

## **LESSON 4 (TEACHINGS) - - THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**SCRIPTURE** - - Matthew 6:5-15, Luke 11:1-13, Exodus 34:6-7, and 1 Chronicles 29:11-13

**SETTING** - - In Matthew the Lord's Prayer is part of a collection of Jesus' teachings known as "The Sermon On The Mount." In Luke, Jesus had been praying (probably in solitude except for his Disciples) and when he finished, one of his Disciples asked Jesus to "teach us how to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

**AUDIENCE** - - The Disciples

### **BACKGROUND**

Only Matthew and Luke include the Lord's Prayer; although, there are other critical prayers in Mark and John including Jesus' use of "Abba, Father" while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36) and John's recording of Jesus' prayer for himself and his disciples at the conclusion of the Last Supper and before his arrest (John 17:1-26). However, it is Matthew's rendering of the Lord's Prayer that has been adopted by the Church as the template for how we should pray.

1. The Two Versions - - the table below lists the two versions using the language of the New International Version of the Bible or NIV.

DESCRIPTION	MATTHEW 6:9-13	LUKE 11:2-4
Address	Our Father in Heaven	Father
1 <sup>st</sup> Divine Petition	Hallowed be your name	Hallowed be your name
2 <sup>nd</sup> Divine Petition	Your Kingdom Come	Your Kingdom Come
3 <sup>rd</sup> Divine Petition	Your will be done On Earth as it is in heaven	
1 <sup>st</sup> Human Petition	Give us today our daily bread	Give us each day our daily bread
2 <sup>nd</sup> Human Petition	Forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors	Forgive us our sins, As we also forgive everyone who sins against us
3 <sup>rd</sup> Human Petition	And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from the evil one	And lead us not into temptation

There are notable differences, some of which will be discussed further below. Luke's version is shorter, does not include the "in heaven" in the address, omits the third Divine Petition altogether relative to God's Will, petitions God for bread "each day" as opposed to "today," uses the term "sin" as opposed to "debtors," and omits the petition to be delivered from the "evil one." Both Matthew and Luke in the NIV do not contain the time-honored blessing used in Protestant Churches of, "For thine is the Kingdom and the..." (Note: the

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Catholic Church does not include the blessing when they recite the Lord's Prayer and you can always identify the Protestants in the crowd as they plow forward after all the Catholic faithful have ceased the recitation.)

Michael Green points out that, "Luke's account is focused on people who needed to know how to pray; most of the readers were Gentiles. Matthew's account is primarily directed towards Jewish people who already pray, but need to know how to pray correctly, with the simplicity and directness that Jesus longed to see in his disciples."

2. Disciple's Prayer - - The Lord's Prayer is also known as the Disciple's Prayer. It was requested by one of the Disciples and in both Matthew and Luke the audience is the Disciples. It is a prayer intended to be prayed by one who believed in Creator God, had experienced the salvation that comes through Jesus' death on the cross, whose life was guided by the Holy Spirit, and who could lay claim to being an heir to the Kingdom and empowered by Jesus to refer to God as "Abba, Father" or "Our Father."
3. The Missing Blessing - - What happened to the missing blessing that we Protestants love and cherish? It turns out that many of the earliest manuscripts do not include it (as shown in the table above from the NIV) and that it was added in later manuscripts. A blessing first appeared in a late 1<sup>st</sup> Century or early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century writing known as the "Didache." The Didache was an early Christian writing that was at one time considered for inclusion in the New Testament but later rejected as "non-canonical." The blessing in the Didache, however, was only a two-part benediction and the full three-part benediction (i.e., Kingdom, Power, and Glory) did not surface until the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries in some manuscripts.
4. How Did Jews Pray? - - Jews prayed standing up, their arms held out, their palms turned upward, and their head bowed. It is no wonder that Jesus condemned the Jews as hypocrites that proudly took this posture in the Synagogues and on the street corners" (Matthew 6:5) and piously offered their "required" prayers to YAHWEH. In addition, Hebrew was considered the "language of prayer" and a sacred language and all prayers were spoken in Hebrew.
5. What Did Jews Pray? - - Prayer for a Jew over time, and certainly by Jesus' time, came to be prescribed. Two, in particular, were required of every Jew daily but Jewish prayer requirements were not just limited to these two prayers. It is no wonder that prayer became a habit and recitation and that how you prayed and where you prayed became as important as the prayer itself. In other words, by Jesus' time prayer was reduced for many to a ritual that must be observed in order to be a "good Jew" and had ceased to be a meaningful form of worship and communication with God. This is totally counter to what we see in the Psalms and in prayers like Hannah's prayer in 1

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Samuel where prayers were deeply personal, passionate, and expressive of the full range of human emotion and petition.

