
THE MODEL PRAYER

(Part 1)

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QUESTIONS:

- 1) What interesting prayer did the Rabbis in Israel have?
- 2) What do you notice about the pronouns in the model prayer?
- 3) In what sense is this prayer of Mt 6 a "model" prayer?
- 4) What makes this model prayer "timeless"?
- 5) What does the model begin with?
- 6) In the Bible, what was used to indicate the kind of person a man was?
- 7) Is it scriptural to pray, "Thy kingdom come" today?
- 8) What is "parallelism"?

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ "In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

One of the marvels of God is to speak vast and infinite themes in few words. No where is this more obvious than this model prayer!

THE CONTEXT

Matthew 6:5-15 composes the longest section in the Bible concerning prayer.

Up to this point in Matthew 6 Jesus has been telling the people how not to do things:

- **Don't give to be seen** (vv1-4)
- **Don't pray to be seen** (vv5-6)
- **Don't use vain repetitions** (vv7-8)

In contrast, now, He teaches us how to pray.

Since we cannot use vain repetitions as the heathen do when they pray, therefore, Jesus says:
"Here's how I want you to pray ..."

NOTE: It is ironic that this model prayer comes immediately after Jesus taught against vain repetitions because no prayer has been repeated more often than this one ... often without understanding.

THE VALUE OF PRAYER

Now, Jesus knew the value of prayer. Often He would arise a great while before dawn and go somewhere to pray. Sometimes He would spend all night in prayer.

So, when Jesus says, "*After this manner*" pray, He knew what He was talking about!

The Scriptures exhort:

1 Thessalonians 5:17

¹⁷ pray without ceasing,

BUT, if we don't know how to pray, or what to pray for, it does us little good to keep on praying.

The disciples realized this and they came to Jesus asking for guidance:

Luke 11:1

¹ Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Jesus, then, is teaching those common people on the mountain the proper way to pray to God.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Now, to better appreciate what Jesus taught in this passage on prayer, it will help to know something about the Jewish outlook on prayer.

The Jews believed prayer should incorporate certain elements:

- Loving praise (Ps 51:15)
- Gratitude and thanksgiving (Jonah 2:9)
- A sense of awe and reverence for God's holiness (Isa 6:5)
- A desire to obey God (Ps 119:172)
- Confession of sin (Ps 26:6)
- Perseverance
- Humility (Lk 22:42)
- Unselfishness

The Jews had a sense of community which we really don't understand. Their prayers encompassed the whole, not the individual.

The rabbis had an interesting prayer:

"Hear not, O Lord, the prayer of the traveler."

The traveler might pray for good weather, accommodating skies, an easy journey. The rabbis were saying:

"Lord, don't hear that prayer, because that's one guy on one trip praying for a fair day, when everyone else in that part of the world knows their crops need rain."

Most of us pray rather selfishly with a big list of:

- Needs
- Wants

We don't really encompass the whole. Sometimes we must sacrifice what is best for us that the whole might benefit.

Notice the pronouns in the model prayer. They are all plural:

- "Our Father"
- "Our daily bread"
- "Our debts"
- "Our debtors"

Prayer is to be unselfish. You cannot pray like Jesus taught and be selfish.

All of these things were part of the traditional prayer life of the Jews. But something went wrong. They became hypocrites (Mt 6:5). They were:

- Making a public display
- Using vain repetitions

And so Jesus teaches in order to correct these perversions.

THIS PRAYER IS A "MODEL"

This prayer has often been called "**The Lord's prayer.**"

- That is an accurate title in the sense that the Lord gave this prayer, but not in the sense that He prayed this prayer.
- This prayer asks for forgiveness and Jesus certainly had no sins to be forgiven.

Some prefer to call this "**The disciples' prayer**" because Jesus gave it to His disciples.

I believe it is more accurate to call this "**The model prayer,**" because that's really what it is. It's simply a model to pattern prayer after.

A MODEL TO FOLLOW

It's a model ... that's important to remember.

If we begin to look at this passage as containing a prayer that should be "recited," then we miss the point that Jesus was teaching. He never intended that men recite this prayer.

