

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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PSALM 89 v 14a – THY KINGDOM COME – WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE

Two thousand years after Jesus gave us a pattern prayer, known as The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6 v 9 – 13), we find it necessary to continue with the plea: "Thy kingdom come". This shows that despite many Christians claiming there is no future kingdom on Earth, actually we are still awaiting another glorious era, which is worth pleading for. Psalm 89 v 14a, repeated in Psalm 97 v 2b, shows that when that era does come, righteousness and justice will be the foundation. It must mean an earthly kingdom, as in Heaven the possibility of injustice and unrighteousness does not arise (Revelation 21 v 27). Perfection being the eternal state of affairs in Heaven, it will not require a king to come and establish it. However, righteousness and justice have been conspicuously absent on Earth during the six thousand years since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and especially during the Church age over the past two millennia. By making this plea every time we utter the Lord's Prayer, Christians are demonstrating a great longing for a kingdom on Earth where justice leading to righteousness will indeed be established as the essential and foundational principle.

Jesus addressed this issue when He arrived in Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion. Luke 17 v 20 tells us that He was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come. It was a question that was preoccupying the whole nation at that time, almost certainly as a result of Daniel's prophetic timetable (Daniel 9 v 24 – 27). Everyone was expecting the arrival of the Messiah (the Christ), inaugurating a new kingdom era. The debate then centred on whether Jesus was the true messiah or whether He was a counterfeit, an imposter planted by "Beelzebub". That debate continued among the Jewish people well into the early years of the Church era, and even continues to this day.

After outlining in Luke 17 v 22 – 37 some of the signs that would herald the coming of the Kingdom, Jesus told His disciples a parable in 18 v 1 – 8. It is important to remember that this parable is fully in the context of the comments He had just made to the Pharisees. His teaching here in Luke is what we are looking at in this study, and we will consider it under seven headings.

1. The present kingdom of God.

There is a kingdom in this present Church era, and it is within the hearts and lives of all who follow Jesus (17 v 21). Every true born-again Christian knows this, for by believing Jesus died as our personal substitute, we are making Him Lord, or King, of our own lives. All the features and hallmarks of that kingdom are being gradually displayed in our lives (or should be), by the power of the Holy Spirit - a process of growing righteousness, or sanctification (1 John 3 v 2 – 3). Emphatically, this must not be self-righteousness (18 v 9ff).

2. The underlying messianic message of the Bible.

The Bible is a book of messianic hope, given by God to a world of sin and despair. From cover to cover it shows that there will be a far better age on Earth than those we have seen so far following the Fall and the Curse, and which have been dominated by the consequences of original sin. In Genesis 3 v 15 Satan is told the woman's seed would crush his head, and Revelation 20 v 1 – 3 promises that Satan will be bound, keeping him from deceiving the nations during a millennial reign of Christ on Earth. After a short release, Satan's eternal banishment would be sealed (Revelation 20 v 7 - 10). Almost all this is yet to happen.

In scripture the promised features of this golden era include, for example:

The nations beating their swords into ploughshares (Isaiah 2 v 1 – 4).

A king on David's throne reigning with justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9 v 7).

The application of justice and righteousness for everyone (Isaiah 11 v 1 – 5).

The restoration of full harmony in the creation (Isaiah 11 v 6 – 9 & Romans 8 v 19 – 22).

A single and universally acknowledged Lord (Zechariah 14 v 9 & Philippians 2 v 9 – 11).

Long and fulfilled lives without satanic deception and influence (Isaiah 65 v 17 – 25 & Revelation 20 v 1 – 3).

Such a period on Earth will fulfil the hope of Israel. It will also be the first destination of the true Church, the Bride of Christ, after the marriage supper of the Lamb. In His short ministry on Earth Jesus gave many powerful demonstrations of His credentials as the Messiah. These are best summed up in His answer to John the Baptist's question in Matthew 11 v 2 – 6, and His miracles gave a foretaste of His messianic power to overcome all the forces of evil injustice, whatever their character.

3. The two personalities in the parable.

First, there is the unjust judge. In a society where God and His law were seen as the ultimate authority, human judges were meant to administer that law on God's behalf with wisdom, fairness, and compassion. But Jesus states clearly that this judge has no respect for God, or concern to fairly administer justice. Indeed, his eventual willingness to give the widow justice was based solely on self-interest. Therefore, in the story He cannot represent God; God is not unjust. Rather, the whole context clearly shows that the judge represents all godless powers and their injustices, throughout the world and throughout history. Whatever our Creator ordains for our blessing and enjoyment, injustice always corrupts and destroys, leading to untold misery and despair.

