

Column

“Do you believe we are living in the ‘last days’?” an earnest woman recently asked me. Her question, as you might imagine, was prompted by the many distressing things that are going on in our world. By ‘last days’ she meant the Second Coming of Jesus.

I think my answer to her and anyone else would be, yes! Our Lord’s Coming whether at the time of the death of a believer or at that great cataclysmic event at the end of the age is always imminent. We, therefore, need to be vigilant and ready.

With that said and perhaps even more importantly, we need to be mindful that the true King is already reigning. “The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof,” begins Psalm 97. Even a cursory tour of the Bible will reveal a lot of kingdom language, language about God’s sovereign rule.

In the New Testament, a prime example is found in Jesus’ Model Prayer. Here, the Master instructs His followers to say: “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” But what do these words mean? What is being asked in this petition?

After all, thinking back to Psalm 97, God’s sovereign reign is already operative. Why then does Jesus ask us to pray for it? Our answer comes when we remember that God’s good creation has two dimensions, God’s space – heaven – and ours – earth. The problem is not with the God’s, but with ours.

This second – earth -- might be thought of as enemy-occupied territory. Man’s rebellion against God as pictured in the early chapters of Genesis has resulted in a schism which God purposes to mend. According to Revelation 21:2, in the end, the city of God will come down and be joined to earth. At that time, the veil between these two spheres will be done away. But what about now?

If we know our Bible, earth and heaven have already come together in one point . . . in Jesus, the God-man. Under the old order, God was uniquely present in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This inner chamber was one of those ‘thin spots’ where heaven and earth overlapped. Jesus is the new and better Temple. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,” says the seer in Revelation 21:3.

More than that, with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, all those who are ‘in Christ’ are part of this spiritual temple. “Ye are the temple of God,” says Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:16.

Hence, when we pray: “Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” we are – in the first instance – asking that this bit of earth called “me” be put under God’s sovereign rule.

But this thought might well be expanded to include that community of which all baptised people are members – the Church. Might we not also ask that the Church be made an effective instrument of bringing God’s sovereign rule to bear on earth?

Christians in a geographic location might be thought of as a colony of heaven. The task of this on-the-ground community is to be an advance sign of God’s coming, universal sovereign rule. As God’s image-bearing creatures now renewed in Christ, we are to lead the world in singing right praise to the Creator . . . to bring a little bit of heaven to earth.

Jesus IS coming again, as the signs along the roadside, no less than the creeds of the Church, proclaim. Our job is not to speculate the day or the hour (though we should always have our eye on the eastern sky) but to bear witness of Him in church and nation in the time given to us. What will He find YOU doing ‘when He comes’?

Almighty and everlasting God, who didst will to restore all things in thy well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of Lords: Mercifully grant that all the kindreds of the earth, set free from the captivity of sin, may be brought under his most gracious dominion;

*who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God,
world without end. Amen.*

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