

## “Your Kingdom come”: Where will it come from? *Carlos Mraida*

The mission of the church is not other but to continue the mission of Jesus here on earth. And the message the church proclaims today cannot be other but the message Jesus came to proclaim. This message is the Kingdom of God. And that mission is to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Indeed, the historic mission of Jesus is inevitably linked to the Kingdom of God. His mission has been the manifestation of the Kingdom as a reality present in his own person and action, in his preaching of the Gospel and on his deeds of justice and mercy.

His announcement of the Kingdom was the announcement that the redeeming purpose of God for all creation had entered in human history taken on flesh in his own being as the suffering Servant of the Lord that establishes a kingdom based on his delivery of love and expressed in justice and peace.

Through its mission, the church makes the Kingdom of God real here on earth. That's why when Jesus taught us how to pray he said we had to ask *ελθετω η βασιλεια σου, Your Kingdom come*. The verb is a middle voice of *ερχομαι* which means to come or go with various applications or uses: to approach, to arrive, to enter, to go, to appear, to come into, to result, to come forth, to happen, coming, to come.

I believe it would be good to ask ourselves, when we pray *Your Kingdom come*, what are we thinking of? To put it simply and in a daily way, *come* from where, *come* when, *come* how? Because I believe that being able to answer these questions will determine our mission as the church today and our message.

*Does the Kingdom of God come from the future?*

Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God in a context in which it is understood in the light of the Jewish messianic hope of the Old Testament. As the expectations of the establishment of the Kingdom are discouraged by the political events of the dominion of other peoples over Israel, the recognition of the final reign of Jehovah, scatological, of the end of time, is paving its way. Jehovah will reign one day over all the earth, he will occupy the throne of Jerusalem and he will be honored there by all the people which will go on a pilgrimage to Zion. (Isaiah 24.23; Zechariah 14.9; Obadiah 21)

When we pray *Your Kingdom come* are we asking that the times speed up and what's going to happen in the future comes now? That is to say, that the future Kingdom comes now?

This scatological futurist vision of the kingdom has permeated a great part of the evangelical theology and therefore its missiology. Perhaps the strongest expression of this has been, and is, the premillennial dispensationalism which places the Kingdom in the millennium that is to occur at the end of times. In Jesus teachings this future dimension of the Kingdom of God is expressed. For example: ***Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.*** (Luke 21.31). In the same way, as soon as the fig tree has its leaves come out, it is indicating that the summer is near, also, the present events reveal the irruption of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13). VER MATEO 24.32-33 In addition to this, we can mention the parables of the Parousia (the unexpected coming of the thief, the return of the owner of the house, the sudden coming of the husband). It means, the kingdom of God bursts in like a tragic and future scatological crisis.

However, as true as this futurist note, is that Jesus also announces the present manifestation of the Kingdom of God: ***But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*** (Matthew 12.28).

And when the Pharisees doubted about when the kingdom of God would come (*ερχομαι*), Jesus replied: ***the kingdom of God is within you*** (Luke 17.20-21). And his affirmation is that the stand people take in the present on his person determines the fate that awaits in the final judgment (Matthew 10.32). This means, the present announcement of the Kingdom of God determines the destiny in the final judgment yet to come. This means, the future kingdom of God is a present reality in the person of Jesus in words and action.

Apart from the dispensational influence, there have been other positions which have conditioned the mission of the church.

Thus, A. Schweitzer, among others, affirmed the “consequent scatology”, by saying that Jesus, depending on the Jewish apocalyptic, made a futurist reality of the Kingdom of God with the novelty that gave an imminent character to the final catastrophe.

The Anglo-Saxon reflection, led mainly by C. H. Dodd, reacted to this position and said it was a way of re-judaization of the Christian community and removed all futurist scatology. They talked about a "realized scatology" in Jesus's preaching. Dodd translates Mark 1.15: **The Kingdom of God has come.**

For his part, Rudolf Bultmann joined Schweitzer position of a "consequent scatology", but he reinterpreted and said that now always means the last hour.

However, I believe that a balanced reading of the texts, drives us to affirm that the message of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus does not announce only his presence, neither his future coming exclusively, but in his person and in his action the coming of the Kingdom of God was happening in the present and started suddenly. I consider that following Joachim Jeremías, it can be affirmed in Jesus a "scatology which realizes".

So when we pray **Your Kingdom come**, we ask this future reality that invaded the present in Jesus of Nazareth to realize in our time, manifesting the signs of the new age inaugurated by Him, the signs of the new order called the Kingdom of God, and to advance until we see the true reality that all **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea** (Isaiah 11.9, Habakkuk 2.14).

We are not asking the future to come earlier, but we are asking the present to be permeated by the reality that at the end of times will be perfect.

If the Kingdom of God, with its complete and perfect shalom, is a future reality, when we pray **Your Kingdom come** we are asking for its present manifestation, a scatology which happens today through the church.

*Does the Kingdom of God come from "above"?*

The term kingdom, **βασιλεια**, designates firstly the being, the state and the power of the king. It should be translated as royal dignity or sovereignty. A second meaning is that that dignity and royal sovereignty is manifested on a territory where the king rules. That is to say, **basileia** means kingdom or empire, understood as the extension of a territory where the one who rules is the king. It can be said that in the Old Testament the Kingdom of God has a static dimension. It is the cosmic dimension of the royalty of Jehovah. As the owner of all creation: **The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it** (Psalms 24.1); **For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods** (Psalms 95.3). As sovereign of the universe: **The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all** (Psalms 103.19). But a dynamic dimension also appears. This is, not only is he the King but also he who makes himself King, as expressed in the Psalms of enthroning Jehovah as King: **The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength** (93.1; cf. 96.10, 97.1, 99.1).

