

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Luke

SB_LK11_Disciples' Prayer, Pharisees Blasphemy, Woes, & Sign of Jonah

Jesus' Model Prayer for His Disciples (11:1-4)

Jesus prayed often according to Scripture. It is evident that Jesus considered prayer to be essential because he prayed before every crisis in His public ministry:

- At His baptism (3:21)
- When He chose the twelve (6:12)
- Prayed for Simon/Peter (22:32)
- Prior to His betrayal in the garden (22:40-44)
- On the Cross (23:46)

In addition, Jesus often withdrew to pray alone (5:16; 9:18) and on other occasions, He had others around Him (9:28-29). The point is that prayer was a vital part of our Lord's life and His prayer life indicates the importance God places upon daily communion between His subjects and the heavenly Father. This fact so impressed one of Jesus' disciples so much that he asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

We have studied the dispensational issues relating to this prayer in our study of Matthew. Therefore, I would like to look at this prayer from a different perspective in our current study. In this prayer, Jesus begins with an intimate address to the heavenly Father which indicates Jesus' submission to the Father's authority. This passage is one of many (i.e. xxx) that provide support for the divine order within the Trinity, i.e. Father = author of the plan, Son = executer of the plan, and the Holy Spirit = revealer of the plan.

- **"Father, hallowed be Thy name"** - The Greek word for "hallowed" is $\epsilon\upsilon\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\eta\iota$ (*hagiasothe sto*) and means to treat as holy. Jesus was teaching His disciples to acknowledge the supremacy of God's essence, plan, and purpose in the world.
- **"Thy kingdom come"** – This request by a disciple to God in prayer would have identified the disciple with the gospel of the kingdom preached by John the Baptist, Jesus and Jesus' other disciples. The request would have represented a desire on the part of the disciple that God's will be accomplished.
- **"Give us each day our daily bread"** – This request represented an acknowledgement that the believer is dependent upon God's grace each day to sustain him logistically. Notice that the prayer is not for earthly riches, but merely a request for daily sustenance. See also 9:3 cf. 12:6-7.
- **"And forgive us our sins"** – This was Jesus' instruction for His disciples, not a request He ever had to make. The disciple making such a request was acknowledging his need for mercy and expressing faith that God would forgive. Such a request implies a lack of self-righteousness for it acknowledges the one and only source of righteousness.
- **"For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us"** – Jesus is not making the Father's forgiveness contingent upon whether the disciple forgave. Rather, the disciple's forgiveness of others was evidence of a thankful attitude because he had been forgiven.
- **"And lead us not into temptation"** – This is a request that God would deliver them from situations that would cause them to sin. Such a request would imply that the disciple realized his weak and depraved nature while at the same time demonstrate the disciple's desire to live a holy and righteous life.

Jesus' instructions regarding prayer were certainly set within the context of the Age of Israel in which believer's awaited the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth through the coming of the long promised Messiah. While this prayer must be interpreted in this historical and dispensational context in order to appreciate its intended meaning, there are principles of

prayer illustrated in this model from which we can benefit. For instance, our prayer life should acknowledge the supremacy of the essence and plan of God. Our prayer life should reflect our utter dependence upon God's mercy and thereby be a denial of our own self-righteousness. Our prayer life is a reflection of our faith in God.

Jesus Teaches Persistence in Prayer (11:5-13)

In this pericope, Jesus is simply teaching the principle that the believer should be persistent in his/her pursuit of God's merciful provision through prayer. Persistence is a bold means of demonstrating one's faith in the source of all provision. Jesus uses the present tense for "seek," "knock," and "ask" in order to emphasize the need for persistence. The emphasis is upon the continual action required. We should not be timid in the exercise of our faith.

It is interesting that the parallel account for these verses in the Gospel of Matthew are set within the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the righteousness, sincerity, humility, purity, and love that would characterize the lives and attitudes of those who were ready to enter the Kingdom. Such characteristics would only be manifest in those who were persistent in prayer.