I believe this because:

- This prayer is recorded twice (Mt 6; Lk 11) but the wording varies. If this prayer was to be memorized and recited He would not have given two wordings.
- In Lk 11, the disciple requested, "Teach us to pray." They did not say, "Teach us a prayer."
- In Mt 6 Jesus says, "After this manner therefore pray ..."
- In Mt 6:7 Jesus just warned the people not to use vain repetitions. It does not seem logical that He would turn right around and give them a prayer to repeat.
- There is no record of anyone in the NT repeating this prayer. It's a model; a skeleton to add flesh to.

Remember this because it will be very important a little later.

A SUITABLE MODEL

This prayer is a "model" for all prayers:

1) Model in brevity

It contains only 66 words; can be said in 1 minute.

2) Model in scope

It deals with both physical & spiritual.

3) Model in simplicity

No word is used that a child could not understand and yet its depth is profound.

4) Model in directness

There are no vague, or ambiguous expressions. Each petition contains a direct and precise request.

5) Model as to the manner men should approach God

It describes the attitude of reverence and faith which we must have in prayer.

6) Model as to the order which we should present things

God came first, ourselves come last. It has always been this way; it will continue to be this way.

7) Model as to what we should ask for

This prayer mentions only the things we need.

8) Describes the adoration due to God

9) Model as to who may pray

The petitions of this prayer cannot be prayed by men lost in their sins:

- "Our Father" – envisions a child of God!
- "Thy kingdom come" – envisions a friend of the kingdom.
- "Thy will be done" – envisions an obedient disciple.

THIS PRAYER IS "TIMELESS"

This model prayer that Jesus gave is a "timeless" model. It is suited for all men of all nations for all time.

It is timeless because:

1) The words used which never change from age to age.

This is not true of all words. But here Jesus purposefully used words that would never change with time.

2) The words used which never change from language to language / from culture to culture.

Some words lose their full force when being translated into another language, but not the words of the model prayer.

Every man in every nation knows:

- what a Father is
- what a kingdom is
- what bread is
- what forgiveness is
- temptation is
- evil is

3) The true needs of man never change.

Every race of man in every country needs:

- to hallow God's name
- enter the kingdom
- do the will of God
- daily bread
- forgiveness
- guidance
- deliverance

NOTE: Had mere men given a "model prayer" I assure you it would have been suited:

- only for Jews
- only for the 1st century
- only for men
- only for the land of Palestine

ANALYZING THE PRAYER

As we begin to analyze this prayer we soon find that it covers everything we could possibly need. It can be looked at in so many different ways that it boggles the mind.

1) Shows our relationship to God

- **"our Father"** – father / child relation
- **"hallowed by thy name"** – deity / worshipper
- **"thy kingdom come"** – king / subject
- **"thy will be done"** – master / servant
- **"give us our daily bread"** – benefactor / beneficiary
- **"forgive us"** – savior / sinner
- **"lead us not into temptation"** – guide / pilgrim

2) Defines the attitude we should have

- "Our" – unselfish spirit
- "Father" – family spirit
- "Hallowed be thy name" – reverent spirit
- "Thy will be done" – submissive spirit
- "Give us our daily bread" – dependent spirit
- "Forgive us" – penitent spirit
- "Lead us not into temptation" – humble spirit
- "Thine is the kingdom" – triumphant spirit
- "And the glory" – exultant spirit

3) Can be divided into two categories

GOD'S GLORY	MAN'S NEED
<i>"hallowed be thy name"</i> <i>"thy kingdom come"</i> <i>"thy will be done"</i>	<i>"give us our daily bread"</i> <i>"forgive us"</i> <i>"lead us not into temptation"</i>

4) Reveals the Godhead

- "hallowed be thy name" – Father
 - "Thy kingdom come" – Son (the King)
 - "Thy will be done" – Spirit (through the word)
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- "give us daily bread" – Father (creator & life giver)
 - "forgive us" – Son (shed blood)
 - "deliver us" – Spirit (through word)

5) Deals with past, present, future

- *"our daily bread"* – present
- *"our debts"* – past
- *"lead us not"* – future

6) It focuses on six great concepts

- The worship of the Father (v9)
 - The kingdom of the Father (v10)
 - The will of the Father (v10)
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- The sustenance of the Father (v11)
 - The graciousness of the Father (v12)
 - The protection of the Father (v13)

The information Jesus packed into these few words is astounding!