- a. The Shema - - The *Shema* consists of passages of scripture from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41 and starts with the familiar lines, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord..." It was to be prayed twice daily. The first was early in the morning when the sun lit the sky sufficient to distinguish between colors, but no later than 9:00 AM. The second was in the evening before 9:00 PM. If the last possible moment was come, a person was to stop whatever they were doing regardless of where they were and repeat the *Shema*.
  - b. The Shemoneh 'esreh (or the Eighteen) - - This was a synagogue prayer consisting of eighteen (later nineteen) short prayers. Many of these prayers were quite stately and beautiful such as number fifteen that reads (See Barclay), "Bring us back to thy law, O our Father; bring us back O King, to thy service; bring us back to thee by true repentance. Praised be thou, O Lord, who dost accept our repentance." Jews were required to pray the *Shemoneh 'esreh* in the Synagogue on the Sabbath as well as other occasions and the *Shemoneh 'esreh* was probably used by many for their daily prayers.
  - c. Other Occasions - - There were prepared prayers for almost all occasions including before and after meals, in connection with light and fire, on seeing the new moon and comets, receiving good news, or entering or leaving a city.
  - d. Daily Prayers - - And if that were not enough, Jews were required to stop everything they were doing and pray three times daily (in addition to the *Shema*) at 9:00 AM, noon, and 3:00 PM, much like modern-day Muslims. Often, the afternoon and evening prayers were combined into the evening prayer.
6. Jesus' Prayers - - There is no documentation to support Jesus' adherence to the formality, schedule, or ritual of Jewish prayer requirements in terms of when he prayed, what he prayed, or how he prayed. In other words, among all the other "apple carts" he upset, he also rewrote the book on how to pray. Prayer was to be done in secret and not with fancy words or in front of an audience and not with an abundance of words (Matthew 6:6-8). God already knows what we need before we even ask for it. Examples of some of Jesus' prayers, when he prayed, and where he prayed are contained in Matthew 11:25, Mark 1:35, Mark 14:36, Luke 3:21, Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12, Luke 9:28-29, Luke 22:41-45, Luke 23:46 and John 17:1-26. He prayed very early in the morning, in solitude (e.g., Matthew 14:23), and while it was still dark. He prayed at night in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42), alone, and in a state of having fallen to the ground while his disciples slept. He prayed at his Baptism (Luke 3:21). He purposely withdrew from the crowds to "lonely places" to pray. He prayed through the night on a "mountainside (Mark

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6:46).” It was while he was praying on a mountain (Luke 9:29) with only the sleepy Peter, James, and John in attendance that Moses and Elijah visited him. He prayed in the presence of his Disciples before he was arrested for himself, his disciples, and all believers. He prayed at the Mount of Olives where he was visited by an angel and his “sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” He prayed on the cross (Matthew 27:46) for all to hear as he committed his Spirit to the Father signaling that his work on earth was complete.

Not only did Jesus not observe the traditions of Jewish prayer in terms of time, format, and subject but he prayed at odd hours, alone, and in conversational language between his Father and him. In teaching his Disciples how to pray, he did so in Aramaic or the language of daily life and not Hebrew, the Jewish language of prayer. In other words, Jesus transformed prayer from an obligation and ritual performed at certain times and in accordance with prescribed words to a deep and abiding form of worship and communication with the Heavenly Father. It was not the language, the hour, or words that mattered but the heart, the intent, the brokenness, and the sincerity. For Jesus, prayer was a state of being and not an activity or obligation that must be fulfilled. From Jesus’ perspective, you did not pray to declare your status as a “child of God;” rather, you prayed out of love because God had embraced us as “children of God.”

7. Satan - - The final petition in Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer is to “deliver us from the *evil one*.” The term “evil one” is one of several words used in the context of the Hebrew noun **satan** which means “adversary” or “accuser.” However, the association of “Satan” with a divine being opposed to God’s purpose is a New Testament phenomenon.

