

The Church of the Servant King
Home Bible Study
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
(Lesson SB-6A)
Matthew Chapter 6:1-15

Focus Upon Pleasing God, Not Man (6:1-4)

- In chapter 5, Jesus instructed His disciples of the superior righteousness that was expected of them. In these verses, Jesus is warning them of the danger of religious hypocrisy, i.e. being focused upon pleasing other men.
- This passage is not in conflict with Jesus' instruction in 5:14-16 where the motive is that praise might be given to God the Father. Righteous conduct under kingdom norms must be visible for praise to be given to God the Father.
- Those who ignore the warning against improper motivation in this passage will get what they want, but no more, i.e. the praise of men.
- The reference to the sounding of a trumpet has been interpreted by many to refer to the practice of blowing trumpets at the time of the collection of alms. However, there are no Jewish sources to confirm this view. Perhaps a better view is that public fasts were proclaimed by the sounding of trumpets. At these times, prayers for rain were recited in the streets and it was widely believed that alms-giving insured the effectiveness of the fasts and the prayers. (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 164) Regardless, Jesus and His disciples were obviously aware of the ostentatious and hypocritical nature of these acts by the religious crowd whereby the religious leaders sought to affirm in their own minds their acceptance by God as a result of the accolades of the people.

The Model Prayer (6:5-15 with emphasis on 8b-13)

- Jesus is obviously not teaching against either giving of one's resources or time or against prayer. The focus is upon inner motivation.
- The person who prays more in public than in private would need to take heed to Jesus' words.
- The true Lord's prayer is found in John 17. Matthew 6:8b-13 is a model prayer for Jesus' disciples.
- There are different views regarding this passage; however, I believe that the appropriate view is to realize that this was a prayer that Jesus taught His disciples regarding the Messianic Kingdom. The disciples had just recently heard Jesus proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom (4:17, 23) and teach principles relating to the mindset that would characterize those prepared to enter the Kingdom (5:3-10). All of Jesus' instruction to the disciples at this point in His ministry was Jewish in orientation. There is not one hint of the Church.
- Those who apply this prayer to the Church by encouraging group recitation are encouraging mindless repetition in my opinion. Most of those who recite this prayer in a group setting have no clue as to its relationship to the future Messianic Kingdom on earth.
- There are certainly aspects of this prayer that can benefit the Church Age believer to understand and for the Church Age believer to long for the coming of the Kingdom to earth with the understanding that the Rapture will precede that Kingdom is not wrong. As a matter of fact, that attitude is commendable.
- Based upon the manner in which events have actually transpired in history, this prayer will be uttered by those in the Tribulation who are subsisting day to day based upon the very real provision of God for their daily sustenance in the face of Satanic attempts to destroy them via the Antichrist.
- No where in teaching to the Church Age believer is there any instruction that we are forgiven our debts based upon how we forgive our debtors. Rather, the instruction is quite to the contrary. See Ephesians 4:32 – "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

- The absence of teaching regarding prayer offered in the Lord's name is noteworthy. Jesus taught this principle later in His ministry when it became apparent that He had not been accepted as the Messiah of Israel and that He would go to the Cross and a new Age would come that had not been previously anticipated (John 14:16; 16:13, 24; Matt 16:18).
- Among dispensationalists, there are those who apply the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5-7 to the Church. We will later see that these dispensationalists believe that there is a mystery form of the kingdom that includes the present Church Age and also the Tribulation. They accept a future, literal Kingdom on earth; however, they believe that there is a Kingdom that is present on earth today in mystery form. According to them, it does not have the political and socio-economic infrastructure that will characterize the future Millennial Kingdom, nevertheless it is present.
- There are many problems with this view that we will discuss later; however, for the purpose of the present discussion, the biggest problem is that it seems to ignore the possibility (reality) that while the Church Age believer will be a participant in the future Kingdom of Christ, it doesn't mean that there is a present form of the Kingdom today to which Christ's teaching applies.