FIRST THINGS FIRST

A significant point which we must notice is the order of our petitions and requests.

We do not begin a prayer to God with our list of wants and needs.

- Not forgiveness
- Not blessings
- Not guidance

If we follow the model Jesus gave, we must **begin with praise and honor to God.**

Saints of old regarded prayer as a form of worship. They usually did not begin a prayer by asking God to give them something. They began by praising God:

1) Jeremiah (Jer 32)

Jeremiah is distressed over Israel. But he begins his prayer by speaking of God's majesty, attribute after attribute.

2) Daniel (Dan 9)

Daniel was in a foreign land and greatly depressed because the Jews were in captivity. But when he begins praying, you begin to wonder if Daniel remembered where he was at!

His prayer begins with a declaration of God's majesty, glory and sovereignty

If we think prayer is only for our benefit, we've missed the point. That's why we get so confused:

James 4:3

³ You ask and do not receive, because **you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.**

The reason we pray and the reason God answers is to put God and His glory on display.

John 14:13

¹³ "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, **that the Father may be glorified** in the Son.

"OUR FATHER"

Now let us examine each portion of this model prayer in detail.

Matthew 6:9

⁹ "... Our Father which art in heaven ...

"Father" – declares an intimate relation with God.

The Jews were very distant from God. They even refused to pronounce His name. When Jesus used this term it awakened them to something lost long ago.

When Jesus prayed, He used "Father" more than 70 times. Jesus prayed only one time without using the term "Father."

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ ... "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

THE IMPLICATIONS

To think of God as our Father is:

1) Very sobering

He is a Father in the sense of how fathers ought to be, not of how some fathers are!

a) ***He will not ignore our sins.*** Earthly fathers might ignore our sins.

Acts 17:30

³⁰ "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

b) ***He will chastise us when we sin.*** Earthly fathers might not chastise us.

Hebrews 12:6-7

⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

c) ***He will insist on obedience.*** Earthly fathers sometimes tolerate disobedience.

Matthew 7:21

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

- d) ***He will insist on growth.*** Earthly fathers are satisfied simply with life, let alone growth.

John 15:2

² "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

To think of God as our Father is:

2) Very comforting

With God as our Father, many problems are solved:

a) The matter of obedience is solved

My children had to obey me although I was an unworthy father. We are to obey God and He is an infinitely worthy Father.

b) The matter of worry is solved

Our fathers provided for our needs and we never worried about it. God our Father will care for our needs without us having to worry (Mt 6:33).

c) The matter of fear is solved

Since God is our Father we need not live in constant dread of Him. He loves us and cares for us far more than any earthly father could.

"WHICH ART IN HEAVEN"

Matthew 6:9

⁹ "... Our Father which art in heaven ...

"in heaven"

There are several things we notice about this:

1) Although God is our Father, still He is "in heaven."

We must not become so casual with God that we view Him as just a big buddy.

ILL: At a Bible college a student lead opening prayer at the daily "chapel service." He began the prayer by saying, "*Hi Daddy.*"

2) Since He is "in heaven" He is able to help us!

Many parents love their children, but they often lack the power to do what is needed. But God is a "heavenly" Father and His powers are limitless!

Daniel 3:17

¹⁷ [The three Hebrew boys declared] ... **our God** whom we serve **is able** to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

When we pray "our Father which art in heaven" we immediately place the love of God and the power of God side by side.

3) Jesus strikes a contrast between the idol gods of heathens who dwell in temples made with hands.

Ours is a heavenly God:

Acts 7:48

⁴⁸ "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands ...

4) Jesus strikes a contrast between the Pharisees and the people of God.

