

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #59, Lord's Day 48

The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer



The John Knox Institute
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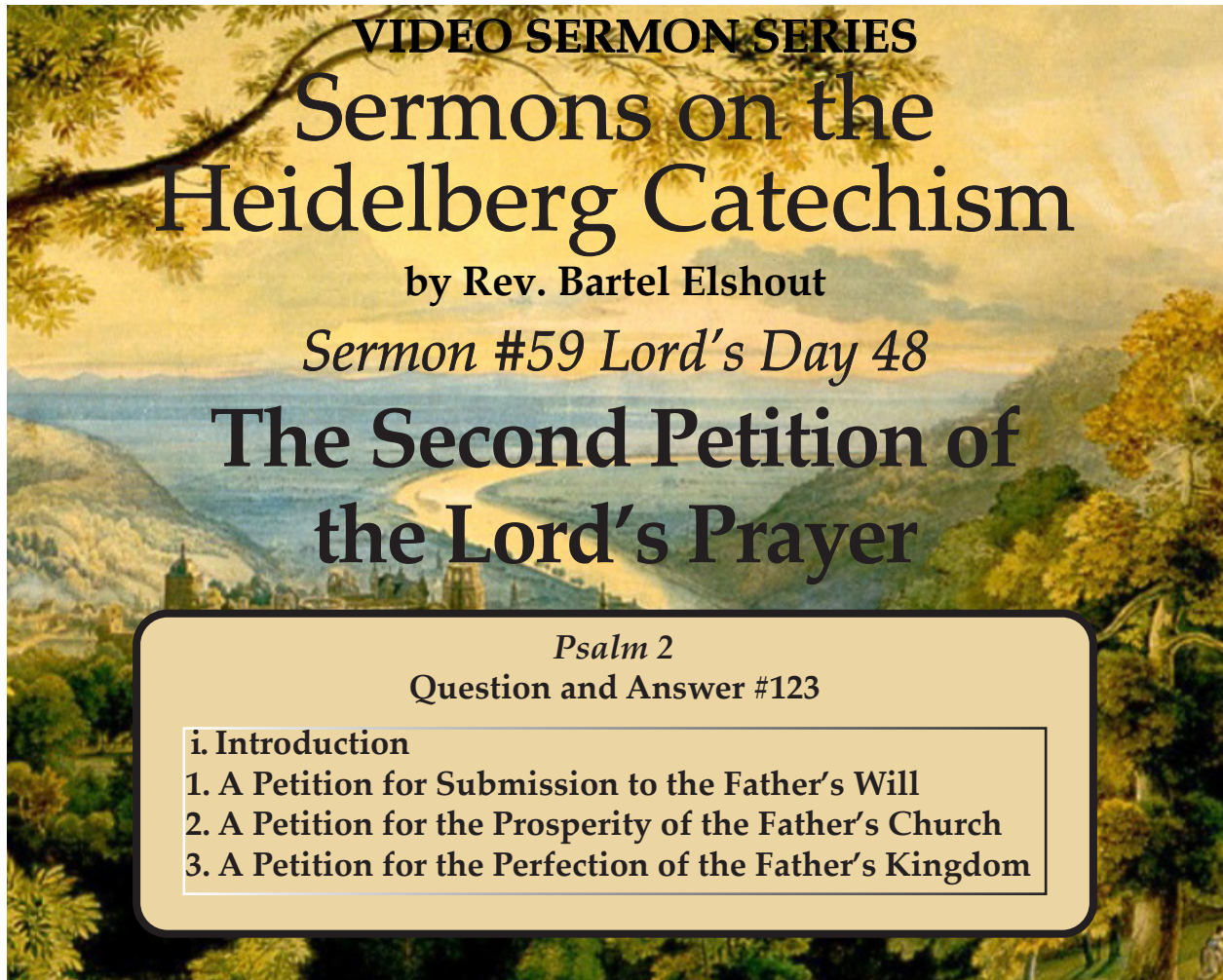
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Sermon #59 Lord's Day 48

