

## Sermon on the Mount—Alms, Prayer, Fasting Part 2

### Matthew 6:1—18

To properly interpret Matthew it is imperative to keep in mind why and to whom it is written. Jesus' ministry was to Israel alone and His disciples were told the same thing.

**Matthew 15:24** But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

**Matthew 10:5—6** <sup>5</sup>These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: <sup>6</sup>But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus was dealing through Israel to ultimately reach the whole world. When the Gentiles rejected God at the Tower of Babel God raise up Israel as the nation through whom He would reveal Himself. God was still dealing with Israel when Jesus was on earth. Once Israel believed then He would use Israel to reach the Gentiles.

**Romans 11:30—32** <sup>30</sup>For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: <sup>31</sup>Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. <sup>32</sup>For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Jesus is now gathering believing Israel together and preparing them to enter the Millennial (earthly) Kingdom that was to be set up very soon. Much of that preparation for the Kingdom was in readying them to go through the Tribulation. Matthew focuses on Christ as King and His soon-to-come Kingdom.

#### Father in secret

Last week we noticed that the Father is said to be in secret (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18). It's not that the Father just isn't visible, He has secreted Himself away. Ezekiel tells the sad story of God leaving Solomon's Temple. He will not return to fill the temple with His glory until the Millennial temple has come down from heaven (Ezekiel 40—43).

**Ezekiel 43:4** And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.

God left Israel just before the Babylonian Captivity and has not returned since. God was no longer dwelling with Israel and will not dwell with her until after the Second Coming of Christ. Christ will rule from the temple and God's glory will fill the temple as in the first temple.

**I Kings 8:10-11** <sup>10</sup>And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, <sup>11</sup>so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

#### God hiding His face

God told Moses and Joshua that Israel would seek after the gods of other nations and that He would hide His face from Israel.

**Deuteronomy 31:16—18** <sup>16</sup>And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. <sup>17</sup>Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? <sup>18</sup>And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

Scripture speaks of a very specific time when Israel will cry out to God for help but it will appear that He does not hear because He has hidden His face from Israel. This will happen during the Tribulation. It is at the end of the Tribulation that God will finally reveal Himself to Israel when He comes to set up His Kingdom.

**Mica 3:4** Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

**Ezekiel 39:23—39** <sup>23</sup>And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. <sup>24</sup>According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. <sup>25</sup>Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; <sup>26</sup>After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. <sup>27</sup>When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; <sup>28</sup>Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. <sup>29</sup>Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

This all fits in with this section of the Sermon on the Mount. Christ is calling out and preparing the remnant of believers who will be going through the Tribulation and then into the Kingdom.

### The “Lord’s” Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer should really be called the disciple’s prayer since the Lord was teaching them how to pray. This remnant of believers (as opposed to the proud leaders) were to pray this prayer in private and not to do it in a manner that would constitute vain repetitions. Those who practice the repeating of this prayer certainly would agree that they are doing it repetitiously but would disagree that it is done in vain. I contend that Christ did not intend for this prayer to be continually repeated AND since this prayer is not directed to the Church, the Body of Christ it can only be done in vain.

Understanding the focus of Matthew is the key to understanding the meaning of this prayer. Matthew is always looking to the King, His Kingdom, the believers who will enter into the Kingdom and the Tribulation they must endure to enter the Kingdom. This prayer is a Tribulational prayer that will be prayed by the remnant of Israel going through the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) before Christ’s Second Coming. Let’s break it down with that in mind.

#### Our Father which art in heaven

God set up His dwelling place in the temple. He made His habitation with Israel but Israel polluted His dwelling by whoring with other gods. God could no longer stay with Israel and so He departed. Now we see God in heaven. This wasn’t what God wanted but Israel gave Him no other choice but to leave. Now in the Tribulation Israel is calling on God who is now in heaven. He is far from them and their prayers seem to go no farther than the ceiling.

#### Hallowed be thy name

The remnant is praying for God’s name to be hallowed (holy, sanctified). A literal translation would say something like this: “Let be sanctified your name.” Israel profaned the name of God to the heathen nations (Gentiles) by including God with all the other gods they worshipped. Now the righteous remnant of Israel is not just acknowledging God’s holiness but praying that His name BE holy among the nations. According to prophecy God will make His name holy by coming back and cleansing Israel. His name being hallowed is directly connected to the Second Coming and to His cleansing of Israel.

