

## **Five Petitions: #2: Thy Kingdom Come (on Earth as it Is in Heaven)**

In March of this year President Trump reversed decades of U.S. policy and signed an executive order recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, an area east of the Sea of Galilee known in biblical times as Bashan.

I'll not go into any of the political or diplomatic issues. They're complicated beyond imagination, and they are a major factor in the belligerent partisanism that divides our people. What got my attention recently was a news article headline: "DISPENSATIONALISTS DELIGHT IN TRUMP'S GOLAN HEIGHTS STATEMENT:" In that article was this statement: "Rapture Christians celebrated last year's move of the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as a key development in fulfilling biblical prophecy."<sup>1</sup> I think you need to know your pastor's position in all of this.

Mainline Protestants don't hear much, pro or con, about dispensational Christianity. You may not even be familiar with the word, although you probably know about some of its concepts related to end times, the Rapture, Mark of the Beast, Second Coming, Pre-Millennial/post-millennial, etc.

It's relatively new to Christianity, unknown until the 1840s. It's a cut-and-paste butchering of Scripture by a British layman named John Nelson Darby, untrained in biblical scholarship or theology. It remained somewhat regional until 1909, when an American lawyer (again, not trained in biblical scholarship or theology) incorporated it into his version of Scripture known as the Scofield Reference Bible. That Bible was widely used, and its Dispensationalist leanings spread quickly among fringe scholars and pastors, and fundamentalist churches.

Briefly, dispensationalism is a system of interpreting the Bible that looks at biblical history as an ongoing narrative of a divine master plan in which history is divided into defined periods or ages called dispensations. That plan is encoded into the Bible and when the code is broken, we can know the future. And Darby and his successors outlined and diagramed a very specific, albeit bizarre, future. He never included specific dates; although some of his followers have done so.

Tulsa evangelist, Hal Lindsey popularized it in the 1970s in his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. It sold more than 28 million copies. Then between 1995 and 2007 Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins gave it life in a 16-book series of religious novels titled *Left Behind*.

Most mainline Protestants reject dispensationalism because it originates in a distorted misrepresentation of Scripture and biblical prophecy.

All of this would be theoretical and easily dismissed but for one element that tangibly impacts our culture and national life. The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation describes an organization, implemented by the anti-Christ (and dispensationalists

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<sup>1</sup> <https://baptistnews.com/article/dispensationalists-delight-in-trumps-golan-heights-statement/#.XT8ka3dFz4g>

understand anti-Christ to be one individual person, rather than an adjective describing an infinite number of persons and policies.) They see a government designed to supersede any national government, to which all nations must surrender their sovereignty and submit to international laws and regulations. Dispensationalists call it "One World Government," and say that according to Bible prophecy it will happen in the very near future. They've been saying that for over 175 years.

Dispensationalists want that to happen very soon, so that they will be taken up into heaven in what they call "the Rapture" and will be removed forever from the trials and tribulations of earthly human life. And that impacts the way they vote—or, in some cases is the reason they refuse to vote. They totally dismiss earthly life and human government as unimportant and are just waiting for the rapture and trying to get as many people saved as they can in the meantime. And that explains the headline I read earlier.

I admire their sincerity and passion; but I also totally disagree with them. My disagreement begins with our text for this morning:

LUKE 11:1-4 (NRSV) *He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."*<sup>2</sup>*He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name.*

*Your kingdom come.*  
<sup>3</sup> *Give us each day our daily bread.*  
<sup>4</sup> *And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.*  
*And do not bring us to the time of trial."*

"Your kingdom come." Matthew adds, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Luke doesn't need that rider. With the possible exception of the Epistle of James, no NT writer emphasizes social justice here on earth more than Luke.

Luke preserves the many sayings of Jesus declaring that those with material possessions have a responsibility to the poor and disadvantaged. He attacks prejudice and discrimination against untouchables, including lepers, Samaritans, gentiles, tax collectors, women (especially widows), and the poor who have no voice.

In Matthew, Mark and John, Jesus offers a message of personal redemption. Luke adds a strong collective emphasis. His is the only gospel with a primary theme of correcting social injustices: poverty, abuse of wealth and power, and the status of women. I found more than three dozen passages in Luke in which Jesus is portrayed as a social reformer. Let's look at just two:

LUKE 4:16-19 (NRSV) *When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,*<sup>17</sup>*and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*  
<sup>18</sup>*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*

*because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,*  
<sup>19</sup>*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

The second passage is Luke's version of the Beatitudes. There are fewer "Blesseds", and Luke adds some woes:

LUKE 6:20-31 (NRSV) *Then he looked up at his disciples and said:*

*"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

<sup>21</sup>*"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.*

*"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.*

<sup>22</sup>*"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.*

<sup>24</sup>*"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.*

<sup>25</sup>*"Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.*

*"Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.*

<sup>26</sup>*"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. <sup>27</sup>"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,*

<sup>28</sup>*bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup>If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. <sup>31</sup>Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

Without denying any witness about heaven or life-after-death, Luke joins many other biblical writers to confirm that God absolutely is concerned with issues of justice and peace here on planet earth. "Your kingdom come."

What is the Kingdom? Jo Lynn shared that Ron Allen, the worship clinician and preacher at ADM, always said, "dominion," instead of "kingdom." It's not uncommon to read or hear, "the reign of God." It can be a place—physical, and tangible, and even geographic—or it can be "places of the heart"—wherever God is sovereign, lord, ruler, and master—where God has jurisdiction and dominion.

And "kingdom," is political; not in the sense of party partisanship, but in the sense of its root in the Latin, "polis"—a community and the interaction of the people within that community. In Luke 17:21 Jesus said, "The kingdom is among you."

Brueggemann: "In a world gone fearful... when society all around is paralyzed in fear, preoccupied by commodity, mesmerized by wealth, seeking endless power, and deeply, deeply frightened, what a stunning vocation for the church, to stand free and hope-filled and to think, imagine, dream, vision a future that God will yet enact.... Here is this little community of visited people, not greedy, not fearful, not in despair... dreaming about the way of peace among peoples... visioning about justice between haves and have-nots... prophesying about an ordered earth in which greed is curbed enough to respect the needs of the environment... not defensive about others, but able to be inclusive of those not like us. This community has no doubt that God's kingdom to come is not in the past, or in heaven, but it is on the earth, beyond bloody fear and scary chaos. What a place for the church to be!"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Brueggemann, Walter. *A Gospel of Hope* (p. 103). Presbyterian Publishing. Kindle Edition.