In verse 13, Jesus uses the word "evil" in reference to the fact that man possesses the sin nature which separates him from His heavenly Father. Jesus uses such a strong word in order to amplify the contrast in His illustration. Also, the last phrase ("*...how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him*") in verse 13 is unique to Luke's account. It is this phrase that makes the instruction here uniquely Jewish since the Church Age believer has the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13-14) and does not need to ask for the endowment with the Holy Spirit as the believer did in the Age of Israel (Psa 51:11).

A House Divided Cannot Stand (11:14-23)

In verse 19 and the parallel passage in Matthew (Matt 12:22-30), Jesus acknowledges that some of the religious leaders of the Jews cast out demons (Matt 12:27 – "*And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out?*"). These religious leaders most likely claimed that it was accomplished by the power of God. However, if Jesus cast out demons in such a decisive way by the power of Satan, how could Satan's kingdom stand? The conclusion that Jesus wanted His hearers to reach was that He cast out demons because He was the Son of God, whereas the religious leaders (who were unbelievers) cast out demons via the power of Satan. Jesus was a threat to the kingdom of Satan; however, the religious leaders were not a threat, but as unbelievers, they advanced the kingdom of Satan.

Principle: Satan can and does use unbelievers to do "good" things that on the surface seem to work against his kingdom, e.g. casting out demons and performing miracles. Today these manifestations of power can even be done in the name of Jesus. It is a case of sacrificing a battle in an attempt to win the war.

In Luke 11:21-22, the strong man is Satan and "his own palace" is the world over which he is the temporary ruler. The one "stronger than he" is a reference to Jesus. Jesus' point is that He is in the process of overthrowing Satan's kingdom and will one day divide the spoils among His own. The "spoils" is a reference to the spiritual assets which would have and which one day will belong to those believers who enter the earthly Messianic kingdom. It just so happens that many of the same spiritual assets which would have and which one day will be possessed by those entering the Messianic kingdom on earth are also possessed by the Church Age believer, e.g. the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (compare Eph 1:13-14 – CA believer with Joel 2:28-32; John 14:17; & Acts 2:17-21; 3:19 – predictions of Messianic kingdom blessings).

Jesus Teaches Regarding Demons and the Religious Leaders Ask for a Sign (11:24-32)

Aspects of this passage are not very clear on the surface to say the least. However, the key to its understanding is in the distinction between the spiritual life that God requires and the religious life that is produced in the energy of the flesh. The following points should help.

- The background for this passage is the Beelzebub controversy, i.e. the religious leaders accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan (11:15) and ask for a sign (11:16) and Jesus' retort in verses 17-23.
- As a part of His response to the religious leaders request for a sign, Jesus contrasts the response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah's preaching and the desire for truth manifested by the Queen of Sheba (11:29-32).
- The religious leaders (and their followers) of Jesus' generation have seen miracle after miracle, yet remain neutral or uncommitted to Him.
- Jesus compares them to a man who had found deliverance from a demon (perhaps through exorcism by a Pharisee), who, after being delivered, tries to clean up his life and put it in order through natural means, i.e. the religious observations and requirements of the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees (11:24-26).
- The point Jesus makes in these verses is that mere religion is never satisfactory and the man lacked the power to resist the onslaught from Satan and his emissaries. The nation was merely like whitewashed tombstones (Matt 23:27) – beautiful on the outside, but full of death and without spiritual life on the inside.
- This only made the man more subject to Satanic influence with even more serious ramifications. Instead of one demon possessing him, he became possessed by seven other spirits and his last condition or state was worse than the first.
- The man represented the spiritual state of Israel. The religious leaders of Israel and their followers were in danger of that happening to them because their attempts at reformation, without the power of God, were sterile. They did not understand the power of God and confused the power of Satan with the power of God.
- The religious leaders were asking for a sign acceptable to them. They had seen a number of miracles which they attributed to the power of Satan, but they wanted a “sign” to be performed immediately on command that would convince them otherwise.
- The unbelief of the Pharisees was manifest by the fact that they addressed Him as “Teacher.”
- The fact that Jesus referred to the Jews as an “evil” (Luke 11:29) or “adulterous” (Matt 12:39) generation would have raised the ire of the Pharisees. They understood quite clearly what Jesus implied.
 - Spiritual adultery by Israel was a familiar theme of the Hebrew prophets, e.g. Is 57:1-13; Jer 3:8-10; 13:27; 31:32; Ezek 16:15ff; 23:1ff; Hos 3:1.
 - Spiritual adultery by Israel occurred whenever Israel rejected the Lord and pursued the gods and false security provided by alliances with other nations.
 - Jesus was indicating that the Pharisees were no better since they rejected the Messiah and His kingdom in favor of a false, non-spiritual religion that was protected under Roman law. Jesus was threatening the power structure these religious leaders had in place, thus their security.
 - The only sign that Jesus mentions is the sign that demonstrated their rejection of Him. By then, it would be too late for them to accept His right to rule over them.
 - Israel had largely abandoned her idolatry and syncretism after the Babylonian exile. Now Jesus insists that she was still adulterous in heart.
- The generation that Jesus addressed had an unusual privilege that was afforded to no other generation.
 - The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of a mere man, Jonah.
 - The Queen of Sheba (1 Ki 10:1-13) traveled a great distance to listen to the wisdom of Solomon.
 - The response of the Ninevites and the Queen was commendable.
 - However, Jesus' generation had something greater.

