



Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven....For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matt 6:10, 13b) Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Rev 22:20b)

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. 25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. 26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together. (Luke 17:20-37)

How often do we truly yearn for the coming of the Kingdom? With each repetition of the Lord's Prayer, we pray for its coming, but do we really mean that? Do we hate the world and its sinful living and yearn for the coming righteousness of God? Or would we prefer that the Lord tarry so that we may get just a bit more of that world?

Would we delay the taking of Christ's White Robe of Righteousness that we might enjoy the Rags of Perdition a while longer? If so, we shall have none of the Kingdom of God when it comes.

The Hymn of the church for this devotion is "I Love thy Kingdom, Lord." It is sung with great dignity and reverence in churches from Oxford in England to Johannesburg, South Africa; and from Belfast to Boston; but does our reverence for its expressed sentiments truly reflect our heart's sincere desire?

I Love Thy Kingdom, LORD

*I love thy kingdom, Lord,
the house of thine abode,
the Church our blest Redeemer
saved with his own precious blood.*

*I love thy Church, O God:
her walls before thee stand,
dear as the apple of thine eye,
and graven on thy hand.*

*For her my tears shall fall;
for her my prayers shall ascend;
to her my cares and toils be given,
till toils and cares shall end.*

*Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
her sweet communion, solemn vows,
her hymns of love and praise.*

*Jesus, thou friend divine,
our Savior and our King,
thy hand from every snare and foe
shall deliverance bring.*

*Sure as thy truth shall last,
to Zion shall be given
the brightest glories earth can yield,
and brighter bliss of heaven.*

The words of this hymn are written by Timothy Dwight (President of Yale College), 1800, and reflect the sentiments of the 137th Psalm set to meter. It is a revision of the same work by Isaac Watts of the Revolutionary War Period. It is the earliest American hymn still in common usage in churches. The music (St. Thomas) is by Aaron Williams but is also attributed to Handel.

The word LOVE is not one to be toyed about. It describes the most powerful possession that a mortal can own, but not truly 'owned' for all LOVE comes from God. According to the apostle Paul in the Book of Romans, LOVE is stronger than death, and will survive death: "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 8:38-39) All love descends from the Father of Lights for "*God is Love.*" (1 John 4:8)

The Kingdom of our God is where Love abides in its fullness in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is the Church for which our Blessed Redeemer paid with His life's blood. In this respect, Christ gives us the perfect picture of true Marriage. A man is to love his wife so that he will give his own life for her just as Jesus gave His life for His Bride, the Church.

*I love thy kingdom, Lord,
the house of thine abode,
the Church our blest Redeemer
saved with his own precious blood.*

The complete unity of Scripture is presented here by this 2nd stanza. God has told us that our walls (defenses) are forever in His purview. The Church is as the Apple of God's Eye. The Apple of an Eye is that which is reflected in the pupil of the eye. We see 'little' man reflected in the very pupil of God's eye for His focus is always on His elect. The Church was 'cut' (for that is the meaning of graven) into the hands of Christ by the nine inch nails of the Cross reflecting that same line in Isaiah: "***Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.***" (Isaiah 49:16)

*I love thy Church, O God:
her walls before thee stand,
dear as the apple of thine eye,
and graven on thy hand.*

This 3rd stanza reveals the beauty of God's Love in tears. In ancient times, women and some men kept tear bottles that have been excavated with their remains in ancient sepulchers. They kept all of their tears to be buried with their bodies at death. But God will take our tears and keep them so that we have no need to go to our graves holding our tears. Perhaps the woman who washed Jesus' feet was actually emptying her tear bottle to Christ so that He would take all of her tears. "***Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?***" (Psalms 56:8) To be honest, there are no toils expended on behalf of Christ and His Church by the people of God, for they enjoy the Perfect Sabbath in Christ who labors IN them.

*For her my tears shall fall;
for her my prayers shall ascend;
to her my cares and toils be given,
till toils and cares shall end.*

The 4th stanza focuses on the Holy reverence with which we must worship in God's Holy Place. If the ground before the Burning Bush of Moses was Holy Ground because of the Presence of God, how about our churches where we meet together having Christ in her midst? Are we not to remove our head coverings and our shoes, made filthy by the world, and observe a dignity and peace that is extraordinary to the human soul? Is not our Anglican worship reverential and full of Scripture readings – more than any other churches with which I am familiar? Do not all our people participate actively in worship in the responsive readings and prayers? Do we sing any hymns but those that reflect strong biblical truth as does this hymn today?

*Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
her sweet communion, solemn vows,*

her hymns of love and praise.

In the following 5th stanza, we laud and magnify the Name of Jesus. He is a friend divine. The Good Samaritan of Port Hope, Canada, Joseph Scribbens, depicted Him as the best Friend (What a Friend we Have in Jesus) a man can have – and Scribbens knew that for he had suffered much, but had Christ to be with him always. In fact, Jesus is a Friend that is closer than a brother: ***“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”*** (Prov 18:24) If we will have Jesus to be our Friend, we must respond to that Love that the Friend bestows – we MUST be friendly to Christ in return!

*Jesus, thou friend divine,
our Savior and our King,
thy hand from every snare and foe
shall deliverance bring.*

The last stanza is a powerful benediction to the foregoing truth of the hymn. Shall the Truth of God endure and, if so, for how long? ***“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”*** (Matt 5:18) The Light of Christ is our present Light of immeasurable magnitude. He is not only our Bright and Morning Star that has shed His gentle Light over us during our passage through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but He has also become our Day Star and Sun of Righteousness who bears healing in His wings for all who belong to Him. (Rev 22:16, 2Peter 1:19, & Malachi 4:2) Of course comes the day of God’s own choosing when the sky shall be rolled back as a scroll and the shining and heavenly angels shall descend following in the trail of our Lord and Savior – such an army as has never before been assembled at the Trump of God. Then shall our eyes be changed to behold such resplendent and effulgent Light as has never before been seen by mortals.

*Sure as thy truth shall last,
to Zion shall be given
the brightest glories earth can yield,
and brighter bliss of heaven.*

We enjoy the benefits of heaven here on earth as well as in heaven. We have our Passover in Christ, and we have our Sabbath rest in Him presently and, fully, at the close of time. All our good works are His labors working in us, therefore, we rest presently in Him and wait not for some future Sabbath to enjoy His blessings. I ask you to please give a serious perusal to the classical and ancient hymns of the Church. Do they not embody Scriptural truth in such a beautiful setting as cannot be duplicated otherwise? Perhaps it is high time the Church returned to her Foundation Stone of Christ, and to seek out the “Old Paths” wherein our fathers walked, and to search out, once more, the Ancient Landmark of all Truth in Christ. Away with the silly ditties that pass for ‘church music’ and up with the old standards – and that Glorious Ensign which is Christ!