**The Second Petition of
the Lord's Prayer**

Psalm 2

Question and Answer #123

i. Introduction

- 1. A Petition for Submission to the Father's Will**
- 2. A Petition for the Prosperity of the Father's Church**
- 3. A Petition for the Perfection of the Father's Kingdom**

Introduction

Boys and girls, you know that in the book of Daniel, we read about King Nebuchadnezzar having this amazing dream, and how Daniel was called to tell him the dream, and to interpret it. It was a very dangerous moment for him, and his friends, and for all the wise men of that kingdom, because Nebuchadnezzar threatened to kill them all. And Daniel, as God's servant, was given grace, not only tell that remarkable dream of that statue, but also to give the amazing interpretation of it, when you read that in chapter 2 of Daniel. And Daniel explains that the various metals of which that statue was made represented various kingdoms that would follow each other successively. But then comes the remarkable conclusion of Daniel's interpretation. And we read in verse 44–45 of Daniel chapter 2, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter." And so, what makes this dream so remarkable is that, at this time, the Babylonian kingdom was the great and mighty kingdom of the world. As a matter of fact, all through Scripture, Babylon stands for the anti-God culture. And then, God sovereignly caused his people, judging them for their idolatry, to dwell in the midst of that empire. And God bore witness to himself also

by way of this remarkable dream. Because Nebuchadnezzar thought that he could conquer the world, and this was a very sobering experience for him. And we know how greatly God humbled him when he had another dream. And then God brought that mighty king to his knees in a most remarkable manner, so remarkable that sound Bible scholars believe that his conversion proves to be a genuine one.

But the point here is, in this dream, in the interpretation of this dream, Daniel was given by God this remarkable understanding that ultimately that a stone would come, symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ—a stone would come and that that stone would eliminate all the kingdoms of this world, and that a kingdom would be established, a kingdom that would endure forever. That’s why we read Psalm 2, because, congregation, what God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar is God’s agenda. That is God’s agenda in this fallen world. And that agenda is the establishment of his kingdom, the kingdom that shall come. And that’s why Christ instructs us in the Lord’s Prayer, or the disciples’ prayer, that we should be praying, not only for the hallowing of God’s name, but we should be praying for the coming of God’s kingdom.

So let’s turn to Lord’s Day 48, in which we have the Heidelberg Catechism’s exposition of *The Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer*.

Question #123: *Which is the second petition?*

The Answer is: *“Thy kingdom come”; that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee; preserve and increase Thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word; till the full perfection of Thy kingdom take place, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.*

And so, this petition is a petition, surprisingly, in the Catechism, surprisingly, first of all, a petition for our submission to God’s will. As we will see, a petition that we who confess the name of Christ may indeed conduct ourselves as worthy citizens of that kingdom. So, first of all, *A Petition for Submission to the Father’s Will*. Secondly, a petition for the prosperity of the Father’s church—*preserve and increase Thy church*. And the reason I’m using the “Father” name here is because all of this, of course, connects to the address of the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father which art in heaven, Thy name be hallowed, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done.” And so, that pronoun has as its antecedent the Father himself. So, *A Petition for the Prosperity of the Father’s Church—preserve and increase thy church*. And finally, *A Petition for the Perfection of the Father’s Kingdom—till the full perfection of Thy kingdom take place, wherein Thou shalt be all in all*.

1. A Petition for the Prosperity of the Father’s Church

And so, before we address the opening words of the Answer, first a few words about what is meant by “the kingdom of God.” Because that is a very, very prominent theme in Scripture, especially in the New Testament. So what is a kingdom? A kingdom is a domain in which a king rules, and in which the citizens of that domain willingly submit themselves to the rule of that king. And so, in the history of this world, we’ve had very good kings, kings that were loved by their citizens, citizens who were delighted to honor such a king. We’ve had very wicked kings, who ruled as tyrants, and who were only capable of keeping the people under control by a brutal manifestation of power. But this kingdom that we are talking about in this petition is God’s kingdom. So God’s kingdom is that moral domain in which God is recognized as the absolute sovereign of the universe. God’s kingdom is that domain where the citizens of that kingdom, of that spiritual kingdom, willingly and lovingly serve God as their King and as their Sovereign.