Examples of the meaning of “Satan” in the Old Testament include 2 Samuel 19:22 where David declares that, “This day you [the sons of Zeruiah or the sons of David’s sister] have become my **adversaries** [or **satan**],” where “**adversaries**” is the Hebrew noun **Satan**. Here the Hebrew noun **Satan** is used in the context of human relationships. In Numbers 22, Balaam is opposed by the Angel of the Lord in the form of Balaam’s donkey when he tries to go to Moab. In Numbers 22:22 it says, “...and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as his **adversary** [or **satan**].” This is an example of where the Hebrew noun **Satan** is used in connection with a heavenly being. In the Book of Job, the Hebrew noun **Satan** takes on a different meaning; namely, the role of one who pleads a case against someone (a prosecutor). In Job 1:6, **Satan** is numbered as one of the “angels” or “sons of God” and his role is to “prosecute” or state the case against man. He does so by proposing a test for Job.

In the New Testament, the significance of the Hebrew noun **Satan** changed to mean a divine being opposed to God’s purpose. How this change occurred in

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the 580 years from the time of exile to the time of Christ is not clearly understood. What is clear is the **Satan** in the New Testament is now portrayed as the tempter, the deceiver, and the one whose purpose is to thwart God's plan. The noun **Satan** occurs 33 times in the New Testament. The Greek word **Diabolos** (i.e., Devil) or "slanderer" occurs 36 times. Other proper names for **Satan** include "Beelzebul" and "Belliar." He is also designated as the **tempter**, the **evil one**, the **accuser**, the **ruler of the demons**, the **ruler of this world**, and the **ruler of the power of the air**."

8. Sin - - When the Lord's Prayer talks about forgiveness what are we forgiving: debts, sins, or transgressions? Presbyterians use the term debt. Episcopalians use the term transgressions. Methodists use the word sin.

There are five different Greek words used in the New Testament for sin. Three of them are used in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, the Greek word **opheilema** (or "debt") is used in verse 12 and **paraptoma** (or "sin") is used in verses 14 and 15. In Luke, **hamaritia** and **opheilema** are both used in verse 4 and are translated in the NIV as "sin." The meaning of these terms is as follows:

- a. **Opheilema** - - means "a debt" and is the failure to pay that which is due or a failure in duty.
- b. **Paraptoma** - - means "slipping across" and is the kind of slip that a person would make on an icy road. It implies momentarily succumbing to the conditions and temptations that surround us. It means a lapse or deviation from truth, a misdeed.
- c. **Hamaritia** - - means "missing the target" or a failure to be what we ought to be.

And if the definitions of the Greek terms were not confusing enough, Jesus who spoke and preached in Aramaic would have had the Aramaic word **khoba** available to him. **Khoba** means both "debts" and "sins." This may be one reason Matthew uses a Greek word in verse 12 that means "owing a debt" and a different Greek word in verses 14 and 15 that means "a lapse or misdeed."

Relative to the "forgiveness of sin," the term used by Matthew in all three verses (12,14 and 15) is **aphiemi** that literally means to "send away" as in "to let go, to give up a debt, to forgive, to remit."

9. God's Name - - When Jesus prayed, "...hallowed be your **name**," he was referring not just to a "proper name" but God's **nature**. If that is true, then what "name" did Jesus have in mind when he prayed this particular phrase? One of the most amazing scriptures in the Old Testament answers this for us. God does not rely on humanity to name him; rather, he **names** himself. In Exodus 34:6-7, God (YAHWEH) passes by Moses who he placed in the cleft of a rock so that God could hide him with his hand until he had passed by

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(Exodus 33:22). God then removes his hand and allows Moses to see his back and as God passes he proclaims, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

According to Philip J. King, the meaning of God's **name** is as follows:

- a. "Merciful' (**nahum**) is an adjective used only in relation to God. As already suggested, this is the kind of loving solicitude that a mother manifests toward the child in the womb (**rehem**).
- b. 'Gracious' (**hannun**), suggests unmerited favor and is kindness that expects nothing in return. Again, the adjective **hannun** is used only of God.
- c. 'Slow to anger' is the literal equivalent of 'long-nosed' in Hebrew. The Hebrew term (**ap**) denoting 'anger' means 'nostril,' thought to be the locale of anger; it may be associated with angry snorting.
- d. 'Abounding in [steadfast] love' comes from the Hebrew word '**hesed**.' **Hesed** appears 250 times in the Hebrew Bible and is the principal term for expressing God's relationship to Israel. Often translated 'loving kindness,' steadfast love,' or 'mercy,' the Hebrew word **hesed** is actually untranslatable. It corresponds in both importance and meaning to **agape** in the New Testament.
- e. 'Faithfulness' (**emet**) suggests God's total reliability and is defined as abiding **hesed**; it is the longevity of love. **Hesed** and '**emet** often appear together in the Bible as in the ... Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: 'The glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.' (John 1:17)
- f. The Hebrew verb to 'forgive' is **nasa**.' It literally means 'to lift up' or 'to carry' as in God lifts the burden of sin.
- g. A caveat – God will not acquit the guilty, but will impose sanctions."

