

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

THE SECOND COMING

by the Rev. Norman H. Reuter

The idea of the Lord coming to us gives us a warm feeling; it makes us feel safe. We ask for it every day when saying the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come." What do you think about when you pray for the Lord's kingdom to come? Come from where, and to whom? Just what is meant by His Kingdom?

Finally, don't we have to ask ourselves one more question? Why do we talk about the Lord, or His kingdom, coming? Isn't the Lord always here, near us? Yes, of course He is, or He wouldn't be loving, kind and caring. But it doesn't always seem that way to us, does it? There are times when the Lord seems far away, when we feel very alone, deserted, unprotected. Do you sometimes, then, go off by yourself and ask the Lord to come near to you? Do you pray that His kingdom shall come, making you feel safe and happy again? Often that is very hard to do, for frequently when we feel so alone we are angry—angry with someone, maybe even the Lord. When we are angry we can't make ourselves pray to the Lord. We find it hard to ask Him to send His kingdom of truth to govern our bad states, our evils, which make us feel alone, apart from the Lord and His mercy.

Don't we at such times have to ask *ourselves* a question before we make a request of the Lord, before we pray to Him? Don't we have to ask what made us angry, what made us feel apart and alone? Did the anger come from the Lord, or did it come from evil spirits—from an unpleasant, even hateful, feeling we let those evil spirits create in us? Surely the Lord doesn't send anger or hateful feelings into our hearts! But they come from somewhere! When we recognize that they come from hell, from evil spirits who love to make us feel unhappy, alone, and separated from the Lord, then we have discovered whom our real enemy is, who makes us feel unhappy, alone and far from the Lord. Anger, loneliness, and all bad feelings come from hell, come when we turn away from the Lord's kingdom of love and truth, when we let selfishness, anger, and other bad feelings or actions rule over us. The Lord really is near, but we can't feel Him near because we have turned away from His teachings—His rule of kindness, thoughtfulness of others. We have to turn back to the Lord, to thoughts about what He teaches us, and even more importantly, to doing what He tells us is right. Then He will seem to come near to us again.

Really what happens is that we go back to Him; go back to letting our minds and hearts be ruled by His commandments, instead of by the anger or revenge of evil spirits from hell. Turning back to the Lord we come under the protection of His kingdom of truth and love. So we feel safe and wanted once more. Remember, the Lord never turns away from us; but we sometimes turn our backs on Him. Then it seems that He is not near, although He tells us in His Word that He is always at the door, knocking. We have to turn around, open the doors of our mind and heart, and let Him come in. The Lord always comes in, is there, when we invite Him.

The idea of how we allow the Lord to come to us to help us, when we are ready and willing, fits not only for each one of us, but for the world as a whole. He has never left the people of this earth alone, without His loving care. There has always been a Word to show how to find happiness, and thus heaven. But there have been times when it seemed like He had forgotten the people of this world. Before He was born in Bethlehem, when He came to this world as a little babe on that first Christmas day, nations were fighting each other, hatred, violence, revenge and jealousy were in people's hearts, and much unhappiness was everywhere. The world was not like the Lord's kingdom of sharing and cheerful helpfulness. He seemed far away. This was because most people had turned away from the Lord and would not listen to the teachings of His Word. Good people, however, longed for His coming. They turned to His Word, and waited for the prophecies about His coming to save people to happen. This invitation in the hearts of good people (like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men) brought the Lord into the world to help and to save all who wanted Him—all who were willing to turn a listening ear and a learning heart to Him.

Now, this coming of the Lord as a person on earth was needed because the teaching He had already given in His Word, the Old Testament, was either unknown, ignored, forgotten, or so twisted by men's ideas that it could no longer show most people the way to heaven—could not save them from their sins, which are what prevent one from enjoying heaven. So the Lord sent His love and wisdom into a babe who was to grow up as the Savior of the world, a Light to lighten the darkness in people's minds. This coming of the Lord in a mortal body of flesh, also in the teachings of the New Testament, is called the First Coming. By this coming the Lord did wonderful things for all mankind as their Savior and Redeemer.

But in time people turned away from this Word too, twisted its meaning so it could not be properly understood. Again they lost their way to heaven. This is why the Lord had to come a second time; come to make His Second Coming to save us all from the power of evil. He did this by giving a new Word—a Word to show us how to properly understand the former Word in the Old and New Testaments. But He Himself did not come again to the earth in a body of flesh. He had done this. And from the New Testament everyone could understand that He was their Savior. But most people couldn't understand that He who had been in the Holy Land wasn't dead on a cross. They didn't think of Him as alive in heaven, the only Ruler of heaven and earth. Most peoples' ideas about Him and the next world—the spiritual world—were so wrong that again they could not understand how to prepare for heaven, thus how to find real and lasting happiness.

So, instead of the Lord coming again into the world, He led a man—Emanuel Swedenborg—while he was still in this world, into the spiritual world. Swedenborg could then record for the sake of all of us what he saw and learned there. Now we can know what that world is like, in heaven and hell and in the world of spirits. By seeing into the spiritual world, Swedenborg could also be taught by the Lord how to explain that there is a spiritual sense in His Word, in all parts of it, and how that sense always teaches about the other world, about the Lord and His providence (how He guides us to heaven) even when the stories are about things in this world. Through these teachings given by means of Swedenborg, but from the Lord, the Lord has come to us by making it possible for us to come to Him. We come to Him, come to know about Him, through the understanding of the teachings of all of His Word, in the Old and New Testaments

and in the Writings for the New Church. This we are told is the final revelation out of His Word, the crowning achievement of the constant effort to lead all people to heaven.

You can become part of this new church by living and loving its teachings. If you do, the Lord will come to dwell in your heart and mind in a way He has never been able to come to people before, and you can become sons and daughters of His kingdom—the kingdom you pray for when you say: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the earth.”

Text: Matthew 6:10