And so when God created the world, he established his kingdom; he established his kingdom

on earth. And so, before man fell, the kingdom of God's power, which is the kingdom which encompasses the entire universe, God is the King of the entire universe in all of its vastness, and his moral kingdom were one and the same thing. There was no contradiction between the kingdom of his power and his moral kingdom. When God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, they were perfect, they were sinless. They had a will that was entirely, willingly, and lovingly subject to the rule and governance of the God who had created them. And then rebellion occurred in that kingdom. It began in the heavens. It began when Lucifer, who became Satan, the great adversary of God, and then the angels followed him, and they brought that rebellion to the earth; Satan, who deceived our first parents, and our parents who believed his lie, and who became rebels. Rather than willing and loving citizens of God's moral kingdom, they became rebels. They became guilty of moral rebellion against God. And ever since that wretched day, man, instigated by the prince of darkness, man has been at war with his Maker. Because ultimately, when Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie, when Adam and Eve disobeyed the revealed will of their glorious King and Creator, they declared their own sovereignty. That's who we are as fallen sinners. In Adam, we have declared our own sovereignty. That means that, as sinners, we are now very much inclined to do our will rather than God's will. And so, Paul writes of this in Romans 8, verse 7, a text we know very well: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

And then, God, as the sovereign King of the universe, expelled our first parents. And the kingdom of heaven which was upon earth, and the kingdom which would have expanded if Adam and Eve had not fallen, and they would have expanded—expanded what God gave them in the garden—that kingdom would have been established worldwide. And that kingdom was withdrawn into heaven as a result of their rebellion. And yet, congregation, and yet, we know that before God expelled our parents from the garden, God proclaims his plan, his eternal plan and purpose in that original gospel promise of Genesis 3, verse 15, where he unveiled to them that the seed of the woman would come in the fulness of time, and that through that seed of the woman, through that Christ, through that Messiah, through that Anointed One, that God would reestablish the kingdom of heaven here upon earth. And that's been happening ever since.

God declared to Adam and Eve that, from that day forward, there would be a battle raging on this earth, a battle that continues to rage; a battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The battle is described for us in the opening verses in Psalm 2, a battle that is raging before our very eyes. And we can only marvel that, in spite of the intense hatred of the ungodly, the intense hatred of a fallen humanity, for their sovereign King and Creator, we can only marvel that that promise continues to be fulfilled, and that God marvelously continues to establish and to expand his kingdom in this fallen world.

And that begins, and that's why the opening of the Answer is rather unexpected and remarkable, where the Answer, first of all, focuses on us. For where does that begin? How does that begin? That begins with the regeneration of a fallen sinner. That's where it begins, when the Holy Spirit transforms an enemy of God into a child of God; when the Holy Spirit, by his mighty and irresistible work, renews the will of a fallen sinner, and makes sinners again willing in the day of God's power. And so, when the Holy Spirit regenerates a fallen sinner, a new citizen of God's kingdom has been added, because the fruit of that regeneration ultimately will be a man or a woman who again begin to live according to God's revealed will—men and women, who by the grace of God, again begin to honor God as their King, who begin to conduct themselves as citizens of the kingdom of heaven. That's why the Catechism, with profound insight, begins this way. Because, when we pray that petition, "Thy kingdom come," we are very much inclined to think about the worldwide picture.

No, the Catechism says, no, no, it begins with us. The question is for you and me, “Am I already a citizen of that kingdom? Does my life manifest that I recognize the King of that kingdom, whether I live in submission to that King, the Lord Jesus Christ?”

