

PRAYING TO BRING IN THE KINGDOM

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:8-13 , 32-33

AN IMPROPER UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING PRAYER

Many people have an improper understanding that prayer involves merely petitioning God related to certain needs, but this is not the case. In Matthew 6 the Lord spoke to the disciples, saying, “Do not be anxious for your life, what you should eat or what you should drink; nor for your body, what you should put on...For all these things the Gentiles are anxiously seeking. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom...and all these things will be added to you” (vv. 25 , 32-33). The Father knows all our daily needs, such as employment, shelter, and marriage (v. 8); and He will take care of these things according to His will. We do not need to pray for these things, because the Father God knows better than we do concerning all these matters. We should not waste time praying for such things.

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER BEING TO BRING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In verses 9 through 13 the Lord taught the disciples to pray in this way: “Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Many Christians regard this as a prayer formula and recite it whenever they pray. However, this was not the Lord’s intention; rather, His intention was to show the purpose of prayer as well as the things for which we should pray.

At the beginning and the end of the Lord’s prayer, He mentioned the kingdom. He began, saying, “Our Father who is in the heavens...Your kingdom come” (vv. 9-10). And He ended, saying, “Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” (v. 13). This indicates that the Lord desires that our prayer would be wholly for the kingdom. The kingdom is the realm in which God can exercise His power and manifest His glory. If God does not have a kingdom, He cannot execute His authority, and His glory cannot be manifested. Thus, the Lord’s prayer was for the kingdom. God’s authority can be carried out and His glory can be manifested only in the kingdom.

At the beginning of the prayer the Lord said, “Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth” (vv. 9-10). The first thing we should pay attention to in prayer is not to pray on behalf of ourselves or of others but on behalf of God. God wants us to pray on His

behalf because He has many great things yet to be done on the earth and an eternal plan yet to be accomplished. There are three conditions present on earth today: First, God's name has not yet been sanctified. People reject and blaspheme God's name, making the names of many other gods equal to His name rather than sanctifying His name, regarding it as the only name worthy of honor. Second, God's kingdom is not yet upon the earth; God's authority has not yet reached the earth. Today God rules in the heavens but not on the earth. Third, God's will cannot be done on earth because His authority has been frustrated on the earth. The Lord's authority in the universe is attacked and restricted because of Satan's rebellion. The whole universe is in a state of chaos and corruption because of Satan's rebellion and man's fall. Consequently, God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will cannot be fully established on the earth.

Nevertheless, God follows the principle of never dealing with Satan, a rebellious creature, based on His status as the Creator. Instead, He has ordained that created man would deal with the created and rebellious archangel Satan (Isa. 14:12 ; Heb. 2:14). Therefore, God needs us to stand with Him and offer warring prayers for His interests. Our prayer gives God the ground, the standing, and the authority to carry out His will so that God can deal with Satan's rebellion and shame him. When Satan's authority is dealt with and God's authority reaches the earth, His will can be carried out on the earth, and He can return to the earth to establish His kingdom and reign so that His name would be sanctified on the earth.

May we receive mercy and light to see the real meaning of prayer. May we not pray merely for our daily needs, for healing from our sicknesses, or for our problems to be solved. These prayers do not have much value before God. Our prayers must have a direct or at least an indirect connection to His throne. We must pray for God's name to be sanctified, His kingdom to come, and His will to be done on earth. The purpose of our prayer is to bring in God's kingdom because the problems in the universe remain, God's authority is still not manifested, and His will is frustrated from being carried out on earth. God needs us, His creatures, to cooperate with Him and co-labor with Him in prayer to fight for Him and to deal with His enemy so that His authority and will can be carried out on earth.