

An Interpretation of The Lord's Prayer

by Lynn Andrew

Addressing the God to whom we belong, God in the highest,
¹ Our Father² which art in heaven,

May your inexpressible name be honored above all and by all.
Hallowed be thy name.

We long for that day in which the seventh angel will announce,
*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord,
and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.* (Rev. 11:15)
Thy kingdom come.

We understand that you demand perfect obedience.
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.³

So that we may obey in that day, give us our Bread of life
Give us this day our daily bread.⁴

by whom we must be entirely free of our debt to sin,
And forgive us our debts,

by which we are enabled us to forgive others and so live in peace.
as we forgive our debtors.

Meanwhile ... keep us from being tempted to do it the devil's way.
**And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

1. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

2. Isaiah 63:16: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.

3. This is properly the second part of a unit, expanding the previous clause. The eschatological climate demands that the primary interpretation be about the prophesied kingdom of God being established on earth, which is also supported by the context in Matthew chapter five.

4. John 6:48: "I am that bread of life." This also explains Luke 11:13 referring to the Holy Spirit.

Israel-respecting churches like to point out that this is not properly "the Lord's" prayer; rather it should be called the "disciples' prayer." The distinction is a triviality, but it must be mentioned because behind it lurks the doctrine that the literal kingdom of God on earth is not relevant to the church: if the prayer is used at all, "thy kingdom come on earth" is twisted to mean the rule of Christ within the petitioner's heart. This is fine as an application, but to ignore the original meaning is a sad mistake—to shrink the general outlook of Christendom such that the essential purpose of God is minimized ... is it not the devil's triumph? Satan would turn us away from praying for that day in which he is disqualified from the game! If you do not believe in the literal rule of Christ on earth and rather believe that the doom of Satan vs. human salvation is already fully justified and needs no further trial, then you have Scripture to explain away.

It is well to appropriate grace and be thankful for adoption. But adoption to what end? The answer tends to be theological jargon because Satan has succeeded in putting the obvious answer off limits.

When Augustine of Hippo severed "thy will be done on earth" from "thy kingdom come" and made them two distinct things, the pattern was set for spiritualizing the kingdom in the Lord's Prayer. It cries out to be rejoined as parallels in a couplet, the latter clause complimenting the former. Augustine committed this sacrilege, and the model prayer has been misinterpreted ever since: the church followed Augustine in being reluctant to expound the literal kingdom. Why? Not because it is not featured in Scripture!

By the way, if you affirm the blessed hope, don't miss the invitation to pray for it: *Bring us not into temptation* [or testing], *but deliver us from* [the time of] *the evil one.* (ASV except brackets.)

The Context from Matthew 5 (KJV): Principles of the Kingdom

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [qualified to serve respecting the ways of heaven rather than the richness of their own talent]. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted* [the happy result]. *Blessed are the meek* [distrusting self: trusting God]: *for they shall inherit the earth* [the government again]. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled* [by taking part in administering the righteous regime.] *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy* [a principle of righteousness]. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God* [Christ dwelling in Jerusalem (Zec. 8:3, Rev. 21:3); but not everyone will have an audience with him]. *Blessed are the peacemakers* [forgivers]: *for they shall be called the children of God* [princes of peace ruling under the Prince of peace]. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* [proven upholders of righteousness!]. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven* [responsible positions]: *for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Ye [specifically Israel] *are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men* [a warning to the Jews]. *Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill* [Jerusalem] *cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under the bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets [the promise of the kingdom]: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass [rhetorically, not that they will pass away], one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled [the judgment of nations and subsequent reign of Christ as prophesied]. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments [righteousness, mercy, holiness, peacemaking], and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven [no position of authority for him!]: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees [corruption of divine authority], ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven [another warning specifically to the Jews].

[Now come illustrations of the difference between the administration of the Law of Moses and the administration and law of the kingdom that requires the presence of Christ not only inwardly but in government.] *Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [an expression of contempt], shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool [literally Moreh, a Hebrew expression of condemnation], shall be in danger of hell [Gehenna] fire [temporal and eternal condemnation, fulfilling the last verse in Isaiah]. Therefore [live in light of the kingdom!] if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go*

thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him [be a peacemaker, for there is no other way to live in freedom either now or under the administration of the kingdom]; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the uttermost farthing [a manifestation of the "rod of iron"].