Now, of course, Christ, when he came, was very, very clear multiple times that the ultimate objective of his coming was to reestablish the kingdom of heaven on earth. I would encourage you to use your computer concordance. Type in “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” in the New Testament. The phrase “kingdom of God” occurs seventy times, the “kingdom of heaven” thirty-three times, a total of one-hundred and three times. And I’m going to give you a sampling of how often Christ spoke of his mission as the establishment of God’s kingdom. So, bear with me, I’m just giving you a sampling.

- Matthew 4, verse 17: “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- Matthew 4, verse 23: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”
- Matthew 16, verse 19: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”
- Matthew 24, verse 14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”
- Matthew 25, verse 34: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”
- Mark 1, verse 15: “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”
- Luke 4, verse 43: “And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.”
- Luke 8, verse 1: “And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.”
- Luke 9, verse 2: “And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”
- Luke 12, verse 32: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
- Luke 21 verse 31: “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”
- And then, in Acts 1, verse 3, before his ascension, we read that, “To whom”—to his disciples—“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”
- The Apostle Paul, in his preaching, Acts 19, verse 8: “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.”
- And then, the Book of Acts ends by saying that Paul was, “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).
- And then, finally, in the last book of the Bible, Revelation 12, verse 10: “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.”

And so, what this simply communicates is that Christ was very conscious that the ultimate purpose of his coming was not merely to reconcile sinners with God and to secure their salvation. But he recognized that the purpose of his coming ultimately would be that through his mediatorial

work, by his death and resurrection, God's kingdom would be reestablished, that the ultimate outcome would be that God's kingdom would come in its fulness; that the ultimately outcome of his mediatorial work would be that there will come a day when there will be a new heaven and a new earth—and you will see that in our last point—where, once again, the kingdom of God's power, and his moral kingdom will be one and the same thing.

And now here, what the Catechism emphasizes is that those who profess the name of Christ must be reminded of the fact that our calling in this world is to be worthy citizens of that kingdom. *"Thy kingdom come," that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee.* So, rule us by Thy Word—that should be the yearning and the desire of every true Christian, of every true citizen of God's kingdom. The result of God's gracious work in the heart of God's people is that they are deeply conscious of the fact that we have a holy obligation to order our lives according to the Word of God. That is the obligation we have to the Christ who saved and redeemed us that, as our King, he is worthy of our unconditional allegiance to him, and to his Word, and to his rule.

And that is, of course, the Bible is, after all, the constitution of the kingdom of God, the constitution of the kingdom of heaven. And the beauty about God's moral kingdom is that, those who belong to that moral kingdom as a result of the regenerating, renewing work of the Holy Spirit, they serve Christ willingly. By nature, we have no such desire, even if we are born and raised within the church, and we are raised, and we receive instruction from the Word of God. By nature, we're not willing to submit ourselves to that Word. But the grace of God changes all of that. And so, the deep desire of those that fear God is expressed in Psalm 119, verse 5: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Do you recognize that, congregation? Is that your petition? Is that the desire of your soul? That your ways would be directed according to God's statutes? Do you recognize your responsibility in this fallen world to conduct yourself as a worthy citizen of the kingdom of God, as a worthy follower of the King of the kingdom, namely, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ? That's what this is saying. That's what the Christian should be thinking about in the first place, realizing that, "If I fail, if I fail, if I fail as a citizen of God's kingdom; if I fail precisely where God has placed me in this world, that I bring great dishonor to the King whose name I profess." That's why Jesus says, in Matthew 7, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord" (Matthew 7:21). There are plenty of people that do that, also in North America. "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." That's it. In other words, true Christians not only profess the Lordship of Christ, they desire to submit themselves to the Lordship of Christ. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" (Psalm 119:5).

