

LEARNING FROM TRIBULATION PRAYER

Prayers during COVID-19 #3: Revelation 6:9-12; Matthew 6:9-15

August 2, 2020

*Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Matthew 6:10*

Praying for judgment

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

Revelation 6:9-11

⁵ How long, LORD? Will you be angry forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire?

⁶ Pour out your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge you,
on the kingdoms that do not call on your name;

⁷ for they have devoured Jacob and devastated his homeland

Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”

Before our eyes, make known among the nations
that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.

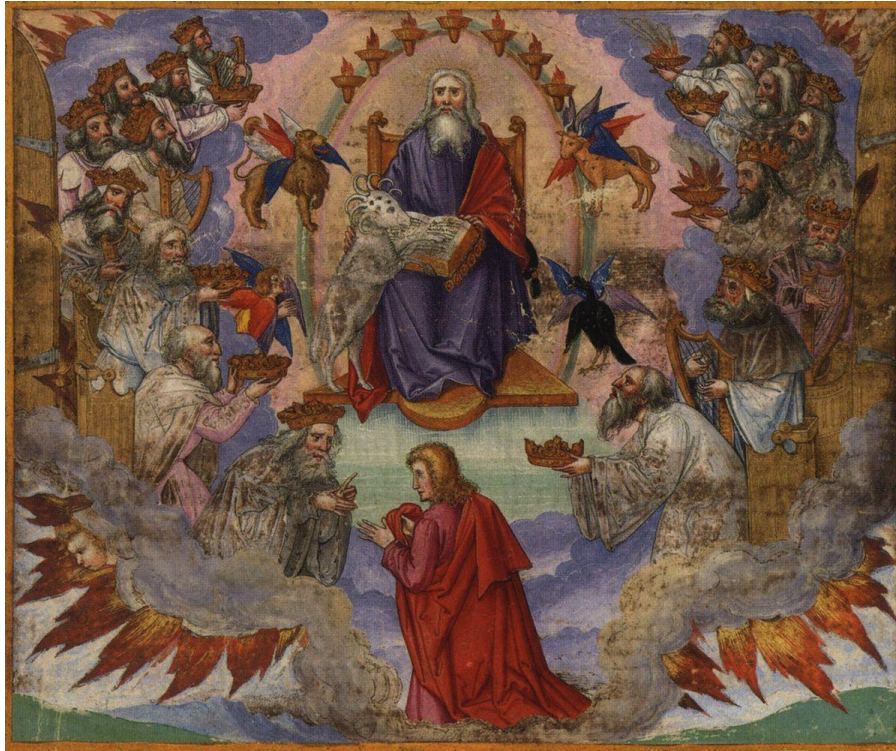
Psalm 79:5-7,10

1) God answers this prayer _____

2) Imprecatory prayers are in praise of _____

and a celebration of _____

3) “t” tribulation is always a omen of eschatological judgment



Where to look for imprecatory prayers

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits ^z of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.

Revelation 5:1-8

1) Start in the _____

2) Then look under _____

3) The plan is put into action by _____

God's scroll and the coronavirus

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, ^s but deliver us from the evil one.’

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6

1) Like every imprecatory prayer, this prayer is answered _____

2) Like every imprecatory prayer, this prayer is answered _____

3) Even through “T” tribulation, God’s people _____

4) A full Christian response requires all three wings:

from John Piper:

from NT Wright:

from John Lennox:

Resources for further study

- Bethlehem Bible College article at <https://bethbc.edu/acblog/2020/07/16/the-book-of-revelation-and-corona/>
- VernPoythress' "Return of the King" study <https://frame-poythress.org/ebooks/the-returning-king/>
- John Piper's "How Do We Rest in the Face of Horrible Calamity" at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-do-we-rest-in-the-face-of-horrible-calamity>. I also liked much of Piper's *Coronavirus and Christ* (Crossway, 2020).
- I would read John Lennox's version of this story first: *Where is God in a Coronavirus World* (Good Book Company, 2020). His interview about the book is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_vm4Ouj7M8.
- N.Y. Wright's contribution to the discussion of the pandemic is his *God and the Pandemic* (Zondervan Reflective, 2020).
- Kim Riddlebarger has a good series on Revelation at ThirdMill. His "Silence in Heaven" lecture is on this passage: https://thirdmill.org/magazine/article.asp/link/kim_riddlebarger%5Ekim_riddlebarger.Rev.13.html/at/There%20Was%20Silence%20in%20Heaven
- Riddelbarger also has a helpful essay (even if it's too hard on other views) on "Thy Kingdom Come" at <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/thykingdom.html>
- Bob Deffinbaugh's sermon on the Lord's Prayer is at <https://bible.org/seriespage/18-jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15>
- Tim Keller has a great sermon series on the Lord's Prayer at <https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series>
- I appreciate Grant Osborne's commentary on Revelation 6 in *BECNT: Revelation* (Baker, 2002) and William Hendricksen's *More Than Conquerors* (Baker Book House, 1939, 1967).
- Doug's go-to sources for Revelation are Darrell Johnson's *Discipleship on the Edge* (Regent College Publishing, 2004), Eugene Peterson's *Reversed Thunder* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1988) and Robert Mounce's *NICNT: The Book of Revelation* (Eerdmans, 1977).



ii. Fifth Seal—Martyred Saints (6:9–11)

Heil (1993: 222–23, 242–43) points out that this is the only prayer of supplication in Revelation. He believes the “slaughter” occurred as the result of the “slaughter” of the first four seals (6:4) and that there is contrast between the sword given to their enemies and the white robe given to the martyred saints. Thus this is a turning point in the book, summarizing the faithful witness of the first part, the conflict of the middle portion, and the promise and vindication of the final section. From the judgment experienced by the earth-dwellers, the scene now shifts to heaven. The idea of heaven as a temple occurs frequently in this book (11:19; 14:17; 15:5; 16:17) and in the OT (Ps. 11:4; Isa. 6:1; Hab. 2:20; Mic. 1:2, cf. T. Levi 18.6), and the altar is always in the heavenly temple (Rev. 8:3, 5; 14:18). Behind the idea of the heavenly temple is very likely the apocalyptic vision in Ezek. 40–48. Also, the subject changes to what the earth-dwellers have done to the saints and to the issue of the justice of God (the judgment of God was the theme in the first four seals). As the only prayer of supplication in the Apocalypse (see above), it is important to realize that it is an imprecatory prayer for vengeance. The subject is martyrdom, another major theme in the book. In the eschatological discourse Jesus warned his followers to expect terrible persecution from councils, synagogues, and secular authorities and even betrayal from family members resulting in death (Mark 13:9–13). This reflects that message. The connection between martyrdom and judgment is appropriate, for one of the primary emphases in the book is *lex talionis* (the law of retribution), defending why God has to judge evil humanity. In fact, 6:15–17 details God’s response to these imprecatory prayers on the part of the martyred saints.

As Christ opens the fifth seal, John “sees” (another use of εἶδον [*eidon*, I saw] to introduce a further aspect of the vision) ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχάς (*hypokatō tou thysiastēriou tas psychas*, souls under the altar). The use of ψυχάς here is interesting, for it normally refers to the whole person. Sand (*EDNT* 3:501) believes that it indicates the life force that lives on after physical death (as in 8:9 of animals; cf. Luke 9:24; Acts 20:10). The imagery of these souls “under the altar” has occasioned much discussion. No one doubts that it refers to the sacrificial system, where the blood of the sacrificial victim is poured “under the altar,” but there is some debate as to which altar is meant. The “blood under the altar” would favor a reference to the altar of burnt offering (so Swete, Krodell, Sweet, Aune), while the prayers directed at the altar would favor a reference to the altar of incense (so Beckwith, R. Charles, Ladd, Morris, Johnson, Beale). In favor of the latter is that the other references to an “altar” in the book (8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7) refer to the altar of incense (and on the Day of Atonement blood was poured on this altar), and here the souls rather than blood are “under the altar.” In favor of the altar of burnt offering is the imagery of the souls under the altar rather than on top of it and of the sacrificial imagery in the concept here (Aune 1998a: 405–6 believes that 11:1 and 16:7 also refer to the altar of burnt offering). Mounce (1998: 146–47) believes that the themes of both sacrifice and prayer in 6:9–10 favor a double meaning, that both altars are intended. However, there is no mention of an altar in verse 10, and the emphasis in verse 9 seems most likely to refer to the altar of burnt offering here (due to the imagery of the souls “under” the altar). Still, Mounce is correct that there is just one altar in Revelation and it combines both functions (see on 8:3). The “soul,” like “blood,” was seen as a symbol of life, and thus the two function as synonyms. In Exod. 29:10–14 and Lev. 4:3–12, the ceremony for the sin offering involved bringing a young bull without blemish to the altar, laying hands on it to identify the sinner with the bull and transfer his sins to it, and then slaughtering it as a substitute for those sins. Some of the blood was placed on the horns of the altar, and the rest was poured at the base of the altar. Here the martyred saints are clearly pictured as those sacrificed for Christ.

