

Why The Lord's Prayer Is Wrong

Many in the world say the "Lord's Prayer" from memory as part of their worship to God, either daily, special events, or as part of the formal praise and worship services. Matthew 6:9-13 has been memorized over and over again and used as a primary prayer. The problem is that to do such a thing goes against what Jesus is trying to teach.

First, let's examine the context of the prayer. Jesus is giving this prayer as part of His "Sermon on the Mount." He's laying out the foundations of His ministry, and giving out a new idea which harkens back to a time before the Law of Moses, and is radically different than the laws and traditions of the Jews of the day. In this sermon immediately before the "Lord's Prayer", in verses 5 and 6, we are given some insight to the prayers that others, presumably the Jewish leadership, gave. They would stand in public places like the synagogue or a street corner where as many people could see them as possible, and pray. The text doesn't say how they were going about it, but I presume they would do so loudly as to draw attention to themselves. They did it for the show; people to look at them and say, "What a devout man he is!" Like an actor on stage, they would get their reward. They would perform, and the crowd would react. That's all.

Many say the "Lord's Prayer" in chorus. It's a prayer for all to say with a leader to direct the group. Is this very different? Some may say yes, and some may say no. To the "no" folks, it's likely the idea of beginning a prayer for everyone to say. What about the saying of the words? Look at verse 7. He tells us not to heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles. It's likely the Jewish leadership were doing this as well, using flowery language that made what they're saying sound impressive, but meant nothing. The Gentiles would have prayers they would say over and over again without any real meaning behind it. I would even challenge that many say the "Lord's Prayer" over and over again without any real meaning behind it. They say it because they've been taught to say it, and if the Lord said it, then it had to be good.

Again, why is the Teacher saying this? Is He actually praying? We're not given the mannerisms, gestures, flavor of His voice, or any other idea of how He said this, but, from what I can see, this is not a prayer at all. Look at the beginning of verse 9: "Pray then like this:" He's setting forth a construct; scaffolding on which to build; bare bones on which to flesh out. Jesus didn't mean for it to be said like it is over and over again. He just spoke against such a thing in the previous breath!

Now, one more thing: you might be saying, "I don't vainly repeat just something I know. It has a deep spiritual meaning to me!" I understand what you're saying, but I want you to explain why you say, as Jesus did in verse 10, "Thy kingdom come ...". At the time of Jesus' life, the Law of Moses was still in effect. Jesus was a Jew, and lived under Jewish Law. His teachings laid the foundations of what was to come.

What was to come? The kingdom! If we stay with Matthew we can see Jesus say that the kingdom is at hand twice in several locations such as 4:17 and 10:7, and John

saying it in 3:2. To say that the kingdom is at hand means that it's almost here. The time is short. Even with more immediate warning, we can see in Mark 9:1 that there are people alive that day who will see the kingdom come with power. Acts 2 tells us about the kingdom being established on the day of Pentecost, and we call it the church today.

So, if the kingdom is here, why do people who say the "Lord's Prayer" not believe the Bible? Do they think Jesus is a liar? Or have they learned something through tradition and say it in vain?

Praying is a wonderful thing. To communicate with God is required of us, and it's comforting and necessary to our lives. Do it with sincerity. Don't just repeat what you've heard, but pour it out from your heart. God loves you, and He wants to hear from you.

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