Because, you see, if, by the grace of God, we conduct ourselves in such a way that even the world will see in us our loyalty to our King, that the world will see in us that we desire to honor that King in word and deed, that we desire to live in submission to his sovereign will, then the world cannot but notice. That's why the world has no problem with nominal Christians, but it hates the true citizens of that kingdom, who by their very lives communicate their love for their King, and their desire to honor him in every aspect of their lives. And that's how the exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism begins. That's very sobering. That's very searching. It means tonight, I have to ask myself, is my life such that it would encourage others to serve that King? Is my life a visible testimony that I belong to that King, that I am loyal to that King, that I am loyal to his Word? Is that my daily prayer when I get up in the morning? Is that my prayer? "Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, enable me this day to conduct myself worthy of what I profess to be, that I may conduct myself as a worthy citizen of thy kingdom." Because you see, when individual believers prosper,

the church will prosper. And when the church prospers, the kingdom of God will continue to come in this fallen world.

And so, the earnest yearning of the free citizen of God's kingdom is that that precious Word of God will become so much a part of me that that Word is always on my mind. That's why the obligation we have, as citizens of God's kingdom, is to be diligent students of that Word, in dependency upon the Holy Spirit to continue to illuminate our understanding, so that we increase in our grasp of what God's revealed will is, pertaining to every aspect of my life; so that that Word abides in me; that that Word is with me day and night; that that Word governs me in my thinking and my speaking, and in my doing. For then, our King will be honored in this fallen world. That's why Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth...Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13–14). You are to order your life in such a way that when, by doing your good works, by obeying the will of your King, men may see your good works, and may honor your Father which is in heaven.

2. A Petition for the Prosperity of the Father's Church

Now second, it's *A Petition for the Prosperity of the Father's Church*. And so, a question needs to be answered that's often asked: Are God's church and God's kingdom the same thing? And the answer is, No. The answer is that the boundaries of God's kingdom, God's moral kingdom, are much wider than the boundaries of the church. What, then, is the connection between God's church and God's kingdom? Very simply this, that the church is the gateway into God's kingdom. What is the church? The church is the gathering of men and women who have been transformed by the power of God's grace. The church—ekklesia¹—called out of the world; called out of a sinful humanity, to be the people of God. So, in the church, God is forming a new humanity. God is gathering a people unto himself who will one day populate that new heaven and that new earth in which righteousness will dwell. And so, that church, the church of Jesus Christ around the world, and as it manifests itself locally, as does our congregation—that church, therefore, becomes the gateway into that kingdom. It is in the gathering of the church where the Word of God is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered. It is via that church that the influence of that kingdom begins to expand. And it's the sacred calling of our congregation. God has placed us in this community, so that by means of this congregation, his kingdom will come, even in our area, even in the Kalamazoo² area.

It means, therefore, that we have a holy obligation, because it says here, *preserve and increase Thy church*. That means that, as citizens of that kingdom, we should be committed to the preservation and to the increase of the church of Jesus Christ. Because, as God's church prospers, God's moral kingdom expands, as I've just stated. So, in Psalm 51, verse 18, we have a petition that so much applies to this: "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem."

Congregation, I believe that's why our nation has declined so very, very greatly. Because our nation once was a land where the church of Jesus Christ prospered greatly. Only a good hundred years ago, the influence of the church of Jesus Christ in our United States was so profound and widespread that it influenced every level of society. And the great revivals that God sent to this land greatly contributed to that. There was a time when the church of Jesus Christ was represented in every locality of this nation. You could travel throughout the United States, and whatever village or city you go to, you will find churches, and what a profound impact the church of Jesus Christ had upon this land. But all of that has changed drastically after World War II. We see a troubling

¹ Ekklesia is a Greek word that means "called out ones" or "assembly," historically referring to the political gathering of citizens in ancient Greece, and in the New Testament, to the Christian community or church.

² Kalamazoo is the city in Michigan.

decline in all of North America and the whole Western world. We have become, sadly, we have become so intoxicated by our material prosperity. And the church has lost its witness. And as a result, the influence of the church has been shrinking. As a result, the kingdom of darkness, governed by the prince of this world, Satan himself, has expanded itself in alarming ways also in our nation. Congregation, that's very sobering, and it should be very convicting, and it should prompt us to ask ourselves the question, "How am I failing to be the salt of the earth? How am I failing to be the light of the world? What can we do individually, but also as a congregation, to reinvigorate ourselves, so that we again become a means in God's hands, whereby God's kingdom is expanded, instead of witnessing how that moral kingdom of God seems to be retracting also in our land?"

