

**“Along with the ‘already here’ there obviously remains a ‘not yet’ aspect with regard to God’s present rule on earth.”**

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pg. 29

### The Kingdom “Not Yet”

Knowing that we are God’s beloved, and that he desires us to be within his kingdom, why do we still experience so much evil in our world?

#### Scripture:

For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel. Colossians 1: 9-14, 21-23

#### Voice of wisdom:

“One thing that may mislead us about the meaning of ‘at hand’ in Jesus’ basic message is the fact that *other* ‘kingdoms’ are still present on earth along with the kingdom of the heavens. They too are ‘at hand.’ That is the human condition. Persons other than God, such as you or I, are still allowed on earth to have a ‘say’ that is contrary to his will. A kingdom of darkness is here, certainly, and the kingdoms of many individuals who are still ‘trying to run their own show.’

“All of this God still permits. And the lack of human unity in intelligent love under God not only leaves us at the mercy of man-made disasters, such as wars, famine, and oppression, but also prevents our dealing successfully with many so-called natural evils, such as disease, scarcity, and weather-related disasters. So, along with the ‘already here’ there obviously remains a ‘not yet’ aspect with regard to God’s present rule on earth.

“The present situation of kingdoms in conflict is one eloquently portrayed in the Twenty-third Psalm: ‘In the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.’ Yes, but the ‘evil’ is very much here to be feared. And ‘Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.’ The ‘enemies’ are certainly here, but we are safe in God’s hands even though other ‘kingdoms’ loom over us and threaten us.”

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pgs. 22-30)

## Study 8

### Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at the “not-yet” aspect of God’s kingdom?

“...we are safe in God’s hands even though other ‘kingdoms’ loom over us and threaten us.” What are some of the other kingdoms that may be looming over you? Do you feel safe in God’s hands? If you do, try to articulate why you do. If you don’t, examine some of the reasons you don’t and talk to God about them honestly and transparently. Consider how your picture of God may affect how safe you feel. Might you have some false narratives about God?

### Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

Take some time this week to explore your picture of God. Try finishing the sentence, “God is...because....” in as many ways as you can think of, exploring not only what you think about God, but what you are basing those thoughts on. For example, “God is relational because the Trinity is three persons, in relationship.” Or, “God is beauty because he created cherry blossoms.” If you have discovered that you really do not feel safe in God’s hands, try to use words that might shed light on any false narratives you have.

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place ([dwellingplaceindy.org](http://dwellingplaceindy.org)), and as a student of The Renovare Institute ([renovare.org](http://renovare.org)). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke ([recess.racke@gmail.com](mailto:recess.racke@gmail.com))