They have been ἐσφαγμένων (*esphagmenōn*, slaughtered) “on account of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.” This is based on a formula that occurs four times in the book (1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4), with 12:17 and 14:12 paraphrasing the formula. As stated at 1:2, this formula shows the prophetic nature of the book and the participation of the saints in the apocalyptic presence of God via their witness. While in 1:1 the phrase “testimony of Jesus” may be a subjective genitive, “the testimony that Jesus gives in these prophetic visions,” 1:9 is certainly an objective genitive, with John in prison due to his testimony to Jesus. Although some interpret the phrase here as holding to the testimony they had received from Jesus (so Morris 1987: 106; Mounce 1998: 147), this verse more likely follows 1:9, “the testimony they maintained” for Jesus. The imperfect εἶχον (*eichon*, were maintaining) dramatizes the past witness of the saints as it progressed. In 12:17 “the word of God” is also interpreted in this direction: “those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the

testimony of Jesus” (also 14:12, “who keep the commandments of God”). The phrase in 6:9 is similar to 12:17 and 14:12; the saints were martyred for their obedience to God and for their testimony to Jesus. Throughout the persecution and suffering in the book, the church is presented as a witnessing church. They do not flee for their lives or compromise the gospel in order to avoid persecution but boldly maintain their witness in the desperate situation.

It is a heavenly sacrifice, and the cry for vengeance in 6:10 is made in the very presence of God. The martyred saints ἔκραξαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (*ekraxan phōnē megalē*, cried out with a loud voice), an emphatic phrase for a loud cry used often of angels carrying out the will of God (7:2; 10:3; 14:15; 18:2; 19:17) or of the martyred saints crying out for vengeance (here) or praising God for his salvation (7:10). Here this is obviously the anguished cry of a soul in extremis, similar to the blood of Abel that “cried out” from the ground (Gen. 4:10). The cry begins with a reverential address and then turns into a cry for justice, following the pattern of imprecatory prayers in the OT, with a form like Ps. 6:3; 74:10; 79:5; 80:4.

Some (R. Charles 1920: 1.175; Kiddle 1940: 119) believe that the vindictiveness shown here is problematic and contrasts with the prayers for forgiveness on the part of both Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:34) and Stephen when he was martyred (Acts 7:60). Like the imprecatory prayers of David, however, this cry does not constitute an ethical low in the book but rather a call for divine justice. As Fee and Stuart (1993: 203) note, such prayers are in keeping with the covenant curses of Deut. 28:53–57 and 32:35. This is also in keeping with Rom. 12:19, which quotes Deut. 32:35, “‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord”; and Luke 18:7–8, “‘Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?’” Caird (1966: 84–85) points out that this is a cry not for personal revenge but for public justice. They stand before the righteous judge presenting their case for judgment against their persecutors, much like Jesus, who “entrusted himself to the one who judges justly” (1 Pet. 2:23). In other words, this is not a low point for ethics but a high point for divine justice and for the centrality of the sovereignty of God in the life (and death) of the saints.