That's why we have to pray for the preservation of the church, because we have an enemy who is bent on destroying the church of Jesus Christ. And so, the Catechism continues that, praying that prayer, that God would preserve his church, that God would keep his church true and faithful to his Word at all costs, even if that means persecution. And we have to say that countless Christians around the world are persecuted, because they are faithful to the Word of God. They would rather die than deny their King; who, because they are loyal to their King, loyal to his Word, are suffering the ultimate consequence of that loyalty. That's why Jesus declared those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, who are persecuted because we confess his name, they are considered to be blessed. And we need ask ourselves, I need to ask myself, the convicting question, why is it that there is hardly any persecution going on in the United States? We do see some alarming manifestation of hostility towards the people of God, but for far too long, the world has tolerated our presence. We have to ask ourselves why. Why is it that our world—because we have to realize that our secular American culture is as hostile to biblical Christianity as any other culture in the world, why are they leaving us alone? I find that so unsettling and so convicting for myself. And so, when we pray "Thy kingdom come," preserve and increase they church, that means we have to pray for grace to be so faithful to Christ, to be so loyal to Christ that we're willing to pay the ultimate price for that loyalty, for that profession of his name.

And so, the Catechism goes on, *Destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word.* Destroy the works of the devil—he is, of course, the archenemy of Christ. As I've mentioned here before if you're familiar with Bunyan's³ *The Holy War*, in the very beginning of his book, he gives an account of what transpired in the court of El Shaddai, and he describes that the reason why Lucifer was cast out and became Diabolus was because he aspired after the glory of God's Son. And therefore, he was cast out, and many demons with him. And I think that explains, even though what Bunyan wrote is somewhat speculative, yet I think it explains why throughout history Christ himself has been the great target of Satan's hatred. It is Satan, as the prince of this world, stirring up the ungodly against, against the Lord's Anointed. That's how Psalm 2 begins—the ungodly are conspiring against the Lord's Anointed. And Satan is filled with blind hatred against the Son of God.

And you know that throughout history he did everything he could to prevent the birth of God's anointed one. And thanks be to God, he utterly failed. And we may now know, having commemorated the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, that this archenemy of Christ

3 John Bunyan (1628–1688) was an English Protestant nonconformist preacher during the Second Reformation in England. Imprisoned for 12 years for preaching the gospel, he used his time writing books and tracts, and allegorical stories promoting the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wrote nearly 60 titles, many of which were expanded sermons, but he is best remembered for his allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

and the church is a defeated enemy. The prince of this world has been judged, and yet, with God's permission, he still exerts a great deal of power. He is the prince of this world. The ungodly are his willing subjects; they are his willing slaves, doing his bidding, opposing the work of God. That's why it's so encouraging to be reminded by the commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we have a Savior who has conquered him; that we have a Savior, of whom the Apostle writes, in 1 John 3, verse 8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"—destroy the works of the devil.

And all violence which would exalt itself against Thee—there you have it—*all violence that would exalt itself against Thee*. We live in a world that is filled with violence. We hear accounts in Africa of God's people being persecuted in a very violent way; Christians being slaughtered mercilessly, by those that hate and oppose Christ. And so, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," oh, we're praying that all the violence that exalts itself against God, that that violence will not succeed in preventing the coming, the continued coming of the kingdom of Christ. And so, the promise that Christ made in Matthew 16, verse 18, to his disciples, after Peter had confessed that He was the Christ; then the Lord Jesus responded, and he said, "Flesh and blood did not teach you this, but my Father which is in heaven." And then he said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And as you know congregation—I've said this many times—we would not be here if that were not true. If Christ, as the reigning King of his kingdom, if he did not reign, if he was not God's King set upon the holy throne, the one who said, "All power has been given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18), we would not be here today. The gates of hell would have prevailed against God's church. God's church would have been eliminated from the face of the earth; and against all this opposition, all of this violence of the prince of darkness and all of his minions, the kingdom of God is still expanding, even in our world.