**Leviticus 22:32** Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you,

**Ezekiel 36:20—28** <sup>20</sup>And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned [made common] my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. <sup>21</sup>But I had pity [cared greatly] for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. <sup>22</sup>Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. <sup>23</sup>And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. <sup>24</sup>For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup>Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. <sup>26</sup>A new heart also will I give you, and a

new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. <sup>28</sup>And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

#### **Thy kingdom come...**

In light of the focus of Matthew, this is a direct request by the righteous remnant going through the Tribulation for Christ to come in His glory, defeat their enemies and set up His Kingdom. It doesn't take much thought to see that God's will is not currently being done on earth. The rule of a heavenly Kingdom certainly is not in charge of the governments on earth right now. Another way to look at it is that the governments of this world certainly are not conforming themselves to heavenly principles. When Christ comes back in glory it can then be said that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

#### **Give us this day our daily bread**

How ridiculous it is for us to pray for our daily bread when most of us have at least two to three weeks of food in the house. How even more bizarre it is to pray this prayer sitting around a dinner table filled with food. It doesn't make sense to ask for something you already have. It would be much more appropriate to thank God for His bountiful supply of food instead of asking for our daily supply of food.

On the other hand, this request make so much more sense if you see the Little Flock of Israel going through the Tribulation and completely dependant upon God to supply their very next meal because they are unable to buy or sell. Just as He supplied Israel with manna in the wilderness He will supply the remnant with the sustenance they need (Matthew 6:25—34). Some Gentiles, who perhaps will take the mark of the beast during the Tribulation but not worship the beast (Revelation 14:11), will be supplying Israel with needed goods (Matthew 25:32—46).

#### **Forgive us our debts...**

Israel operated on a series of conditional promises. If they obeyed God they were blessed. If they went against God they were cursed. In this case they would not be forgiven if they did not forgive. This edict only applies between Israelites because they were all God's people and they were not to be indebted to each other as the Law stipulated (Deuteronomy 15:2—18; Leviticus 25:39—43). In this case Christ expands upon the Law stating that Israelites are to forgive those who have sinned against them. The Law gives external rules and now Christ gives an internal rule, one from the heart.

**Matthew 6:14—15** <sup>14</sup>For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Additional teaching is found in Matthew 18 where Peter asks Jesus how often he should forgive his brother. Peter was thinking seven times would do it but Christ comes up with 70 x 7 or 490 times. This is usually spiritualized to mean there is no limit as to how often we should forgive our brother that has offended us but Jesus really had something much more specific in mind.

It seems strange that Jesus said to forgive 490 times until we realize that this number is exactly the same number of years of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24). Daniel laid out the number of years that would pass from the building of the wall of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity until the end of the Tribulation. During this span of time God has been longsuffering towards the Jews as they time after time turned their backs on God. God had to forgive them time after time but still reached out in love to them giving them the opportunity to repent. God will ultimately forgive Israel at the end of the 490 prophetic years which is at the end of the Tribulation.

The parable that follows shows the concept of the King (God) forgiving Israel of a debt so great that they would never be able to pay it back on their own, that of killing their Messiah. God in His compassion toward Israel heard Jesus' plea for Israel's forgiveness and allowed one more year to try to turn their hearts toward Him (Luke 13:6—9). The leaders in Jerusalem represent Israel. It was these self-righteous leaders who mistreated the Little Flock of believers causing them to be scattered. These evil Israelites are

represented in the parable as the ones who did not forgive the believing remnant and were thus turned over to the tormentors.

Compare that with the Church, the Body of Christ. We are told to forgive because we have been forgiven. We are to be kind to each other and show love toward each other unconditionally.

**Ephesians 4:31—32** <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: <sup>32</sup>And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

#### **Lead us not into temptation...**

This time of temptation is the Tribulation when evil will be ruling and all godliness will be in hiding. These saints will be praying to get out from under this time of testing and purification. Israel will be tried by fire (Zechariah 13:9) with the righteous coming out pure and ready to enter into the Kingdom. The promise to Israel is that the Lord can deliver them. Psalm 23 is a picture of the righteous remnant of Israel going through the Tribulation while being protected and lead by God.

**James 1:2** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

**2 Peter 2:9** The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

#### **Kingdom, power and glory**

The kingdom, power and glory all belong to God. It's interesting to see that God gave King Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, power and glory (Daniel 2:37) but when he proclaimed all these things came by his own doing then God took them away (Daniel 4:30—31).

King David on the other hand understood God is the One who possesses the Kingdom, power and glory. When the Millennial Kingdom comes God will no longer give man the power to rule over the earth. Christ will have the Kingdom, the power and all the glory. Acknowledgement of God's eternal glory in the eternal Kingdom will be done by the remnant of believing Israel as they look upward for the face of God coming to save them. In contrast to this the unbelievers of the world will be begging for the rocks to fall on them as God and the Lamb come back in glory at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 6:15—17)\*.

**1 Chronicles 29:10—12** <sup>10</sup>Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. <sup>11</sup>Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. <sup>12</sup>Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

\* Note: I believe John wrote in a cyclical instead of a linear manner. Most interpretations of Revelation assume he wrote linearly by describing each event as if they were happening according to a timeline. By writing in a cyclical manner I believe the seals gave an overview of the whole Tribulation while the trumpets and bowls filled in slightly different details within the time frame of the seals. The sixth seal would then be towards the end of the Tribulation and the seventh seal (Revelation 7:1) details the silence just before the Second Coming.

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