The prayer begins in an unusual fashion, with ἕως πότε (*heōs pote*, how long) expressing at the outset the anguished plea for justice, a question often addressed to God by a suffering people in the Psalms and Prophets (Ps. 79:5; 89:46; 90:13; Isa. 6:11; Hab. 1:2; Zech. 1:12; Dan. 12:6) as well as in intertestamental literature (1 Enoch 47.2, 4; 99.3; 104.3; 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 4:3–5; see Klassen 1966: 303–4). This then is followed by an affirmation of the majesty of God, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός (*ho despotēs ho hagios kai alēthinos*, master, holy and true). The title is not the normal term for the lordship of God but is a strong term referring to the absolute authority and power of God (or Christ, if these titles refer back to Christ as “holy and true” in 1:5; 3:14; cf. Heil 1993: 226). Δεσπότης occurs only here in the book, and elsewhere in the NT it is primarily used of a “master” as owner of slaves (e.g., Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18). In the LXX the term translates “Lord” nineteen times. In general the term expresses absolute power and authority. In Luke 2:29 Simeon prays to God as a slave to his master, and in Acts 4:24 God is addressed as the master of creation. Here God is addressed as the judge who will right a terrible wrong. Note that in all three NT uses of it as a divine title, it occurs in prayer passages. This judge is then described as “holy and true” (cf. “righteous and true” in Rev. 16:7; 19:2) in the same way that Christ is described as “holy and true” in the letter to Philadelphia in 3:7. In both cases the terms refer to one who is set apart from wickedness and “faithful” (see on 3:7) to vindicate his people in their suffering. The question here is not whether God will judge the transgressors but how soon. In light of the character of God affirmed in this ascription of praise, their doom is certain, but the martyrs would like it to be sooner rather than later.

The content of the prayer is brief and begins with οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν (*ou krineis kai ekdikeis to haima hēmōn*, are you not judging and avenging our blood), alluding to Ps. 79:10, “avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.” With the present tenses it poses the question, How long are you going to refrain from judging and avenging? The two verbs are very specific. First, the martyrs are asking for judgment against those who have slain them. In Revelation κρίνω occurs nine times, and the two cognate nouns (judge, judgment) occur seven times. This verb functions as a prelude to the rest of the book as God pours out his judgment on “those who dwell on the earth”—first in the seals, trumpets, and bowls (chaps. 6–16), and then in the final events of the eschaton (chaps. 17–20). As discussed in 3:10, “earth-dwellers” is used thirteen times in the book (three of them variations of the basic phrase used here) as the primary phrase for unbelievers. It is similar to κόσμος (*kosmos*, world) in John, which also refers to the inhabitants of the world as depraved in sin and in utter rebellion against God. This plea is specifically answered in 18:20, “God has judged her for the way

she treated you,” and implicitly answered in the judgment of 6:15–17. In other words, as we will see in 8:3–5, one of the reasons for God’s pouring out his judgment is his response to the prayers of the saints here (see also 6:15–17; 15:3; 16:5–7; 18:6, 20, 24; 19:2).

The second verb, ἐκδικεῖς, is more explicitly associated with the earth-dwellers (with the cognate ἐκ meaning “take vengeance on” them). This verb is found here and in 19:2, “He has avenged on her [the great prostitute] the blood of his servants.” As in the case of God’s “judgment,” the rest of the book also details the “vengeance” God will exact on the persecutors of his people. This is especially seen in 16:5–7, justifying the turning of the oceans and inland waters to blood in the second and third bowls: “they shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink, as they deserve.” The final vindication comes in two stages: in 20:4–6 the martyred reign on thrones over the earth in the “millennium,” and at the great white throne judgment of 20:11–14 the unsaved are judged “according to their deeds.”

God responds in two ways in 6:11. First, he gives “each of” the martyrs (another divine passive ἐδόθη [*edothē*, it was given; see on 6:2, 4, 8] indicating the sovereign will of God) στολή λευκή (*stolē leukē*, a white robe). The “white robe” occurs five times in the book (6:11; 7:9, 13, 14; cf. 22:14) and refers to the long robe of rank similar to the “robe down to his feet” worn by Christ in 1:13, the “white” garments promised to the “worthy” faithful in Sardis in 3:4–5, and the “white” garments of the twenty-four elders in 4:4. This robe indicated high social status in the first century. Jesus used it as an example of the scribes who like to “walk around in long robes” (Mark 12:38), and the angel at the resurrection was wearing the same “white robe” (Mark 16:5). In addition, the wearing of such robes was stressed often in Jewish apocalyptic (1 Enoch 62.16; 2 Enoch 22.8; Asc. Isa. 4.16; 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 2:39–44) as a sign of the glory of heavenly reward.