10. Our Daily Bread - - You will note that the Matthew and Luke versions of the Lord's Prayer differ in terms of asking for bread "today" or for "each day." The issue is the translation of the Greek word **espiousios**. It is only used once in the Greek New Testament in the Lord's Prayer, and until recently, did not appear in classical Greek literature at all. Since the meaning of words in any language often comes from seeing how a word is used, there existed no precedent or comparisons for establishing what **espiousios** meant. Some have thought it conveys a time element such as "give us food for today" or "give us food for tomorrow." Others have thought the word refers to amount. These four possibilities are illustrated below:

- h. Bread for today (time),
- i. Bread for tomorrow (time),
- j. Just enough bread to keep us alive and no more (amount), or
- k. The bread we need (amount).

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Stated another way, is Jesus suggesting that we should ask only for God to take care of our needs today or should we be asking God to relieve us of the anxiety of meeting our daily needs now and in the future?

### **OLD TESTAMENT ECHOES**

The addition of the three-part blessing to the Lord's Prayer can be for some, disconcerting. It damages our illusion that the Scriptures as we know them may not be the exact Scripture versions that were used by Jesus and the Disciples and that our Bible of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century may have been altered through the ages. There is some truth to that statement but not sufficient, in my mind, to upset our faith in God's word as God's Word. For example, we know the Septuagint (or LXX) and Masoretic Text (or MT) versions of the book of Jeremiah differ. Our English Protestant translations are based upon the MT that is the primary Hebrew source with the most complete Bible version dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD. The LXX is the Greek translation dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC and Jeremiah is some 2,700 words shorter than the MT. Fragments of both have been found in the vicinity of the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are scholarly skeptics who use these differences to bash away at those that hold to an inerrant interpretation of the scriptures. Historically at one point, the LXX was naively viewed as simply a bad translation. The Dead Sea Scrolls have dispelled that myth. It now appears that the LXX and MT translators of Jeremiah worked from different compilations of the Jeremiah and Baruch scrolls. Regardless, the core of Jeremiah and his message is in both manuscripts.

In the case of the Lord's Prayer, most scholars agree that the blessing was added later to the Book of Matthew and not part of the original manuscript. However, it is not without precedent and there is the echo of an Old Testament blessing that was likely used to craft the Lord's Prayer Blessing.

In 1 Chronicles 29:11-13, we have David's prayer of praise in the "presence of the whole assembly." The occasion was the receiving of gifts for building the Temple that David's son Solomon would ultimately construct. Besides giving his own personal wealth, the people of Israel gave generously and abundantly from their resources and the result was overwhelming. As part of David's prayer, we have this beautiful praise and blessing, "Yours, O Lord, is the **greatness** and the **power** and the **glory** and the **majesty** and the **splendor**, for **everything in heaven and earth is yours**. Yours, O Lord is **the kingdom**; you are **exalted as head over all**. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the **ruler of all things**. In your hands are **strength** and **power** to exalt and give strength to all. Now our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name." (Note: I have added the emphasis on specific words)

In David's blessing are all of the elements of the Lord's Prayer blessing including **Kingdom** (ruler of all things, everything in heaven and earth is God's, and exalted as head over all), **power** (greatness and strength), and **glory** (majesty and splendor).

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While it cannot be conclusively proven that later New Testament scribes used David's blessing as their template, the similarities are too profound to ignore.

### **MEANINGS**

The Lord's Prayer or Disciple's Prayer appears at first glance to be a short, simple prayer. However, the brevity of words in no way translates into brevity of meaning. Each phrase, each word, and the very ordering of the prayer are rich and deep in significance, reverence, and meaning. It is not just a template that we can use in forming our personal prayers. These are the very words of Jesus that we are to embrace, meditate on, and offer up to God the Father as our own as often as we need or want.