[Now comes a closer examination of the principle of holiness that distinguishes resurrection life from the corruption of the flesh.] *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye [not literal eye, otherwise why the "right" eye] offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell [the thoroughness of resurrection holiness, hardly to be compared with life under the influence of the flesh]. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body go into hell. [Now to make sure someone doesn't construe this to recommend divorce for any offense:] It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery [not to be taken to mean that marriage will be part of life in the resurrection].*

[Now an example of righteous conduct:] *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king [the Christ]. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay [not "Yes by x"]: for whatsoever is more than these commeth of evil [or the evil one].*

[An example of kingdom conduct by its peacemakers, forgivers:] *Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

[In view of the kingdom, prove yourself reliable for service now:] *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

The immediate context in Matthew 6 (ASV):

And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread [Greek: bread for the coming day]. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For if ye forgive men [others] their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you [that you may be worthy to serve in the kingdom]. But if ye forgive not men [others] their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

...

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things [including daily bread] shall be added unto you [in that day]. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow [the kingdom]: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Notes:

When Messiah became physically present in Israel, it constituted an eschatological storm (and crisis for the enemy). Suddenly the sacred prophecies of old had reared up: the prophetic silence had been shattered; Isaiah and the prophets had been vindicated; and the prophesied kingdom of God was at hand! The judgment of the nations would be next (as in Zephaniah 3:8 and many other OT passages).

The establishment doubted this, but the devil did not. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8): Jesus could fulfill the prophecies by taking an easy way, avoiding the suffering. When Jesus instructed his disciples to pray, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one," it had been his prayer too.

Jesus knew more about the kingdom than did even the published prophets. He describes it in Matt. 5-7 and instructs how to pray for it:

Our Father who art in heaven

The Jews understood from Scripture that Yahweh God had represented himself uniquely to them as their Father (Psalm 89:26 etc.)—not meaning as Abraham was their father by ancestry, and not merely as their Creator. This was adoption. We address their condescending Father who stole them away from demon-infested idols.

Hallowed be thy name

As the names of deities competed for recognition, the particular name of Israel's Father was held in such high esteem that it was not actually spoken: it was that holy, utterly separate from the names of demon counterfeits. Thus this clause joins the preceding phrase as part of the salutation. Or as the New English Translation renders it, "May your name be honored," which makes it the first element of the prayer proper, and as such it leads into the next verse:

Thy kingdom come

When the devil attempted to tempt Jesus, he offered him all the kingdoms of the world as if they were his, and Jesus did not rebuke him for saying that. Now Jesus is urging his disciples to pray that the kingdom according to heaven will supersede Satan's domains.

(Do we agree? Or are we satisfied being citizens of one of Satan's kingdoms on earth? For which do we pray most fervently?)

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven

This must be seen as the second half of the couplet. The break between it and the previous clause is incorrect, yet nearly all translations use Augustine's full stop. (The NET is an exception.) Clearly this complements "thy kingdom come," and should be joined to it.

Give us this day our daily bread

(*Give us bread for the coming day* is another translation.)

You can break the prayer here if you like and take this to mean food for the body. Is that in accord with the context? If we lift our thoughts above the mundane and seek to understand the Savior's heart and the exciting context of this teaching, you will remember that he used bread to symbolize the means of forgiveness and new life.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ... if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. (John 6:48-51 ASV)

The children of Israel could (and we can) pray for food for the belly and die in the wilderness. Or better, pray for the bread of life and receive forgiveness and faith to enter the promised land.

And forgive us our trespasses

In the wilderness the children of Israel trespassed against the commandments given through Moses, which prevented their generation from experiencing the promised land. Likewise trespasses unforgiven will keep us from inheriting in his kingdom.

As we forgive those who trespass against us

Our Lord goes on to expound this in the verses immediately following the prayer. The way it is stated makes it appear as a works-based formula: we must forgive before we can be forgiven. But what is the mark of one who has been forgiven? Is not an unforgiving heart what needs to be regenerated before it can become a forgiving heart? So the two are tied together. He is making it very clear that one cannot expect to have responsibility in the kingdom and maintain an unforgiving spirit.

Lead us not into temptation [or trial] but deliver us from evil [or the evil one].

As the disciples looked forward to the kingdom they were aware of Scriptures that predicted transitional havoc. So while they may have applied this to their immediate trials at the hands of unbelievers, they must have understood that this prayer was primarily intended to keep them from the time of trial during the judgment of nations.

Today we stand in that same position. Worldwide testing such that everyone will be tempted to abandon the faith is on the horizon. The danger in that period is being deceived by antichrists. Even as Jesus was tempted by the devil, so the disciples might have been tempted. Evidently Judas Iscariot neglected to apply the Lord's Prayer.

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