Several (R. Charles, Lohmeyer, Caird) interpret this in the light of extrabiblical evidence as meaning the martyrs will be given their glorified bodies early, while the rest of the departed saints will not receive theirs until after final judgment. However, this is reading too much into this brief sign. More likely, it indicates more generally vindication and reward for their faithfulness. The color “white” could refer to purity and holiness or perhaps also their victory (at a Roman triumph the conquering general would wear such a white robe). However, purity and glory are the primary thrusts. In the parallel passage of 7:9, 13–14 the great multitude in heaven are wearing “white robes” because they “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” As Roloff (1993: 90) says, “The white robe is a symbol for the salvation granted to the faithful on the basis of Christ’s saving act and, for their communion with God, to be preserved in faithful obedience White is the color of end-time joy, but also of immaculate purity.” Therefore the church as the bride of Christ will be given “fine linen, bright and clean,” which “stands for the righteous deeds of the saints” (19:8).

The martyrs are then called to have the same patience that characterized their life of perseverance on earth (1:9; 2:2–3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12). God tells them ἵνα ἀναπαύσονται ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν (*hina anapausontai eti chronon mikron*, that they should wait for a short time yet). The imminence of the eschaton is strongly emphasized in “a little longer,” and as Schüssler Fiorenza (1985: 49) states, “all the visions and images of Rev[elation] are determined by such an imminent expectation” (cf. 10:6; 11:18; 12:12; 14:6; 20:3; 22:10). Throughout the book God is seen in process of bringing the world to an end in his own time yet promising that this time will be short. Satan “knows his time is short” (12:12), and the “delay” is over (10:6). There is probably also double meaning in ἀναπαύσονται, which means not only “wait” but also “rest.” This verse parallels 14:8, in which the martyred saints are told they will “rest from their labor” in heaven. With the “white robe” of glory, this is a promise that they will “rest” in the glory of heaven as they “await” the consummation of God’s victory on their behalf.

Finally, they are told to wait ἕως πληρωθῶσιν (*heōs plērōthōsin*, until [the number] is complete) of those yet to be martyred. This is a concept strange to most today, but it was a common emphasis in apocalyptic writings to say that God in his sovereignty had established a certain number of martyrs who were yet to be killed before the final judgment. Bauckham (1993b: 48–56) discusses this in light of intertestamental parallels, particularly 1 Enoch 47.1–4 (“And the hearts of the holy ones were full of joy that the number of righteousness had been reached”), 2 Esdr. (4 Ezra) 4:35–37 (“When the number . . . is completed, for he has weighed the age in the balance, and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse them until that measure is fulfilled”), and 2 Bar. 23.4–5a (“No creature will live again unless the number that has been appointed is completed”). These other texts had also asked “how long” before God’s final intervention was to occur, and each responds that the “number” appointed by God must be complete. While

there are slight differences with regard to who constitutes that number (Revelation and 1 Enoch—martyrs; 2 Esdras [4 Ezra]—the righteous dead; 2 Baruch—all those born into this world), the idea of a number God had ordained is common to all. In short, the emphasis is on divine sovereignty. God knows each one who is to be martyred and will vindicate them all at the proper time, which will soon come. The rest of chapter 6 shows just how soon that will be. The sixth seal in 6:12–14 gives us the storm theophany that is the immediate forerunner of the eschaton, and 6:15–17 describes the terror of the persecutors as they face the wrath of God.

At the same time, the beleaguered saints are being told that the end of the killing is not yet finished. Only one martyr, Antipas, is named in the book (2:13), but both John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29) and James the brother of John (Acts 12:1–2) were beheaded, as was Paul under Nero. Josephus tells of the stoning of James the Lord’s brother about A.D. 65 (*Ant.* 20.9.1 §200), and Peter was also martyred (the tradition that he was crucified upside down cannot be proven) under Nero. While recent studies have shown that the popularly held notion of thousands of martyrs in the first hundred years of the church is a gross exaggeration, there were many (see the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, written in the mid-second century). Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) tells of hundreds of Christians fed to animals, crucified, and burned alive in the Neronian persecution. Here Christ is telling the believers that this persecution will continue until the appointed time.