The Address opens to us the intimacy that Jesus shared with his Father and invites us to pray in like manner. It also clearly establishes the realm or domain of God's presence; namely, all heaven and the majesty and splendor that conveys. The three Divine Petitions elaborate on the sovereignty and "hallowedness" of God's Name (i.e., God's nature), embraces God's Kingdom that spans both earth and heaven, and recognizes that God's Will and our obedience to that will is the key to being a citizen of the Kingdom.

The three Human Petitions are ordered in such a way as to convey the importance of both time and the Trinity in our lives. The first petition is about the **present** or our daily need for bread. The second petition is about forgiveness and brings the **past** into the present. The third petition addresses the **future** and coming trials and deliverance from the "evil one." Relative to the Godhead, the first petition reminds us of God the Creator and provider of all that is. The second human petition invokes Jesus and his death and resurrection that lead to forgiveness. The third petition dealing with the future, reminds us of the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promise of the "Comforter" to guide and lead us as we walk forward into time.

1. The Address (Our Father in heaven) - - The address sets the tone for the entire prayer. Many scholars believe that prayer as Jesus prayed it started with the Aramaic noun **Abba** or the familiar Aramaic form of word for father. (Note: the phrase "Abba, Father" is not used in the Greek in Matthew 6 as it is in Mark 14:36.) The Old Testament also refers to God as Father (e.g., Psalms 103:13) a number of times. However, this usage is different than using the term **abba** as Jesus did when he prayed. The Old Testament terms for Father are used to describe the nature of God or what God is like. For example, God is like a father who cares for his children (Psalms 103:13) or God is like a father or potter who has complete authority over the shaping of our beings (Isaiah 64:8). This is not the meaning when using **abba**. Rather than describing God's nature, the term **abba** is used in the context of addressing God as in, "Good morning father." It is a title but also a term that conveys respect and intimacy as well as familiarity. The term **abba** takes us from the world of the simile and into the world relationship.



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To my six grandchildren, I am known as “papa.” Their use of “papa” is much the same as Jesus’ use of the term **abba**. It conveys respect, love, trust, familiarity, and a desire to be in that person’s presence. **Abba** is still a title that children are taught in the Middle East as soon as they learn to talk (see Ken Bailey). Possibly the best portrait we have in the New Testament of what Jesus’ usage of **abba** meant to him (and to us) is found in Luke 15 and the parable of the lost son. The father in that parable is representative of God and is, (a) longsuffering, (b) respectful of his wayward son by honoring his request, (c) steadfast in his love as he waits expectantly for his son’s return, (d) overwhelmed with joy upon seeing his son “afar off,” (e) willing to shatter the conventions of his day to welcome his son home and nullify the expectations of society for punishment, (f) openly joyous in reaffirming his son as a member of the family and heir, and (g) rejoicing over the fact that the lost son had returned.

The term “in Heaven” is coupled with the term “Our Father” for very specific reasons. We must never forget that God is God. He is all-powerful, not a created being, and not a creature of earth. He is in a place (heaven) that conveys the image of dominion over all realms and creation. He is holy and righteous and dwells in a place of holiness, love, purity, justice, and mercy; a place that we can only glimpse but not totally embrace until God’s Kingdom is fully come to earth.

The combination of the two terms, **abba** and “in heaven”, presents us, therefore, with an opening to our communication with God and worship that conveys an intimate relationship with God, but not just any god; rather, The God of all creation who reigns supreme and is our sovereign Lord, our **Abba**.

2. 1<sup>st</sup> Divine Petition (Hallowed be your name) - - There are two concepts that are essential in understanding this first petition; reverence for God’s holiness (i.e., hallowed) and what is meant by “name.” For Jesus and any devote Jew, “name” is not what we think of today as a name such as Emily, David, or Elizabeth. It is much more. “Name” in the context used by Jesus conveys the nature and character of the person; in this case, Lord God or YAHWEH. Psalms 9:10 states that, “Those who know your **name** will trust in you.” Trust is not created or nurtured simply by knowing a person’s “label” or in the trucking world “handle.” It comes by knowing that the person is kind, gentle, true to their word, and compassionate. Or look at Psalms 20:7 which says, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the **name** of the Lord our God.” Again, it is the “nature of God” that produces trust.

So when Jesus prays “Hallowed be your name,” it is the entire nature and personality of God that we are reverencing as described in God’s own words to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7.