- The phrase in verse 31 – “a greater than” (NKJV) and “One greater than” (NIV) should be translated “something greater than” as it is in the New American Standard Version (NASV).
 - The phrase “One greater than” is the neuter (not masculine) form of the Greek word $\alpha\alpha\bullet\blacklozenge\blacksquare$ (πολις).
 - In the neuter this is a reference to the kingdom that Jesus offered.

The Lamp of the Body (11:33-36)

In these verses, Jesus is not focusing upon the physical eye and what one sees through the physical eye. Rather, Jesus is focusing upon one’s spiritual focus. Jesus’ point is that to the extent that one does not have the correct spiritual focus, then to that extent one is spiritually blind. The eye to which Jesus refers is equivalent to the heart or mind of man. The heart set on God so as to hold to His laws was what God desired of the Jew (Psa 119:18, 148 cf. 119:36-37). When Jesus exhorts His disciples to “take heed that the light which is in them is not darkness”, He is referring to the fact that the soul of a man can be filled with Satan’s cosmic thought which is darkness. The same principle is found in Church Age epistles (Eph 4:17-24; 5:8-14).

Woe to the Religious Leaders of Israel (11:37-54)

In this passage, if Jesus spared any words, I would not want to hear what He would have said otherwise. This passage represents one of the most stunning rebukes ever given by Jesus and the religious leaders respond in their typical self-righteous and vehement fashion. In verses 37-41, Jesus turns the ritualistic and religious focus of the Pharisee toward the cleanliness of the soul versus the cleanliness of the body. One indication of their cleanliness on the inside would be their willingness to give material things to the poor instead of their selfish accumulation of wealth.

The religious leaders were so wrapped up in their traditions and their interpretations of the Law that they even attempted to tithe a tenth of their spices (herbs). The Law did contain guidance regarding the tithing of food (Deut 14:22-29); however, the tithing of what constituted food was somewhat open to interpretation (Lev 27:30). The Pharisees were careful to include the smallest of herbs, yet they did so without the proper attitude that God sought. They did not have an attitude of love, mercy and justice (Mic 6:8; Zech 7:8-10).

Rather than providing guidance to people, Jesus taught that the religious leaders caused those who followed them to be unknowingly contaminated. There was no way one could keep all of the various traditions of the Jewish religious leaders in their self-righteous attempt to define the Law. Instead, the Jew was destined to become an unwitting violator of the Jewish legal traditions in the same manner as the Jew who unknowingly stepped on an unmarked grave became ceremonially unclean (Num 19:16).

In verse 51, the blood of Abel and the blood of Zechariah refers to the killing of innocent men involved in serving God. Abel was the first innocent victim (Ge 4:8) and Zechariah the priest was the last martyr in the Hebrew Scripture order (2 Chron 24:20-21). Jesus indicates that they have taken away the key of knowledge. This is most likely a reference to a proper understanding of the Scriptures (which had been distorted by their traditions) or a reference to Jesus Himself, Who was the key to understanding the prophecies of Scripture.