The saints soon to be martyred are described as καὶ οἱ σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν (*kai hoi syndouloi autōn kai hoi adelphoi autōn*, both their fellow slaves and their brothers). It is unlikely that these are two separate groups, and the second καὶ is probably exegetical, meaning “fellow slaves, namely their brothers.” The two descriptions of the future martyrs detail their vertical and horizontal relationships. First, they are God’s slaves along with the martyred saints, and second, they are their brothers and sisters in the faith. Their God-determined lot (see also 1 Pet. 1:6, which says the saints should “rejoice, though now for a short time *if necessary* [meaning ‘if God deems it necessary’] you may suffer in all kinds of trials”) will be a “fellowship in suffering” (the σύν compound; see Phil. 3:10). The idea of a δοῦλος is particularly significant here and is closely connected to “the slaves of our God” who are to be “sealed” in 7:3. The word group appears 182 times in the NT and never means what we call a “servant.” As Tuente (*NIDNTT* 3:593) says, the emphasis lies “on the service being that of a slave, i.e. on a repressive or at least dependent form of service under the complete control of a superior.” It is used metaphorically by Paul and here by John to stress the absolute dependence and service of believers toward God, who owns them as their master.¹

¹ Osborne, G. R. (2002). *Revelation* (pp. 283–290). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

How Do We Rest in the Face of Horrible Calamity?

John Piper, Founder & Teacher, desiringGod.org

What happens to our emotions if we really believe in the sovereign wisdom and goodness of God in horrible persecution?

This question rises for me for two reasons.

One is because of God's will for our emotions revealed in the Bible, and the other is what I see happening in the hearts of God's people today. They are not always the same. One of my aims is to help today's saints experience more of God's aims for our emotions.

Here is the most recent example in my experience.

Refreshed by Horrible Persecutions?

In Revelation 6 John saw "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God." These are martyrs for Jesus in heaven. "They cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood?'" (verse 10).

Since they are in heaven, where "the spirits of the righteous are made perfect" ([Hebrews 12:23](#)), we should be slow to call this cry sinful. But God directs their emotions from this rising sense of urgency to a different heart-experience.

The martyrs were "told to *rest* a little longer." This is an emotionally peaceful and refreshing word (*anapauō*). We can feel the connotations in these examples:

- "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*" ([Matthew 11:28](#)). - "They *refreshed* my spirit" ([1 Corinthians 16:18](#)). - "The hearts of the saints have been *refreshed* through you" ([Philemon 1:7](#)). - "*Refresh* my heart in Christ" ([Philemon 1:20](#)).

But here's the striking thing emotionally.

They were explicitly made aware of the horrible persecutions on earth. They were told to rest and be refreshed "until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been."

This is emotionally jarring.

The Key to Their Rest

Note four things: 1) They are told to rest and be refreshed; 2) They are told that while they are resting, people are being killed, some by beheading ([Revelation 20:4](#)); 3) They are told that while they are resting, these dying people are their "brothers"; 4) And they are told that the number of these killings is appointed by God.

So we are confronted with this real, practical, emotional question: Does God really expect these saints to step back from their urgency about immediate vengeance, and rest while their brothers are being horribly killed?

Yes. He does. He would not have told these perfected saints to rest if he did not think it was possible and right.

The key to their ability to rest is precisely the sovereign wisdom and goodness of God implicit in the statement of [Revelation 6:11](#) — there is an appointed number of martyrs yet to come. “Rest until the number of your brothers is complete, who are to be killed.”

Deep Soul-Rest in God’s Wisdom and Goodness

What this means for our emotions is that *deep confidence in God’s sovereign wisdom and goodness is profoundly transforming to our emotional reaction to horrible things*. We are made able, in a supernatural way, to have a soul-rest in God amid terrible calamity.

This is not the same as indifference. It is not callousness or lack of compassion. It is not the absence of tears. But it is rest. It is a sweet repose on Jesus.

*The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes.*

There is a profound emotional “repose” — a deep restfulness of soul — even as we know the horrors of calamity and persecution — including our own.