It also mentions here, *and also, all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word*. The devil knows that the Word of God is *the* means that the King uses to make sinners willing in the day of his power. The Word of God is God's chosen instrument whereby he establishes his kingdom, and whereby he expands his kingdom. He knows that the Word of God is that Word which is proclaimed by the people of God until this day to the very ends of the world, and the devil knows that that Word is a power unto salvation, and that wherever that Word comes, sinners are conquered by the grace of God. That's why the Word of God, the written Word of God, and of course, the living Word of God, have always been the special target of Satan's devious devices. Because he knows, if he can't eliminate that Word, then, if he can corrupt that Word, the cause of Christ will fail. And we know—I don't have to expand on this—we know how profoundly our Western culture has been corrupted by the great lie of evolution. The devil knew that if he could attack the very foundation of Scripture; if he could call into question that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth;" if he could call into question the historicity of the opening chapters of Scripture, that the entire body of truth would collapse. That's why the father of creationism, Henry Morris,⁴ correctly said, "In the beginning, God' are the most important words in Scripture." That's the foundation. You take those words away and the Scriptures collapse.

And so, now we live in a day when we have the so-called "new hermeneutic," where we're being told that we just haven't read the Bible correctly, that we need to read it through a whole new set of lenses. And so, we have professing Christianity embracing this new, corrupt, and vile morality—gender confusion, homosexuality, you name it, all of it—the church of Christ endorsing

4 Henry Madison Morris (1918–2006) was an American young earth Creationist, Christian apologist, and engineer, one of the founders of the Creation Research Society and the Institute for Creation Research, and considered by any to be "the father of modern creation science. He coauthored *The Genesis Flood* with John C. Whitcomb.

this rather than rejecting it, because Satan is behind this. Satan conspires with his wicked counsels against the Word of God, to discredit that Word of God. The mass confusion we have in the Western world of countless translations that nobody knows anymore which translation we can trust. That suits Satan well, who is the author of confusion. And what a comfort to know that he will not succeed. What a wonder to know, that's why we have to be the diligent protectors of the Word of God; the diligent protectors of the integrity of that Word of God. Because that Word of God is the constitution of the kingdom of heaven.

So *A Petition for Submission to the Father's Will*; secondly, *A Petition for the Prosperity of the Father's Church*; and thirdly,

3. A Petition for the Perfection of the Father's Kingdom

And so, the Answer ends with this wonderful statement, *Till the full perfection of Thy kingdom take place, wherein Thou shalt be all in all*. And so, be encouraged. That kingdom is coming. Christ, as the exalted King, is answering the petition of his people. That kingdom was inaugurated especially on the day of Pentecost, when suddenly, the Word of God was understood by all those languages of the world. That's why we'd rather not use the word "amillennialism" because it gives the wrong idea. Instead, we should talk about "inaugurated millennialism." The number "thousand" in Revelation chapter 20 is a symbolic figure. To make that figure literal, makes a mockery out of the rest of Revelation, where all the numbers are symbolic. And so the thousand is simply a number of fulness—ten to the third power. A millennium is that period that separates the first coming and the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And during that period, he is reigning. He is expanding his domain throughout the world. Ever since the day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit, Satan has been bound. Satan, prior to that, had complete dominion in the world, kept all of humanity in bondage. But ever since that day, wherever the gospel has come, Satan has to yield. That's still happening, that's still happening. Christ, the reigning King, sees to it that the boundaries continue to be enlarged. He continues to stir up his church and people to proclaim the gospel, and to go to the very ends of the world to proclaim that gospel. How encouraging that is! That's why we speak about "inaugurated millennialism," the inaugurated kingdom of God. Christ is reigning. Christ is having dominion over land and sea. Christ is seeing to it that his kingdom will be to the very remotest ends of the world; that the promise made to Abraham that all families of the earth will be blessed in him, that that promise will be fulfilled, and it shall be fulfilled (Genesis 22:18). That's why Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom"—Matthew 24:14—"shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.