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The other concept is the meaning of the word “hallowed.” The word “hallowed” is again, a very difficult word to translate. In Greek, the adjective form of the verb is **hagios** that literally means to treat a person or a thing as “**hagios**.” It means they or it is “different” or “separate.” So the Temple is **hagios** because it is different from other buildings and a priest is **hagios** because he is separate from other men. So literally, the second petition is saying that, “Let God’s name be treated differently from all other names; let God’s name be given a position which is absolutely unique.” (See Barclay)

There is a word in English that comes close to conveying how we should treat God’s **name** and that is “reverence.” “Reverence” is an attitude of deep respect tinged with awe; veneration. According to Barclay, there are four essentials in true reverence of God’s name:

- a. We must believe that God exists. God is not proven in the Bible but is an “axiom” or a “given.” He is the basis of our belief.
- b. We must know who God is, his nature or stated in the verbiage of the Lord’s Prayer, we must know God’s **name**.
- c. We must live in God’s presence such that belief is not just intellectual awareness but is a way of life and our awareness of God is constant.
- d. We must be obedient and submissive to God’s will.

In summary, the 1<sup>st</sup> Divine Petition means we must revere the nature and character of God as something unique and set apart and our reverence must permeate every aspect of our lives.

3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Divine Petition (your kingdom come) and 3<sup>rd</sup> Petition (your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven) - - These are listed as two separate petitions in the Table, but I’m not sure they are separate thoughts but rather a single petition. Understanding what the “Kingdom of God” (i.e., Kingdom of Heaven) means has always been confusing. Jesus obviously ushered in the Kingdom of God or the awareness of the Kingdom of God with his ministry but he also refers to Kingdom of God as something that is yet to come. Is the Kingdom the fellowship of believers? Is it a dispensation in time or something that is perpetual?

Barclay suggests that there is not only a present (Luke 17:20-21) and future or anticipatory (Mark 1:15, Luke 4:43, and Luke 8:1) reality to the Kingdom but also a past reality as well. He points out that in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28, Jesus refers to those in the age coming from the east and west and taking “their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the **kingdom of heaven**.” In other words, the Kingdom of God existed in the past, is with us now, but is yet to come in all the fullness of its glory. Confusing? How can something that was already in existence, be in us now, and yet something that we are to look forward to in the future?

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The answer may be found in the Jewish use of parallelism. Jewish writers were fond of parallelism or the literary practice of stating things twice. You only have to examine familiar Psalms like Psalms 46:1, 46:7 or 23:1-2 to find examples of this. For example, in Psalms 46:1 it states, "God is our refuge and strength - - a very present help in trouble." In this example, Parallelism is used to restate a thought but also to explain and amplify that thought. In Psalms 46:1, the first statement is global and more theological and the restatement is specific to the present need.

Likewise, Barclay suggests that Jesus is employing parallelism in the Lord's Prayer and we should not separate "your kingdom come" from "your will be done" but look upon the one as a restatement or clarification of the other. When this is done, "obedience" to God's Will becomes the amplified restatement or meaning of the "Kingdom of God." Or to rephrase Divine Petitions 2 and 3 in the Lord's Prayer, "The Kingdom of God is a society upon earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven." Obedience to the will of God is therefore the key to the Kingdom and explains the past, present, and future dimensions of the Kingdom. Since we cannot obey God's will "perfectly" on earth, there is, however, still an aspect or element of the Kingdom that is yet to come. But when the full glory of God's Kingdom is established on this earth at Jesus' second coming, then our membership into the Kingdom will be sanctified or perfected and God's Kingdom will be forever and forever.

4. 1<sup>st</sup> Human Petition (Give us today our daily bread) - - This sounds like such a straightforward human petition that it's meaning should be obvious, "provide for our needs this day." And, it certainly embraces that interpretation. However, there is more to understanding this very simple request. We get our first hint of where some of the complexity lies by looking at the Matthew and Luke versions in the Table. Matthew is translated "Give us **today** our daily bread," while Luke is translated, "Give us **each day** our daily bread."

Ken Bailey postulates that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Syriac Translation of the Bible found at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai and now in the British Museum may be the oldest translation of the New Testament we have. In addition, since Syriac is closely related to Aramaic (the language of Jesus), it's translation of the Greek may also be in some cases the most accurate in terms of conveying meaning. The Syriac word used to describe the giving of the bread means, "lasting, never-ceasing, never-ending, or perpetual" and comes from the same Syriac root word as **amen**. Based upon the Syriac Scriptures, this phrase in the Lord's Prayer would read something like, "Give us today the bread that doesn't run out." In other words, "Deliver us O Lord, from the fear of not having enough to eat. Give us bread for today and with it give us confidence that tomorrow we will have enough."

