

Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be your name

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[0 : 00] Part of the Sermon on the Mount. Verse 1. Wear of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them.

For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets. Truly, that they may be seen by men, I say to you that they have received a reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the street corners that they may be seen by men.

Truly, I say to you, they have received a reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[1 : 22] And in praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this, Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Amen. May the Lord add his blessing to that reading of his own word.

[2 : 30] It be just praise. We sing. Pray then like this, Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 500 years ago, the Reformation started. And the Reformers, in their attempt to bring people back to the faith, relied on three particular things, all of which were based on the Bible.

The first was the Apostles' Creed. I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. The second was the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5, and the third was the Lord's Prayer.

When we turn to Holy Writ, we find that this prayer occurs twice, here in the Sermon on the Mount, and a shorter version in Luke 11, 1-4, where the setting is that of an unnamed disciple making a request for teaching on prayer.

[4 : 00] When we study the Gospels, it's clear that Jesus may have repeated his teaching to different audiences in different places, so that if one is shorter than the other, that was the version that suited that particular occasion.

What can we say about it? It's a summary of every prayer that could ever be made with the knowledge that if you pray it, God will hear.

The second thing is, it's a model. You can base all your prayer that you want on this, again, with the knowledge that God will hear.

There's something else. In this prayer, you can discern the work of the Trinity. In the phrase that we're looking at this evening, our Father, that obviously speaks to God the Father.

When we come to forgive us our debts, that meaning sins, as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us, that's the work of the Son. He forgives.

[5 : 15] God forgives through him. And when we come to lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, that clearly is the work of the Spirit.

So we start with this relationship, our Father. It's very clear that if you read the Old Testament, there is in fact nothing to be found like this.

there's no prayer that starts our Father. The nearest you get to it is a prayer called, in rabbinic terms, the Kaddish, which our Lord would have known from childhood.

And next week, I'll have a slide to show you what it's like. It's very short. And today, it's usually used in Judaism for funerals.

And so as far as the Jewish religion is concerned, the idea that you could address God as Father didn't appear until somewhere about A.D. 50.

[6 : 25] And it came about through the teaching of a rabbi called Johann Ben Zagai. He was a contemporary of the apostles, and perhaps listening to them praying is where he got it from.

So when we speak of this prayer, our Father, it's unique to the teaching of Jesus.

So, if we are claiming that this is our prayer, how does it come to be ours? And the answer is, and it's a very simple answer, it comes to us through the person of Jesus.

He said this, Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.

So the scripture answer as to how the Lord's prayer becomes your prayer and mine, is that it comes to us through the person of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 43] Because in this prayer, in this person, Jesus Christ, God is committed to answering prayer that he might be glorified in and through his beloved Son.

how many prayers have been addressed in the name of Jesus since his incarnation. How much glory is there that has been given through God the Father?

So it's a prayer of relationship. Our Father. Father. The moment we place our trust in Christ, something very profound takes place.

Because at that moment, the moment that you say, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief, something marvelous has taken place.

John describes it like this, but to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become the children of God.

[9 : 04] A transaction, a moment, a turning away from darkness and blindness. Who were born, says John, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So here what John is saying is that this new birth, when did that happen to you? A long time ago? A short time ago? It doesn't matter. In that very moment, you were given a relationship relationship in prayer.

Russell Paul in Romans 8 describes it like this, Romans 8, 15. You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. You have received the spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Father. There are spirits abroad which would attempt to enslave people in this world, but that is not the spirit that we have received.

[10 : 26] For we have received a spirit that brings liberty, so that we can cry, Abba, Father. in the bombing of Raqqa, I saw this on television, that of course, individuals who weren't involved were hurt.

And this little boy was severely damaged, and he cried out in Arabic, Abba, Father.

Daddy. So we take on our lips this prayer, our Father. We're expressing a relationship which can't be broken in this life, nor in the one that's to come.

And so this unnamed disciple in Luke chapter 11, he asked for prayer, for teaching. He said, Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.

And so fundamentally, we've got a very unique relationship. It doesn't matter where you are, or what you're doing, or how dark the situation you feel that you're involved in is around you.

[12 : 02] This transports your request to the throne of heaven. It's your relationship, our Father.

Pray, then, like this. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, and earth is in heaven. give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Now, the second thing I want to think about is not just the relationship, but where this prayer is going.

Because God is not on earth, although his spirit is. It's seen in the phrase, who are in heaven. So, this is the second thing that has to be said about this. It's the destiny of prayer. It's the prayer that will reach the throne of God.