The widow represents the ordinary citizen, pictured here as having no financial or social advantages, but facing a gross injustice at the hands of an adversary. Her only hope lies in the universal human instinct for the triumph of fairness and justice. Jesus does not tell us what her problem is, or who her adversary may be, but I believe that is quite deliberate. As the story stands, the details apply to all injustice, whoever the adversary is. Otherwise we may be tempted to limit the story to her own specific circumstances.

4. Persistent prayer against all injustice.

While our persistence in prayer is desirable whatever the need, the context and detail of this parable shows that it applies especially to prayer in the face of evil. Thus the principle here is that Jesus is urging us to continue to pray earnestly regarding all injustice, ranging from any issues in our personal circumstances, right up to the gross corruption and evil we see in national and international administrations, whether they are political or religious. The motivation for earnest prayer for justice to be done, and seen to be done, is that the administration of justice is a process, always leading to righteousness as an outcome. This is why the two are linked in scripture as the foundation of the rule of the Messiah and brings us back to the wonderful truth that Jesus, the Messiah, is the Righteous One.

5. Prayer or action?

As we think about praying against all injustice, whether the circumstances are on the personal and local level or in the widest sphere of world affairs, like the widow we so often feel helpless. Sometimes action is necessary and possible, especially through the legal and media processes in a reasonably free society like our own, but far more usually prayer is the only weapon we have. The widow is pictured here as being persistent in going to the judge, but that is not a fight in any legal sense; basically it is a demonstration of prayer. I'm sure the Lord is using this story to show us that when action is not possible, and there is no other alternative, then it is because He is going to take matters into His own hands on our behalf. How frequently in the Gospels we see people coming to Him with injustices - sickness, demon activity, death of a loved one, etc, etc - pleading for His action when they had no answers beyond seeking His help. Through prayer, Jesus stands right there at the limit of our own resources.

6. Because of the messianic future, justice will win.

The biblical truth of the coming millennial reign of the Messiah, bringing to the world the true foundation of justice and righteousness, means that at a point in time justice will fully triumph over all injustice, and over Satan himself, the real adversary, and the author of all injustice. Injustice leading to unrighteousness will be vanquished by justice leading to righteousness. I believe there is a legitimate parallel here with the spiritual principle of redemption. Jesus came to accomplish redemption "when the time had fully come" - a specific point in time. However, on the basis of the eternal God's unstoppable and unbreakable promise to bring about a perfect redemption, the blessing of that redemption is applied to those who had faith in Him throughout all time, including those living in history before the Lord arrived. For example, Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness, and the multitude of sacrifices under the mosaic law was a "shadow" up to the time of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The legal basis for this is that Jesus died "once for all" (Hebrews 10 v 10) - that is, all who had or will have faith in God for redemption, in all eras of history. In the same way, the sure promise of His future Kingdom, where justice and righteousness will triumph, is the legal basis on which God has already enabled and performed many victories of justice throughout history and can continue to do so. The judge has to give way, whatever his reason for doing so. Satan is a defeated foe, and he knows it! The truth of the matter is, if there is no millennial reign of Jesus on Earth, there can be no triumph of justice and righteousness on Earth.

7. The sting in the tail.

Jesus asks whether He will find faith on the earth when He returns. Such a comment cannot be divorced from the context of the whole parable. It must mean that He is asking whether, at the end of the Church age, the Christians living in that day would be really expecting the final triumph of justice and righteousness to be fully and gloriously accomplished by His messianic kingdom on Earth. That is, the fulfilment of all that God has promised through the prophets and apostles - another unstoppable and unbreakable promise. Sadly, the need for the Lord to even voice the question suggests that in His foreknowledge He was aware that many would not be expecting that fulfilment. Here we see the tragedy of many Christians today denying the prophetic promise of a millennial reign on Earth in justice and righteousness, the complete answer to the widow's prayers, and ours too.

Deep in the human psyche there is an unquenchable desire for utopia. With every revolutionary movement, every new philosophical idea, around every political corner, there is the expectation that at last mankind has found its way out of the constraints of original sin. However, the corruption of human nature will always find a way to pervert and destroy the brightest ideas of the human mind and imagination. Only Jesus, uniquely Son of God and perfect Man, ruling and reigning as King of Kings, will bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth; a glorious conclusion of God's purposes in time, before time shall be no more, and a blessed eternity embraces all who have found peace with God through Jesus our Saviour, Lord and King.