The Jews prided themselves that because Abraham was their forefather there was no chance they could be lost.

Matthew 3:9

⁹ "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

To pray, "Our Father which art in heaven" reveals a trust in God rather than earthly pedigree.

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"

Matthew 6:9

⁹ "... Hallowed be Thy name.

Today we are being told that "*there's nothing in a name*" – especially when we discuss the name of the church.

Q: If names aren't important, then why pray, "*Hallowed be Thy name*"? Why did God warn men not to take His name in vain (Ex 20:7)?

In Bible days names were more than titles – they meant something.

ILL: My name means something. "*George*" means "*farmer*" in Greek. (No telling what it means in some other language.) Your name means something too.

In the Bible:

- A name indicated what kind of person a man was.
- A name indicated the function one would serve in life.
- Parents would name a child to signify the destiny of the child.
- God would often change the names of men (Abram, Sarai, Jacob), or decide before birth what name a child should have (John, Jesus).
- A Hebrew name designated a person's character, his nature and his personality.

Psalms 9:10

¹⁰ And those who know **Your name** will put their trust in You; ...

This does not mean those who know God's name is "Jehovah" will trust in Him.

(Many sinners know God's name is Jehovah, but they don't trust in Him.)

This means those who know the character, nature and personality of God will put their trust in Him.

Psalms 20:7

⁷ Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

In time of trouble Israel would not just remember that God's name was "Jehovah." Rather, they will recall God's nature, character and personality and that would renew their confidence!

"HALLOWING" GOD'S NAME

Q: What does it mean to "hallow" the name of God?

"Hallowed" – "sanctified, set apart, holy"

To pray, "Hallowed be Thy name," is to petition:

- That God be given the unique place which His nature and character deserve and demand.
- That God would be treated differently from all other beings.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

How do we reverence God's name?

1) By knowing the kind of God He really is

The heathens invented gods who:

- Fought wars
- Had quarrels
- Felt hatred
- Seduced each other
- Committed adulteries
- Were immoral
- Were perverted

When men invent gods, they create them with the same attributes they themselves have. Likewise, men begin to develop the same traits of character as the gods they believe in.

(That's why heathen religions become so vile.)

But our God is:

- Holy
- Good
- Just
- Sinless
- Righteous
- Kind
- Pure
- Omnipotent
- Omnipresent
- Omniscient

To know what He is like is to reverence Him!

(To reverence God's name we:)

2) Must live obediently

When we claim to be servants of the most high and holy God, we obligate ourselves to live holy lives. Otherwise He will be blasphemed!

Romans 2:23-24

²³ ... do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

²⁴ For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," ...

When we pray to God that His name be honored, or revered, we bind ourselves to obey His Law and spread the gospel.

It is hypocritical to pray for His honor, yet refuse to obey His will.

"THY KINGDOM COME"

Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. ...

All my life I have been taught that Christians today cannot pray this prayer because the kingdom (church) has already come and we cannot pray for something to come which we already have.

We have developed an unnecessary phobia. Jesus never intended this prayer be recited verbatim. He gave this as a model to follow ("After this manner pray").

BUT, what did Jesus really intend when He said we should pray for the kingdom to come?

"come" (ἔρχομαι) – "I come," or "I go"

Let me give you some examples of how this very word is translated in other passages:

Matthew 12:9

⁹ Now when He had departed from there, He **went** (ἔρχομαι) into their synagogue.

John 4:45

⁴⁵ So when He **came** (ἔρχομαι) to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had **gone** (ἔρχομαι) to the feast.

Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray that the kingdom of God might "**go forth**" to places where it has never gone before. Or, if you please, to "**come**" to people who are lost.

Jamison, Fausset, Brown:

"... [the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost] ... was a glorious "coming" of this kingdom. But it is still to come, and this petition, "Thy kingdom come" must not cease to ascend so long as one subject of it remains to be brought in." (p. 40).

Pulpit Commentary:

"The Messianic kingdom, the Church of Christ, the net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind. The prayer is a missionary prayer. We pray that God may enlarge the borders of his church; that the heathen may be gathered in; that the stone cut out without hands may, according to his Word, speedily become a mountain and fill the whole earth" (p. 242).