The Messiah is the connection between both dimensions. The cosmic and transcendent sovereignty joins the sovereignty which is dynamic, immanent, longed on earth, which means, the manifestation of that cosmic sovereignty on the earth and the history. May the dignity and royal sovereignty get territory.

I mean, here "come" calls the attention on the origin and nature more than on the temporality. That is to say, your kingdom come "from above" refers to the supernatural character of that kingdom, its divine precedence. Its nature is "from above", it is the kingdom of the heavens. That's why it must come.

When we pray **Your Kingdom come**, we are asking that transcendent and cosmic sovereignty to be immanent. May it come "from above", "down" here. It means, may the Kingdom have a spatial expression, through a manifestation of the supernatural world, the powerful action of God, an "invasion" from heaven into the earthly reality.

If the kingdom comes "from above", from the heavens, when praying: **Your Kingdom come**, we are asking that Kingdom to establish "down" here on earth.

*Does the Kingdom of God come from inside?*

Against the doubt of the Pharisees as regards when the Kingdom of God would come (**έρχομαι**), Jesus replies: **the kingdom of God is within (εντός) you** (Luke 17.20-21). The word **εντός** is also translated as **inside**. Luther translated it like this.

The kingdom of God is the divine sovereignty manifested through the sons of God in every aspect of the human life. The mission of the church is not only to verbalize a message but also to manifest the Kingdom through a community of faith made up of men and women who live under the lordship of Christ and who have been sowed on the field of the world to express and make the transforming action of God true, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and in this way, setting up his love, justice and peace so the Father is glorified in all things.

The Kingdom is inside all believers. And if it is inside, when we pray **your kingdom come**, we are asking it comes out, it manifests. And it's not only us who asks for it, **for the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed** (Romans 8.19).

## *Some implications for the mission*

### *Your kingdom come to the present through the church*

A futurist scatology in the form of fundamentalist dispensationalism or liberalism has made us lose the present dimension of the kingdom and the imperative so the church, through its mission, makes the realities of the kingdom of God visible on the earth today.

While we are waiting with expectation and hope the triumphant return of our Lord, when his kingdom will be expressed in a complete and perfect way over all reality, we are working so the signs of the Kingdom are visible to people. The world today asks the same John the Baptist asked Jesus through his messengers: ***Are you the one who is to come (ἐρχομαι), or should we expect someone else?*** ***Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor*** (Matthew 11.3-5).

The kingdom is the dynamic power of God which turns visible through concrete signs. It is a new reality, a new order burst into our history which affects the whole human life. Not only morally and spiritually but also physically, psychologically, materially and socially. And it is the duty of the church while it is waiting the coming of the Lord to establish the kingdom of God in this time, to announce with words and deeds the redeeming purpose of God for all creation. The consummation of this divine purpose will be accomplished in the future but here and now it is possible to catch a glimpse of the present reality of his Kingdom through the mission of the church.

### *Your kingdom come down through the church*

The irruption of a supernatural kingdom has plunged the church into an attitude which is passive many times. The revivalist emphases have left the reality transforming processes in the hands of God exclusively.

When we give up all self-sufficiency that can lead us to believe that the establishment of the kingdom will be the result of human effort and when we admit the need of a supernatural intervention, that the kingdom comes from "above", we also accept that the responsibility falls on us to allow the divine action manifest so the kingdom comes "down" here.

Therefore, it is required ***to receive the kingdom of God like a little child*** (Mark 10.15) who receive the gratuitous gift of God and also its radical follow-up. If it is necessary, our hand must be cut off (Matthew 5.29s) ***or we must live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven*** (Luke 9.62). That is to say, the church manifests down here the kingdom which comes from above, through a community of faith, which lives in a holy way, which is an alternative for the world since it is first fruits of the kingdom of God. And which lives in that way, not as a result of a repressive legalism, but as an expression of a greater joy result of having found in the kingdom of God the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value (Matthew 13.44-46).

The kingdom is from above, supernatural, but it is absolutely down here. When the Kingdom is announced and received, the personal, family and social reality must experiment a transformation.

### *Your kingdom come to the world through the church*

The kingdom has already come. It is within us, inside (***ἐντός***). It comes out from inside ourselves. The church has waited it to come as if it were Israel. But God expects us to bear fruit on the earth. ***The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field... The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom.***

We believers are sowed in the world. And we are the good seed which God expects to bear good fruit. The church has waited, but it is God who waits to see the good seed sowed by him in the world bear fruit.

The Kingdom of God is manifested through words and actions. Our words proclaim the gospel of grace. But our words also decree with authority and spiritual government new realities on earth so everybody can see the kingdom of God manifested in the reality: ***The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth*** (Daniel 4.17).

Our actions make that sovereignty, that new order, real. The message of the kingdom is the King. And the King sat at the right hand of the Father and was given all authority in heaven as on earth and he has commanded us as the church to manifest his sovereignty and to establish the Kingdom in all aspects of the reality. It won't come from another place. The kingdom is within us, therefore, it will come to the world through us. Because it has been given to us, that many times feel like a small flock

***Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.*** To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*Some questions for the apostolic ministry*

1. What implication will the fact that the Kingdom has come have for AFI and the apostolic ministry?
2. What are the consequences for the mission of a scatology which is exclusively futurist?
3. In what ways can AFI contribute to "correct the deficient" of an exclusively futurist scatology?
4. The Kingdom comes from above but it is established down on earth, with a comprehensive message and mission. To expect revival to "just come from above" and the transformation of the reality of a city or nation, in what ways do they influence the reality of the church?
5. In what ways can AFI contribute to rise and sow in the world a transforming leadership for all aspects of reality?