

PRAY FOR THE COMING OF GOD'S KINGDOM

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, until her righteousness shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a blazing torch. ²The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings [will see your] glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of Jehovah will bestow [upon you]. ³Furthermore, you will be a beautiful crown in the hand of Jehovah, a royal diadem in the hand of our God. ⁴You shall no longer be called "Forsaken," neither shall your land any longer be called "Desolate." On the contrary, you shall be called "Hephzibah"—[my delight is in her], and your land shall be called "Beulah"—[married]; for Jehovah will take delight in you, and your land will be married. ⁵As a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, [O land]; and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

⁶I have posted watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who are Jehovah's [palace] recorders, give yourselves no rest, ⁷and give him no rest, until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of [all] the earth. ⁸Jehovah has sworn by lifting his right hand—and by his mighty arm—[promising], Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and foreigners will never [again] drink the new wine you have labored hard to produce. ⁹On the contrary, those who harvest [the crop] will eat it and praise Jehovah, and those who gather [the grape]s will drink [the wine] in the courts of my sanctuary. ¹⁰Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people! Construct, construct the highway! Remove the stones! Give the signal for the peoples [to come]! ¹¹Listen! Jehovah has made a proclamation to the ends of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, Look! Your Savior is coming! Look, he is bringing his reward with him, and his recompense accompanies him. ¹²They will be called, "The Holy People," "Those whom Jehovah has redeemed." You will be called, "[A City that is] Desirable," and, "A City that is No Longer Forsaken." (Isa. 62:1-12)

Introduction

A survey indicated that four out of five Christians pray at least once a day. The general content of their prayers was described as follows:

- 90% thank God for what they have (as does 73% of the non-Christian population)
- 74% pray for people they know (as does 58% of the non-Christian population)
- 71% pray for their own spiritual growth (as does 52% of the non-Christian population)
- 66% pray for their health (as does 61% of the non-Christian population)
- 31% pray about the events happening in the world (as does 31% of the non-Christian population)
- 28% ask for the LORD's guidance for public leaders (as does 19% of the non-Christian population)

- 7% ask for material things they need or want (as does 17% of the non-Christian population)

One observation the researchers made was that the content of the Christian's prayers is strikingly similar to that of the non-Christian (*Vital Signs*, George Barna and William Paul McKay, Crossway Books, Westchester IL, 1984, pp.111-112.) Another observation that can be made from considering the Christians' prayers is the startling omission of any petition for the coming of God's kingdom. It appears that many Christians are losing sight of one of the foremost petitions that should be the primary focus and concern of our prayers: Thy kingdom come.

Because of the instruction and incentives provided by God's Word, let us be sure to make the coming of God's kingdom a primary petition—if not **the** primary petition—in our prayers.

I. Pray for the Coming of God's Kingdom, Because You are Commanded to Do So (Isa. 62:6-7)

In verse 6a the LORD declares that He has set watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem. These watchmen are not apprehensively on the look out for signs of an approaching enemy; on the contrary, they are expectantly looking for the coming of the LORD and His kingdom. The LORD further declares that these watchmen are never to hold their peace day or night. But they are not constantly crying out a warning to the citizens of an approaching enemy; they are constantly crying out to God for the fulfillment of His promises to bring His kingdom to its full fruition.

In verse 6b these watchmen are identified as "*Jehovah's [palace] recorders.*" The palace recorder, or remembrancer, was an official position in the ancient Middle Eastern court whose responsibility was to remind the king of his appointments and commitments—the remembrancer was a type of royal secretary. These divinely appointed "*[palace] recorders*" are given this charge: "*give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest, until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of [all] the earth.*" That is to say, the LORD's remembrancers are to take no rest and give the LORD no rest until He has fulfilled His promises and brought His kingdom to the earth in all of its eternal glory.

With this Old Testament passage before us, consider how the New Testament describes what should be the Christian's mind:

... the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹²It teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³as we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:11-13)

Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:20)

*... what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives*¹²*as you look forward to the day of God and earnestly desire its coming.* (2 Pet. 3:11-12)

Let us consider, too, what the New Testament Scriptures indicate should be the foremost focus of our prayers:

This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:9-10)

He who testifies about these things says, Indeed, I am coming swiftly. Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:20)

The greeting and the prayer of the New Testament church was, "*Maranatha*" (1 Cor. 16:22); a Greek term that means, "O Lord, come!"

Let us expectantly pray for the coming of God's kingdom, because we are commanded to do so.

II. Pray for the Coming of God's Kingdom, Being Inspired to Do So by God's Great Promises (Isa. 62:1-5)

In verse 1a the LORD promises that His people's righteousness shall "*shine out like the dawn, and her salvation like a blazing torch.*" This is not an inherent personal righteousness, as we learn from Isaiah 64:6, "*all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*" On the contrary, as the Apostle Paul testifies, it is the righteousness of God we come to possess by faith in Christ, "*that I may gain Christ, and be found in him—not having my own righteousness which is derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God received by faith*" (Phil. 3:9.) This truth was prophesied through Jeremiah, when he indicated that the promised Messiah would bear the name, "*the LORD is our righteousness*" (Jer. 23:6.)

At the present time this righteousness is obscure in the Christian's life; the new heart still dwells in the old sinful body. There is still a great deal of resistance to the working of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is planted in the Christian's life, but it only appears in its immature form. What is anticipated here in Isaiah 62:1 is the day when the divine righteousness of Christ shall radiate from our lives with the brilliance of the noonday sun and like a blazing lantern illuminating a pitch dark cave. The revelation of Jesus' glory as it was revealed on the mount of transfiguration is described in this way: "*he was transfigured before them; and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as the light*"

(Matt. 17:2.) On the day of our Lord's appearing, when His work of sanctification has been fully realized in His redeemed people, we shall be like Him: *"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13:43.)