That's why the book of Revelation, that's why God's Word ends in such a wonderful way. In that last chapter, three times, the exalted Christ says, "I come quickly." The King is on his way. He is coming. And all the unsettling events of world history today, all that's happening in the world, all the turmoil among nations, wars and rumors of wars, all that's going on, they are the footsteps of the returning King of kings, who is coming to put an end to the history of this fallen world. That's why, at the end of Revelation 22, we read, "And the Spirit and the bride say"—the bride, the bride of Christ, the citizens of his kingdom, the citizens of his moral kingdom, those sinners who have been made willing in the day of his power, his bride; they say—"Come....Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (verses 17 and 20).

I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, where the Apostle Paul gives a remarkable, a remarkable summation of all of this, and he says, in verse 24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Christ shall have dominion, congregation. And then, in verse 28, he

says, “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” And Paul is saying this here of Christ as Mediator. As the Son, he is equal to the Father, but as Mediator, he was given the task of redeeming sinners and establishing God’s kingdom, and the day is coming when he will say for the second time, to his Father, “It is finished. I have accomplished thy good pleasure.” And he will then deliver up the kingdom to his Father, and he himself will be subject, as Mediator, as glorified Mediator, “unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

And so, the day is coming that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Let’s turn to Isaiah 65, where we have the Old Testament testimony of this, and then we’ll turn to Revelation 21. Isaiah 65, verses 17 through 19, remarkable words: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.” Now turn to Revelation 21, verse 1, please, the next to the last chapter of the Bible. And just think of the similarity with what you just heard:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done.”—It is finished—“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

Then, the kingdom of heaven will have come in its perfection. Then, the day is coming when God’s moral kingdom will be established fully and completely on that new earth, that will be inhabited by that new humanity, redeemed by Christ, who then shall be perfectly conformed to him, who then will forever serve that King, no more troubled by sin, no more troubled by our failure, no more troubled by the fact that here we have but a small beginning of that new obedience. Then, we will see him as he is, and then, we shall be at last like him. And then, God’s people will forever live in perfect obedience to the revealed will of their King. They will love their King, who is God manifest in the flesh. They will love him with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and they will love each other as themselves. Oh, what a glorious future is coming! And so, let us be encouraged to keep praying that prayer, because Christ is hearing it, and he will see to it that his kingdom shall come.

The question is, for you and me, will we be there? Are you a citizen of that kingdom today? Is there sufficient evidence in your and my life that we belong to that moral kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ? lest we belong to those who in that day, will be stunned to hear out of the mouth of Christ, “I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). And so, let us examine our hearts and our lives, whether this King, this precious King has become our all and in all. Then, it is our daily prayer, “Rule us so by thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee. Thy kingdom come.” And it is coming. Amen.

Let's pray.

Our faithful God, we give thee thanks that we could be in thy house tonight, that we could be instructed from thy precious Word regarding this very essential truth of the coming of thy kingdom. And Lord, continue to use our own congregation as a gateway to that kingdom, that we, as members of this local church, that by our very conduct, we would communicate to the community around us that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. And Lord, may it be our fervent desire to be instrumental in bringing others into that kingdom; so many lost men and women around us, who belong to the kingdom of darkness, and who will perish, unless, by grace, they are led to our blessed King, the Lord Jesus Christ, the able and willing Savior of sinners. And so, remember us as we enter into a new week. Grant that in our work, in our families, wherever thou hast placed us, we may conduct ourselves as worthy citizens of the kingdom of God. Gather with us on Thursday as we seek thy face, and as we focus on the need of our nation in a national day of prayer. Forgive us our sins of this moment, both in speaking and hearing. We ask it in Jesus' name alone. Amen.