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Barclay likewise struggled with the meaning of the Greek word translated "today" or "each day." He refers to a papyrus fragment that recently (probably the 1950's) "turned up" in which this Greek word was used. The fragment was actually part of a woman's shopping list. It was a note to remind her to buy supplies of a certain food for the coming day. From this, Barclay concludes that the best rendering of this petition is, "Give us the things we need to eat for this coming day" or that God will supply the things we need for the coming day.

Are these interpretations consistent with other Biblical teachings? Yes, the Lord's Prayer petition is consistent with Jesus' teachings in the New Testament and Old Testament precedents. In Exodus 16:1-21, YAHWEH provides manna and quail. Relative to the manna, they were to go out each morning and gather enough **for the day**. On the sixth day, they were to gather what they needed for two days. YAHWEH states, "In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions." In Luke 9:3, Jesus sends out the Twelve to preach the kingdom of God with these instructions, "Take nothing for the journey – no staff, no bag, **no bread**, no money, no extra tunic." And in Matthew 6:25-34 God tells us, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, **what you will eat or drink**; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air ... See how the lilies of the field grow ... So do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' .... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

The bottom line is we are to rely upon him for our daily "bread" or needs. Whether it is manna in the Old Testament or Jesus' exhortations in the New, we are to trust (pray) that God will supply our daily needs each day.

5. 2<sup>nd</sup> Human Petition (Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors) - - This is the only conditional petition in the Lord's Prayer. As a result, this petition becomes one of the more frightening ones to pray. If we accept verses 12, 14, and 15 of Matthew 6 at face value, it means that God's granting us forgiveness as requested in this petition is dependent on our forgiveness of others.

The change in the Greek word used for "sin" is interesting. In the Lord's Prayer or verse 12, Jesus appears to be saying that our petition for forgiveness are for the types of sin where we have failed in our duty and have not lived up to the salvation and redemption "covenant" that was given to us freely through Jesus death on the cross. Verses 14 and 15 appear to amplify the meaning somewhat by altering the term used for sin to one that means a slip, a lapse, or a misdeed. In other words, both of these terms appear to capture the types of "relational" sins (or debts) that come from our day-to-day interaction with God and with our fellow human beings. They are our

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mistakes, lapses in discharging our duty as Christians and moral human beings, misdeeds, and failure to honor that which we owe. They are the very fiber of human existence and living with others and Jesus is correct in pointing out that our forgiveness from God is very much a reflection on our extension of that very same forgiveness to others.

In addition as Ken Bailey so clearly states, "provision for community underlies this petition." Unless we are able to forgive others their "debts" and "sins," our ability to live together as a community, family, and church ... is seriously damaged and the seeds of community decay are planted and allowed to fester. Reconciliation and forgiveness are not only essential divine/human transactions but also essential human/human transactions as well. Perhaps Abraham Lincoln said it best in this address he delivered as the Civil War was grinding to a conclusion, "With malice towards none; with charity for all...let us...do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace."

Just as God works to forgive and maintain our relationship with him, so must we work to forgive and maintain our relationship with our community, friends, and family.

6. 3<sup>rd</sup> Human Petition (And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one) - - This last Human Petition is, perhaps, the most difficult to understand. Why would God ever lead us into temptation? Aren't we told in James 1:13 that, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." So what does the first part of this petition mean? Does the word "temptation" mean what we so often leap to as an enticement to do evil?

Once again we must start with the Greek word that is translated into English as "temptation." That word is *peirasmos* and means "an experiment, attempt, trial, or proving." So it can mean a trial or proving as is caused by dealing with a bodily condition (e.g., see Paul's "trial" or *peirasmos* in Galatians 4:14). It can also mean a trial of man's fidelity, virtue, or integrity as in a temptation. But it can also mean a trial of God by mankind as in our rebellion against God putting his righteousness and justice to the test. So what is meant in the use of the term *peirasmos* in the Lord's Prayer?