[John Piper](#) ([@JohnPiper](#)) is founder and teacher of [desiringGod.org](#) and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of [more than 50 books](#), including [Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist](#) and most recently [Coronavirus and Christ](#).

Thy Kingdom Come by John Calvin



The second petition is: that God's Kingdom come [Matt. 6:10]. Even though it contains nothing new, it is with good reason kept separate from the first petition; for if we consider our languor in the greatest matters of all, it behooves us to extend our discussion in order to drive home something that ought to have been thoroughly known of itself. Therefore, after we have been bidden to ask God to subject and finally completely destroy everything that casts a stain upon his holy name, there is now added another similar and almost identical entreaty: that "his Kingdom come" [Matt. 6:10].

But even though the definition of this Kingdom was put before us previously, I now briefly repeat it: God reigns where men, both by denial of themselves and by contempt of the world and of earthly life, pledge themselves to his righteousness in order to aspire to a heavenly life. Thus there are two parts to this Kingdom: first, that God by the power of his Spirit correct all the desires of the flesh which by squadrons war against him; second, that he shape all our thoughts in obedience to his rule.

Therefore, no others keep a lawful order in this petition but those who begin with themselves, that is, to be cleansed of all corruptions that disturb the peaceful state of God's Kingdom and sully its purity. Now, because the word of God is like a royal scepter, we are bidden here to entreat him to bring all men's minds and hearts into voluntary obedience to it. This happens when he manifests the working of his word through the secret inspiration of his Spirit in order that it may stand forth in the degree of honor that it deserves. Afterward we should descend to the impious, who stubbornly and with desperate madness resist his authority. Therefore God sets up his Kingdom by humbling the whole world, but in different ways. For he tames the wantonness of some, breaks the untamable pride of others. We must daily desire that God gather churches unto himself from all parts of the earth; that he spread and increase them in number; that he adorn them with gifts; that he establish a lawful order among them; on the other hand, that he cast down all enemies of pure teaching and religion; that he scatter their counsels and crush their efforts. From this it appears that zeal for daily progress is not enjoined upon us in vain, for it never goes so well with human affairs that the filthiness of vices is shaken and washed away, and full integrity flowers and grows. But its fullness is delayed to the final coming of Christ when, as Paul teaches, "God will be all in all" [1 Cor. 15:28].

Thus this prayer ought to draw us back from worldly corruptions, which so separate us from God that his Kingdom does not thrive within us. At the same time it ought to kindle zeal for mortification of the flesh; finally, it ought to instruct us in bearing the cross. For it is in this way that God wills to spread his Kingdom. But we should not take it ill that the outward man is in decay, provided the inner man is renewed [2 Cor. 4:16]! For this is the condition of God's Kingdom: that while we submit to his righteousness, he makes us sharers in his glory. This comes to pass when, with ever-increasing splendor, he displays his light and truth, by which the darkness and falsehoods of Satan's kingdom vanish, are extinguished, and pass away. Meanwhile, he protects his own, guides them by the help of his Spirit into uprightness, and strengthens them to perseverance. But he overthrows the wicked conspiracies of enemies, unravels their stratagems and deceits, opposes their malice, represses their obstinacy, until at last he slays Antichrist with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroys all ungodliness by the brightness of his coming [2 Thess. 2:8].

What Does It Mean to Pray ‘Thy Kingdom Come’?

[Erik Raymond](#) | August 1, 2018

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/mean-pray-thy-kingdom-come/>

It’s as humbling as it is fascinating to consider that God advances his kingdom agenda through the prayers of his people. Jesus instructs his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come ([Matt. 6:10a](#)). And the coming kingdom is the undying burden of God’s people. Those who love the King eagerly yearn for his kingdom to come.

But what does it mean to pray for it to come? Here are three aspects of this cry for the kingdom to come.

Cry of Loyalty

Some people have described the kingdom as *God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule*. I think this is a helpful orientation for this prayer. This kingdom has a physical and a spiritual aspect to it. There is a driving desire to return securely to Eden where God is rightly honored and his people are blessed with unimpeded access to God and his gifts.

Through our prayers, it is as if the Holy Spirit lifts our chins above the earthly horizon to see the fleet of God’s coming kingdom advancing on the open sea. And we cry, ‘Make haste! Come, O King and kingdom!’