Jesus is simply teaching men to pray for the advancement and good of the kingdom (church). Who would argue against this and say we should not pray like that?

"THY WILL BE DONE"

(Part 1)

Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ ... Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

It is significant that *"Thy will be done on earth"* immediately follows the petition *"Thy kingdom come."*

We have here a double petition called *"parallelism."* The Hebrews would tend to say things twice.

(They would say something one way and then repeat it another way so as to explain what they said the first time.)

Almost any verse in the Book of Psalms reveals this practice of parallelism.

Psalms 23:1

¹ The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

Q: The Lord is my shepherd. What does this mean?

A: "I shall not want" for anything.

Psalms 46:1

¹ God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.

Q: God is our refuge and strength. What does this mean?

A: He is "a very present help in trouble."

Matthew 6:10

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Q: We pray that the kingdom will go forth into all the world. What will this mean?

A: It means that God's will shall be done in the earth as it is in heaven.

The will of God is done on the earth when the kingdom comes.

- When the church (kingdom) came to this city, the will of God began to be done in this city.
- When we send preachers to Africa and they start a church in Africa, the will of God is being done in Africa!

NOTE: *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* does not mean that all men on earth will be obedient to God's will.

Somehow men have gotten the idea that when the kingdom arrives:

- Every human being will submit to God's will.
- There will be total world peace without any war.
- Earth will be restored to paradise.
- There will not be a wicked person left on this planet.
- In effect: the kingdom and wicked men cannot coexist.

To these people the presence of evil is proof that:

- **The kingdom has not yet come, and**
- **That God's will is not being done in the earth**

But God's kingdom has come (the church) and His will is being done in spite of wicked men.

Daniel 4:35

³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing;
 He does according to His will in the army of heaven
 And among the inhabitants of the earth.
 No one can restrain His hand
 Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

When God's earthly kingdom (Israel) existed there was plenty of violence and plenty of wicked men, but God's kingdom still existed and His will was still accomplished.

Today, men try to resist God's spiritual kingdom (the church) and His will, but God's will is still performed in spite of these wicked men!

"THY WILL BE DONE"

(Part 2)

This portion of the prayer becomes very significant! There are many false doctrines being taught that oppose this prayer:

1) Denominationalism

There is an idea that "good people from all denominations will go to heaven."

- When we all get to heaven, will we be divided into different groups, or will we all be one?
- If we will all be one in heaven, we should all be one on earth ("Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven").

2) God has a law for Christians

Some men are teaching that Christians are under grace and that there is no law which a Christian is obligated to obey.

But, God's will is His law and Jesus told us to pray that His will be done "*on earth as it is in heaven.*"

1 Corinthians 9:21

²¹ to those who are without law, [I became] as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law;

3) Unity in diversity

Some teach we should unite with every church in town no matter what they teach, or practice. They say, "Let us have unity in spite of diversity."

God's will is not practiced that way in heaven and Jesus said we should pray that His will be practiced on earth as it is in heaven.

The old restorers use to say:

- **In matters of faith there must be unity.**
- **In matters of opinion there must be liberty.**
- **In all matters there must be charity.**

"ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN"

To know how God's will is to be done on earth, we must first know how it is done in heaven.
How do angels do God's will?

- Unwaveringly
- Completely
- Sincerely
- Willingly
- Fervently
- Readily
- Swiftly
- Constantly

Psalms 103:20-21

²⁰ Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.

²¹ Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.

When we pray for God's will to be done "on earth as it is in heaven," we are pledging ourselves to obey what He has revealed and to oppose all that opposes Him.

- **We will not gripe at His will**
- **We will not delay in doing His will**
- **We will not pride ourselves because we did his will**

CONCLUSION

This ends our introductory remarks on The Model Prayer.

- This first section deals with God and Jesus is teaching that we cannot pray properly unless we begin by praising and blessing God first.
- We do not begin to ask for things we need before praising, blessing and honoring the Father.