One thing for certain is that "temptation" as translated in Matthew DOES NOT mean, "seeking to seduce us into evil." Rather, it means "trial or proving" as in Genesis 22:1 where God "tested" Abraham and where the Hebrew word used is *nacah* and like it's Greek counterpart means to test, prove, or tempt.

Listed below are four interpretations that cover the spectrum of what was probably intended by Jesus when he spoke these words:

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- a. Guide Interpretation - - When we go into unknown and dangerous territory such as an African Safari, we hire a guide. The guide is the expert and has been over the territory many times and knows the dangers and risks involved. We place our absolute trust in that guide to keep us safe. In much the same way, this 3<sup>rd</sup> Human Petition is saying, "Lord, we trust you to guide us because you alone know the way that we must go."
- b. Permissive Interpretation - - Some language scholars believe that this verse is a situation where the Greek word used does not adequately reflect the full breadth of the Aramaic equivalent (*nisyon*) that was probably used by Jesus. *Nisyon* and has two shades of meaning; one causative and the other permissive. The causative would translate "Do not **cause** us to go into temptation," and the permissive would translate, "Do not **permit** us to go into temptation." In other words, this is a prayer to hold us back from turning aside into trials and temptations. There are reflections of this interpretation in Mark 14:38 where Jesus prays for his sleeping disciples, "...Watch and pray so that you will not **fall into temptation**."
- c. The Preventative Interpretation - - This interpretation looks at Peter in the final days of Jesus' life and Peter's failure to listen to Jesus' exhortations that he should pray in order to avoid temptation. It starts with Peter in Luke 22:31-32 where Jesus states, "Satan wants to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith might not fail." Peter pledges loyalty but then fails to pray and falls asleep in the Garden. Jesus awakens them and admonishes them in Luke 22:40 to pray, "...that you will not fall into temptation." Again, Peter fails to pray and ends up denying his Lord three times. This interpretation postulates that the "accuser" is not prevented from his work. Rather, praying for guidance and deliverance as the Lord's Prayer teaches, crystallizes an awareness and resolve that builds our faith and reliance on God; thus, fending off the "evil one" and navigating through the trials of life.
- d. The Universal Interpretation - - perhaps the most interesting and out-of-the-box interpretation is from N. T. Wright. First of all, he translates this 3<sup>rd</sup> Human Petition as, "Don't bring us into the great Trial, but rescue us from evil." Jesus in his teachings foretells of a great time of testing coming upon the world and that his followers should pray to be spared. This was born out just a short while later when Jesus suffered his arrest, trial, humiliation on the cross, death, and resurrection. We all face another "great Trial" as we enter the last days. We will not be spared the darkness of these trials ourselves, but we should pray as Jesus instructs us to pray that we be kept from its worst ravages and to be delivered from evil, both in the abstract and in its personified form, "the evil one."

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There are undoubtedly elements of truth in each of these meanings. Regardless, the following can be stated about this 3<sup>rd</sup> and last Lord's Prayer petition: (1) God DOES NOT entice or tempt us to do evil, (2) God's intent is to preserve us during times of testing and to strengthen our faith so that we are better able to survive "the accuser," (3) God's focus is on protecting and shielding us as one of his children, and (4) we need his deliverance in combating the "evil one."

### ***RELEVANCY***

As Michael Green so aptly states, "Prayer is not informing God of something he does not already know. Nor is prayer seeking to get God to change his mind. It is the adoring submission of the creature to the Creator, of the disciple to the Master. He knows. He cares. He is your Abba, your dear Father."

Prayer also links all of God's Covenant Peoples, both Old and New Testaments believers. As Philip J. King states so eloquently, "Prayer is one of the dominant themes binding the Old Testament and the New Testament. Biblical prayer is an unmistakable expression of the covenant relationship obligating God and people." In prayer, we are personalizing God's Covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and David; invoking the praises of the Psalmists; echoing the petitions of Hannah and the laments of Job and Jeremiah; and endorsing the hopes of Isaiah and the prophets. We are also part of the disciple fellowship that Jesus prayed so earnestly for in John 17, a benefactor of Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross, and a witness to the glory and simplicity that is our Lord's Prayer.

So when we pray, "Abba, Father in Heaven," we are calling upon the cloud of witnesses described in Hebrews 11 as well as all of the praises, laments, petitions, questions, cries for mercy, songs of thanksgiving, and expressions of reverence and awe that bind the Old and New Testaments into one glorious hymn of hope, love, and triumph. God is indeed Lord of all creation.

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