When we pray, “Your kingdom come” there is a real sense of yearning and loyalty. We are anticipating the coming kingdom, on board with God’s agenda and that we love the King himself. Those who love the King eagerly yearn for his kingdom.

And through our prayers, it’s as if the Holy Spirit lifts our chins above our earthly horizon to see the fleet of God’s coming kingdom advancing on the open sea. And we cry, “Make haste! Come, O King and kingdom!”

This is also a convicting word, because we cannot cry “Thy kingdom come” while promoting our kingdom. Sin is an expression of disloyalty to the King. It is trading of crowns. It salutes the flag of self over the flag of Christ. Therefore, the cry of loyalty is also a cry of repentance. We want the kingdom to come in the world around us and also in us.

So we pray: *O Lord, I see my disloyalty to you and hate it! Incline my heart to love you and your gracious and just administration so that I can eagerly long for your kingdom to come in this world!*

Cry of Treason

The word *treason* gets tossed around liberally these days. Strictly speaking, treason is a crime of betraying one’s own country by breaking the law, and often by attempting to overthrow the government or kill its leader.

When I talk about this prayer being a cry of treason I mean that Jesus is teaching his followers to pray for the overthrow of the kingdom of this world, the coup of its leader, and the establishment of a new king. This is a cry of dissatisfaction. It wants a chance.

But, please note, I am not talking about the overthrow of the U.S. government—or any other natural government. Instead, I’m talking about the spiritual government of this world, led by Satan. He is the spiritual king of this world. Scripture calls him the god of this world ([2 Cor. 4:4](#)). He has a ruling seat ([Rev. 2:13](#)). His kingdom is darkness ([Col. 1:13](#)). He planted his flag in the ground in [Genesis 3](#). He has set up dominion by storming the castle of our minds and hearts ([Eph. 2:1-3](#); [2 Cor. 4:1-4](#)).

When we pray for the kingdom of God to come we are pleading for the kingdom of Satan to be toppled. Like is so often the case when a tyrant is displaced, we want his statues to be defaced, toppled, and dragged in open view. We want Satan and all of his demonic scheming, tactical assaults, deadly seduction, hissing lies, and destructive systems to be shattered!

We know it is a matter of time, because on the cross the kingdom of God burst into the world with a head-crushing blow to the serpent. “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” ([Col. 2:15](#)).

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever” ([1 John 2:15-17](#)).

Praying for the kingdom to come is a beautiful subversive prayer that melds faithfulness with fervency.

So we pray: *Lord, we are not loyal to the god of this world. We resist his laws and rules at every turn. We will not salute his flag nor genuflect before his statues; we are yours! We are loyal to your good and just government. Your kingdom come! Your will be done!*

Cry of Conquering

As we await the full realization of the inaugurated kingdom, we cry for the kingdom to come and conquer souls.

Ever since the garden of Eden, we have turned our hearts from upon God and towards ourselves and our pleasures. It is a spiritual ignorance, even a darkened ignorance. Thomas Watson observed,

Ignorance is a black veil drawn over the mind. Men by nature have a deep reach for the things of the world, and yet are ignorant of the things of God. In [1 Samuel 11.2](#) Nahash the Ammonite would make a covenant with Israel to thrust out their right eyes. Since the fall our left eye remains, a deep insight into worldly matters, but our right eye is thrust out, we have no saving knowledge of God. Ignorance draws the curtains around the soul so that we are blind and in darkness.

But, when God awakens a person to behold the glory of Christ, he conquers their rebellious hearts and makes them his. Those who formerly would not give Christ honor but pledged allegiance to another ([John 19:14-15](#)) are brought into the kingdom of Christ ([Col. 1:13-14](#)).

When we pray for the kingdom of God to come we are praying that God would conquer souls! And that he would shine the kingdom of grace upon the hearts of men, women, and children so that they would see and savor the kingdom of glory!

So we pray: *“Lord, your kingdom come, your will be done! Conquer hearts by your Holy Spirit to set up the administration of grace in their hearts! Let them see the beauty and worth of your glory! Like Narnia melt the ice of winter and give way to the buds of grace and the dawning day of the kingdom of glory! We know you can do this and delight to do it because you’ve done it to us!”*