[13:21] Now, to illustrate what I'm trying to say this evening, I want to refer to how it was seen in Old Testament times. In the Old Testament, when Israel had ceased to be a nomadic people, i.e. wandering here, there, and everywhere, and were dwelling securely in the land of promise, they had an idea of where the dwelling place of God was.

And that was at some remote location in the very north, beyond the borders of Israel. Now, listen to the psalmist. psalm 48, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, his holy mountain, beautiful in elevation is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great king.

You see, the psalmist thinks that God is remote, and somewhere to the north of Israel, that's where he dwells.

Now, let me take you a bit further than this. When Ezekiel has a vision in chapter 1 of the chariot of divine purpose, because that's what it is, this vision is said to come from the north.

[14:55] Ezekiel 1.4 And looked and behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and the midst of the fire, as it were, gleaming bronze.

So this vision of God's purpose for the nation comes to Ezekiel from the north, believed to be the dwelling place of God.

More than that, when Jeremiah describes the judgment of God coming on the nation of Judah because of their faithfulness, it's said to come from the north.

The Lord said to me out of the north, evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. God's name. You and I know that they came from the north because of mountain ridges.

That's the ancient Babylonians I'm talking about. But in the thinking of the prophet, this has come from the very throne of God, somewhere, to the north of the land of Israel.

[16:15] That's a comparison. comparison. We are now living in New Testament times. And we're dealing with our Father whose dwelling place is said to be in heaven where the throne of God is located.

Now, what is the throne of God like? Daniel 7 verse 13, I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven.

There came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him. The book of Revelation also describes it like this.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne.

And the books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. What's being described there is the throne of final judgment from which no person will ever escape.

[17:35] But for you and I who trust in Christ this throne of judgment has been transformed into a throne of grace. And it's to that throne that all our prayers are directed.

Earlier in the book of Revelation in chapter 6 we read this. verse 1. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.

And they cried out with a loud voice, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?

And the book of Revelation describes that as the prayers of the saints. So if you wonder where your prayer is going, your prayer through Christ is going right to the throne of God.

Finally, the result. Pray then like this. Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be your name.

[18:52] Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

So the final phrase of the first verse, hallowed be your name. God's name. Or perhaps better still, let your name be made holy.

How then can we do this? How can we make the name of God holy? God's name?

In a chapter that deals with the restoration of Israel, in Ezekiel 36 verse 23, he says this, And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you are profaned among them.

And the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

[20 : 12] So here in this great act of restoration, the fundamental thing that's happening, is that God is vindicating the holiness, the awesomeness of his own great name.

So if we take this, let your name be made holy, there's two ways that we can achieve this. The first way is by living a people, living a life of holiness, to which God has called us.

And the second is by proclaiming the greatness of his name in the ministry of the gospel. Going back to the Old Testament once again, we read in Leviticus 19 2, say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, you shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

Now that word in Christ is repeated on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 48. you, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect.

Voltaire, who was an arch critic of the church in the 18th century, met a gentleman called Joseph Fletcher.

[21 : 55] Fletcher. He's known today as Joseph Fletcher of Madley. He was a Methodist. John Wesley had him down to be his successor.

The only problem was that Fletcher died first. But Voltaire met Joseph Fletcher and he said of Joseph Fletcher, he was the holiest man I ever met.

Unimpressed with the church of his day, but highly impressed by the life of Joseph Fletcher.

The second way is by the proclamation of the gospel. When Paul deals with the doctrine of election, chapters that Daniel's covered in 9-11 of Romans, he makes this statement relative to the hardness of Pharaoh's heart with regard to the voice of God through Moses.

Romans 9-17. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, I have raised you up for this very purpose of showing my power in you so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

[23 : 25] What can we learn from this? First of all, that God was saying to Moses and latterly to the apostle Paul that through this action of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the name of God was going to be proclaimed throughout all the earth.

Now, without going into all the intricacies of this doctrine of election and how the scripture would appear to teach this action of what is called reprobation as a direct act of God, what is happening is that through this act of God, the name of the Lord is to be proclaimed through all the earth.

The preaching of the gospel centers in the forgiveness of sins. Now, here's a word that Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost.

It's actually in Joel 2, 30 to 31. And I will give portents, that signs, in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

And the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. It shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.

[24 : 57] That's happening now. The name of God is being magnified and honored throughout all the earth.

So, when we pray, let your name be made holy, this is happening. Right in our midst, the name of God is being exalted, made holy, made awesome.

And we continue to pray, because at the end of the day, an age will come, which is described in Isaiah chapter two, like this.

It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it.

And many nations, peoples, shall come and say, come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, that we may walk in his paths.

[26 : 14] For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Our Father, who art in heaven, let your name be made holy.

Amen. We sing in response to that, breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew.