

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

"THY KINGDOM COME"

National Sunday School Lesson for December 27th, 1953.

Memory Selection: "The kingdom of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."—Revelation 11:15.

Lesson: Matthew 6: 9-10; 28: 16-20; John 17: 18-21; Acts 1: 6-8; Revelation 11: 15b.

Although we have been "saying" the Lord's prayer from childhood, we wonder if we have really thought through just what we are supposed to have been praying. After an opening salutation, in which we acknowledge God as the Father of all and as a heavenly Father, we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is done in Heaven."

Realizing that he had only a short time in which to teach his disciples the meaning of the Kingdom of God, Jesus became more anxious that they understand his purpose in coming into the world, about the kingdom he had come to establish and about their own part in that program. Therefore, the first request embodied in the prayer which Jesus gave to his disciples as a "model prayer" is "thy kingdom come."

Just what does "God's kingdom" mean. Just the reign of God in the hearts of men—that's all there is to it, simply put, but that is not so easily accomplished as one might imagine.

Jesus pointed out that the kingdom of God was a spiritual kingdom. The disciples found it very difficult to understand that Jesus had not come into the world to establish an earthly kingdom. Most of their difficulty among themselves came from the idea that he would proclaim himself as a ruler and they would be entitled to varying positions of prominence as a result.

In the Sermon on the Mount, which some have called the "Magna Carta" of Christianity, Jesus had as his theme the description of the character and behavior of men and women who had been redeemed and who thus became citizens of the kingdom of God.

It is significant that, in the Lord's Prayer, the petition for the establishment of the kingdom of God should precede the petition for daily bread, or for the forgiveness of our sins. This is so because if we have the

kingdom of God in our hearts, as we should, those things necessary will be provided.

We should certainly not neglect to pray for the coming of God's kingdom into our own lives and the lives of others. We should pray for the leaders of our nation and the other nations of the world, that God's spirit might permeate their hearts and lives, so that the spirit of Christ, with its unselfishness and love for mankind, might bring about a settlement of the world's ills. There are so many others whom we should not forget to pray. The leaders of industry and of labor—that there might not be conflict between them and that they might each work for the good of the other. For the teachers of youth, that they might inspire those whom they teach with the ideals and principles of Jesus Christ.

We should remember, too, that work without prayer is presumption, but prayer without work to help answer our prayers is pretense. In the Great Commission, recorded by Matthew in his gospel, we find His command to go, teach and baptize—specifically "what I have commanded you."

Then, in the words of Dr. H. C. Moore, "The Master sketched four features for his world-wide and age-long program. The first was enlightenment. 'Go, ye therefore,' and let your light shine in every part of the world. The second is evangelism. 'Make disciples of all the nations,' not only informing every creature about Christ but leading everybody to Christ, to acceptance of Him as Saviour from sin to a good life here and the life unending hereafter.

"The third is enlistment. Those who are evangelized must be united in the work and worship of the Lord. Hence the importance of 'baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

"The fourth is edification. Having informed about Christ and led to Christ and enlisted for Christ, it is our duty to build up in Christ. Hence the long and invaluable course of training in the knowledge of Christ and obedience to his holy will: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Then the Master gives the glorious promise, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The task of winning the lost to Christ would be too great for the average Christian, would be well-nigh impossible, were it not for the glorious promise that he will be with us always, strengthening, comforting and caring for his own.

Dr. Clay E. Palmer has declared that "the most meaningful definition of the kingdom of God to come to my attention is this: 'The kingdom of God is the kingdom of right relations.'"

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A. B. Bonner, DDS

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"Mince pies?" wrote back the husband. "I thought they were rubber heels. I'm still wearing them."

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"Are you going to study singing, as you intended?"
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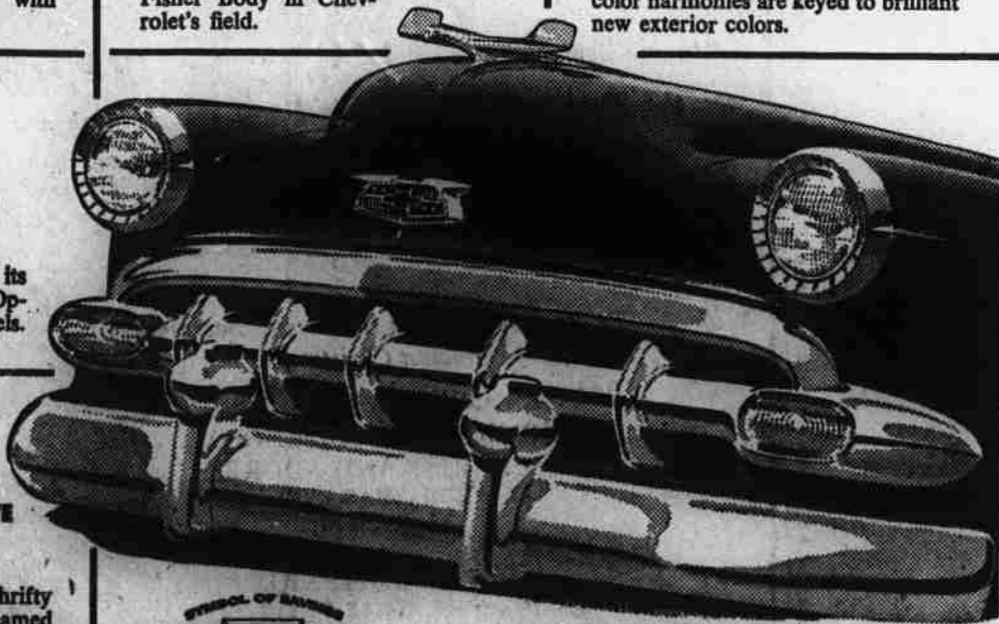
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