

The Lord's Prayer

You memorized it as a kid but did you really understand it? Did you know what you were praying? In the Gospel of Matthew it is given within Jesus' Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of His ministry. The context is teaching concerning the self righteousness of religious leaders in Jesus' day versus the true righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matt. 6:1-8, Jesus gave several examples of a hypocritical righteousness concerning almsgiving and prayer. After exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Jesus then gives proper instructions on how to give and how to pray. Jesus taught that they should not pray memorized canned prayers, and they should not use meaningless repetition. Therefore, whatever we pray should have meaning to us, we should understand it, and it should be from our heart.

In v.9, He says "Pray then in this way", but notice He did not say memorize this. It is fine to memorize it and pray it if it has meaning to you, but memorization is not His meaning. We call this the Lords Prayer, but is that accurate? He actually was giving it as an example or a model to His disciples so a better title might be the Disciples Prayer. Concerning memorizing this exact prayer, consider that we do not find this prayer in the history of the early church in the book of Acts or any of the letters written by the apostles. We have no record in the Bible of any of the first churches memorizing it. All the prayers issued by the apostles are individualistic and from the heart, from the book of Acts to Revelation.

Are you sure you understand the words and phrases used in the model prayer of Matt.6:9-15? I confess I have not understood it until recently. For instance, in v9, what does "Hallowed be thy name" mean? When you pray "thy kingdom come" what are you saying? In v12, should we use debts or trespasses? Is He being redundant by repeating the same thing in v14-15? In v13, would God really lead you into temptation so as to sin? If so then why did James say that God never tempts anyone in James 1:13? Let's examine each of these phrases.

Webster's defines hallowed as meaning sacred, revered, and holy, but remember hallowed is an English translation for the Greek word hagiozo in the original text. It meant to sanctify or set apart God's name, His being, and His character as holy. We recognize that only God is perfectly holy, He is set apart, and separated from all of creation. We revere and worship only Him, and have great respect for His name which we would never use frivolously or profanely.

When you pray "thy kingdom come", you are asking Jesus to come back now and end this world and set up His kingdom. When Jesus comes back, He is not coming to take sides, but to take over. Are you really ready for that? Are you sure you wouldn't like to put it off for a while so you could see your kids graduate, or your daughter get married, or

that huge business deal close? Are you really ready for this world as we know it to end? Are you actually preoccupied with Christ coming back? Before you answer consider Jesus' teaching on the value of the coming kingdom in Matt. 13:44-46. The kingdom is so valuable and to be longed for that we should be willing to give up everything else to have it. All of the heavenly host is currently on the edge of their seats anticipating Jesus' coming and setting up His kingdom, the time in which "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord" (Rev.11:15-17).

In Matt.6:12, did Jesus say debts or trespasses? There were five different Greek words used for sin. The word used in Matt 6:12 was *opheilema*. It was rarely used but meant a moral or spiritual debt to which God must be paid. Obviously the only way for us to pay this debt for all our sin is to allow Jesus to pay it for us.

In v13 the word translated temptation is *peirasmos* which refers to testing or trials, so the implication is, "Lord don't lead us into a trial which will be so overwhelming that I can't endure it. It is parallel to the promise in 1 Cor. 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you...God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able..." When James 1:13 says "God does not tempt anyone" he uses a different Greek word meaning enticement to do evil. Therefore, in the Lords Prayer you are actually praying for God to protect you from being overcome by trials and falling into evil because of them. There is no contradiction between Matt 6:13 and James 1:13.

Also, I hate to tell you but "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen" was not in the original text. The oldest and best manuscripts do not have it; it was added much later. If you have a NIV translation you will see its not even there whereas the NAS puts it in brackets.

Concerning forgiveness, v12 is concerned with God forgiving our debt incurred by sin through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross, but v14-15 is concerned with our relationship with other people. Since we are praying for and expect God to forgive all our many sins, how much more should we forgive specific individual sins someone commits against us? The word used in v14 is *paraptoma* for careless transgressions as opposed to *opheilema* in v12 which is the great debt we owe God.

I LOVE THE LORD'S PRAYER BUT NOW IT HAS NEW MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE AND I BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT WAS GIVEN.

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