head up all things to restore everything to proper order.

When Christ has fully subdued God's enemies, the end will come. At that time everyone in heaven and on earth will worship God and His Christ. This is fully anticipated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, which speaks of universal order being completely restored, reflecting the kingdom of God:

Then the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to His God and Father, once He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until God puts all His enemies under His feet. Death, the last enemy, is being abolished. For He has subjected all things under His feet. But when He says that all things are subjected, it is evident that all things are except Him who has subjected all things to Him. And when all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to Him who has subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.

The subjection of all things to Christ depends not only on His death and resurrection but also on the full cooperation of the chosen people of God who are joined to Him

through faith. When the church is built up, the gates of Hades will not prevail. The keys of the kingdom have been given to the church (Matt. 16:18-19). The final consummation of His subjection and heading up of all things rests with the church as His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:19-23). As the members of His organic Body are headed up in Him, the way is opened for the spreading of His headship in the universe. Accordingly, the hymn concludes, "Such reign in life and glory / The Church e'en now foretastes, / And to His rule submitting / Unto His kingdom hastes."

We must be subdued in the very core of our being. The Lord must take up His residence in our hearts and establish the kingdom in us personally and individually. God's authority must become a reality in our living. The center of our Christian life must be the throne of God.

In our Christian experience the unique item should be the throne of the One who purposed and of the One who redeemed. Such a throne must be set up in our entire being, and this should be the center of our Christian life. This means that we would accept the God who purposed and the Christ who redeemed us as our Head, Lord, and authority. We should be willing to subject ourselves to such a headship. We adore Him as the Lord and we take Him as our authority. We enthrone Him in our being and in our Christian life.

In our Christian life the center is the throne of God and of the Lamb. We are not here living for ourselves. We are living and existing for the accomplishment of God's purpose, to carry out what Christ has accomplished. Therefore, we experience the One on the throne in His headship and lordship, and we submit ourselves to such an authority. In our daily life, in our family life, in our marriage life, in our business life, and in our church life the center must be God's throne. Everything should be subjected to His headship. (Lee, *New Testament* 388)

May each of us have such a view of God's kingdom for His glory. May we pray, "Father, Your name be sanctified, Your kingdom come, and Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth." Thus, we will hasten His return in His kingdom.

by Gary Kaiser

Works Cited

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