We are furthermore told, *"the nations will see your righteousness, and all kings [will see your] glory"* (vs. 2a.) On that day, when the world beholds the church, they shall see Christ—as His people radiate the splendor of their Savior with whom they are united in glory—and they shall marvel. On that day the splendor of kings shall be put to shame and be consumed by the all-surpassing glory of Jesus, the King of kings, as He reveals His divine glory in His people: *"he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at by all those who have believed"* (2 Thess. 1:10.)

In verse 2 the LORD promises that His people, who are represented by the personification of the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, shall be identified by a new name. The old name, *"Forsaken,"* shall be put away (vs. 4.) *"Forsaken"* is the name the unrepentant sinner bears as he clings to his sins and remains outside of the Savior and apart from Him, note Romans 1:28, *"even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up."* The new name is *"Hephzibah,"* meaning, "my delight is in her," *"for Jehovah will take delight in you."* This is the very way in which the Father addresses His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, note Matthew 3:17, *"there came a voice out of the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"* We shall eternally bear our Savior's name and enjoy the divine favor of His Father, because on the day of His return we shall become His bride. At present we are engaged to Christ, as the Apostle Paul informs the Corinthian church, *"I pledged you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him"* (2 Cor. 11:2b.) We are being preparing for and anticipating the day of His return when we shall be received as His beloved bride, perfectly united to Him in all the holiness of His divine character: *"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶so that he might sanctify her ... ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in glory, without blemish or wrinkle or any [other] such thing, but being holy and blameless"* (Eph. 5:25-27.) When we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we became "engaged" to Him; we are no longer our own, it is now our duty and desire to prepare for our great "wedding day."

In verse 3 the LORD promises that His people shall be a crown of beauty in His hand. Here is the blessing of being totally possessed by God—being held in the LORD's hand as His precious jewel and treasured possession. The church, being the New Testament manifestation of the people of God, composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus the Messiah, is God's own heritage, and He shall come to claim His possession. The Apostle Paul expounds on this in Ephesians 1:14. In that passage he identifies the Holy Spirit as *"a 'deposit' guaranteeing our inheritance, until the redemption of [God's] possession, to the praise of his glory."* The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart is the guarantee that we have been

purchased by the blood of Christ to be God's own possession, and that He shall surely come to claim us for Himself.

At the same time, Isaiah 62:3 is describing the blessing of being a royal honor and glory to the LORD of glory Himself—a crown of glory and a royal diadem for the LORD. The LORD has graciously chosen to glorify Himself in us by perfectly reproducing His character in us: *“you are ‘a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people appointed to be [God’s] own possession, so that you might display the virtues of him’ who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9.)

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom, being inspired to do so by God's great promises.

III. Pray for the Coming of God's Kingdom, Being Motivated by God's Own Commitment (Isa. 62:1,8-12)

In verse 1 the LORD pledges that He will neither hold His peace nor rest until He has fulfilled His promises: *“For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, until her righteousness shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a blazing torch.”* In verse 8 the LORD takes the solemn oath that He will most certainly grant to His people the blessings of His kingdom. The LORD has sworn *“by lifting his right hand—and by his mighty arm;”* that is to say, He is both committed and able to do all that He has spoken. The pledge is presented in Old Testament terms; namely, that the people of God shall enjoy the blessing of the bountiful fruits of their labors in the presence of the LORD their God:

Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and foreigners will never [again] drink the new wine you have labored hard to produce. ⁹On the contrary, those who harvest [the crop] will eat it and praise Jehovah, and those who gather [the grapes] will drink [the wine] in the courts of my sanctuary.
(Isa. 62:8b-9)

In verse 10 the LORD Himself oversees the construction of a highway and the removal of all obstacles, so that His people may return to Him and enter into His kingdom. In Isaiah 40:3 the way is prepared for the LORD to come to His people; as the command is given, *“Prepare the way for Jehovah! In the desert make level a highway for our God!”* Here in Isaiah 62:10 the LORD is preparing the way for His people: *“Prepare the way for the people! Construct, construct the highway! Remove the stones!”* By way of illustration, the scene presented in these chapters of Isaiah is analogous to the building of the transcontinental railroad in the American west: one team of workers started laying track in Nebraska and headed west, another team started laying track in California and headed east, the two teams connected in Utah.

In verse 11 the LORD publicly proclaims in the hearing of all the nations that His kingdom shall surely come: *“Listen! Jehovah has made a proclamation to the ends of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, Look! Your Savior is coming! Look, [he is bringing] his reward with him, and his recompense accompanies him.”* The LORD has gone on “public record,” He has publicly committed Himself, and He has put it in writing in the Bible. Therefore, we can be assured that for His own honor, He will certainly fulfill His promise: His kingdom will surely come.

Let us pray for the coming of God’s kingdom, being motivated by God’s own commitment. By way of illustration: When your favorite soccer player is coming in all alone on the opposing goal keeper and is about to score a sure goal, the certainty of his success motivates you to enthusiastic action (you stand up and cheer him on), not to lethargic complacency, In the same way, the commitment of God to bring His kingdom should motivate us to enthusiastic prayer, not lethargic complacency. One dimension of prayer is this: the privilege of being used by God as the means by which He brings about the fulfillment of His plans—Christian prayer is partnership with God.

Conclusion

According to the survey referred to earlier, it appears that many Christians are losing sight of the first great petition of prayer, the petition that should be the primary focus and concern of our prayers, namely, the coming of God’s kingdom. Because of the instruction and the incentives provided in the Word of God, especially in such a passage as Isaiah 62, let us make the coming of God’s kingdom the primary petition in our prayers.