



Living in the Last Days - Prayer
How Important is Prayer and What Should We Be Praying For?
Matthew 4:17
Jeremiah 23:1-6

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Matthew 4:17

“From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”” (NASB 2020)

When Jesus Christ began His ministry, after standing and resisting Satan succeeding where the nation had failed in the Exodus. These are the first words heard. The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.



And it truly was contingent upon the nation accepting their Messiah, whom they would quickly reject. That taking place at the hands of the religious leaders who then began to influence the crowds.

Matthew 12:22–24

“Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to Jesus, and He healed him so that the man who was unable to speak talked and could see. **And all the crowds were amazed and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?” But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”**” (NASB 2020)

And from that point forward, Jesus began teaching only through parables. The Messiah had been rejected and with His rejection, the Kingdom was postponed. Instead of blessings for the nation, curses and the diaspora across the surface of the planet.

There is also a very disturbing prophesy, several in fact that talk about the shepherds of the people, those who were the spiritual leadership, abrogating their job and instead intentionally misleading the people. Jeremiah was the first to warn about this and he also reflected the impact as well as a hint of what it would be like when the nation would finally return.

Jeremiah 23:1–8

“**“Woe to the shepherds who are causing the sheep of My pasture to perish and are scattering them!” declares the LORD. Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel says concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not been concerned about them; behold, I am going to call you to account for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD. “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will live securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD Our Righteousness.’** Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when they will no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought the sons of Israel up from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘**As the LORD lives, who brought up and led the descendants of the household of Israel back from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.**’ Then they will live on their own soil.”” (NASB 2020)

We are now seeing that taking place with millions of His people now returning to the land. And conditions globally are incredibly conducive for that with rampant antisemitism being the reason why many are going back to the land.

Zechariah talked, in Zechariah 11, about how the shepherds of the people would be the reason for rejection. Zechariah is commissioned by YAHWEH to portray Israel’s true Shepherd-Messiah, he will also portray the wicked shepherd pointing to the antichrist.

Zechariah 11:4–6

“This is what the LORD my God says: **“Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter.** Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and each of those who sell them says, ‘Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!’ And their own shepherds have no compassion for them. For I will no longer have compassion for the inhabitants of the land,” declares the LORD; “but behold, I will let the people fall, each into another’s power and into the power of his king; and they will crush the land, and I will not rescue them from their power.”” (NASB 2020)



Because this was one of the flocks consisting of sheep who are doomed, having been given for the purpose of sacrifice, those shepherds who were hired by the Temple to take care of them did not usually treat them well. They were not their sheep; they were simply hired to take care of the sheep.

He is specifically called to pasture or rather feed the flock that is destined for destruction. This flock is a picture of Israel as it goes racing into the future being cared for by those who feed off of them rather feed them.

He has been called to feed that flock. They are doomed.

Because he is dealing with hired hands, also a last day's picture of many of those who allege to be shepherds in various "churches" around the globe today, there is an obvious problem. One of the problems with a flock like this especially since it is hired hands who are taking care of it, is that they do not receive the best care. It is almost as if they have been abandoned and left to simply survive until time to die. No one would risk anything on these sheep. Yet they wanted these still healthy sheep to reproduce and provide revenue.

When Jesus came the first time, He found the flock being kept by hirelings who did not care for the flock, only themselves.

The shepherds of the flock in Judea had indeed prepared the flock for disaster. My concern when reading this section of scripture is this, I see the condition of the church today in what I read here as well as a condition report of many who are shepherds in name only. Jesus wrote seven letters to seven churches in Revelation giving each a report card of how they were doing as a church.

There were two churches that Jesus had nothing good to say about. The church at Sardis and the church at Laodicea. Sardis, as you study the churches, is a picture of the church of the reformation which was known for dead religion. Laodicea is a picture of the last days church where Jesus has been relegated to being on the outside looking in.

The Laodicean church is a growing segment today that thinks they have it all together, because they have money, large buildings, great programs, and popular appeal. But they are totally apostate and exist worldwide. Meanwhile the church of Sardis is theologically correct and spiritually dead. Neither one is looking for the rapture of the church.

We are looking for the rapture of the church, and we know based on the word of God that we do indeed live, right now, in the last days. Jesus Christ is about to return and remove all the crooked wicked shepherds who think they are serving but are not.

One of the conditions of the last days is that of apostasy. There were some during the time of Jesus who were looking for the Messiah, but the nation rejected Him. That is what this section of Zechariah is all about.

We are warned of a condition we see all around us now.

Matthew 24:10–12

"Then many will be led into sin, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will appear and deceive many, and **because lawlessness will increase so much, the love of many will grow cold.**" (NET 2nd ed.)

How do we pray in a time like this?



You see, we are in a time of already but not yet. Jesus is returning and His return is imminent. Remember what Jesus said when He began His ministry?

Matthew 4:17

"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for **the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" (NASB 2020)

His teaching to His disciples and to us is done in light of us living with the tension of already but not yet. Knowing the reality of our future while dealing with the grim reality of still being here on this fallen world. He gave really clear instruction.

Matthew 6:5–13

"When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But **when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private.** Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **"When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them,** for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! **Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."** (NLT)

For those of us looking for the Kingdom, Jesus tells us that praying is a given. He tells us three times here not to pray, but instead He says, "when you pray."

Here at the end of the age, living in the last days, prayer is not just a good thing to do, it is a must thing to do. Many of those shepherds at the time of Jesus, prayed to be seen, not heard by God, just like today.

Take that forward to our situation here at the end of the age. Many of the Laodicean church, which is indeed all around us, also make a show of prayer but the real question is this, is it the lifeline for them that it should be. Prayer is the lifeline of the church. If you cut off blood flow to an arm or leg, what happens? It gets numb, turns blue. Eventually, unless blood flow is restored, gangrene sets in, it will turn green, rot and die.

For all of us who follow Jesus and are living here at the end of the age, restore the blood flow. Restore the lifeline. Pray.

And as we pray, remember this, and I wish I didn't have to add this but because there is so much abysmal teaching going on I have to, God is God. God is not a great big genie in the sky waiting to hear from you or me to "order Him" so He can then express ship something to us since we have named and claimed what it is we wanted and used the right words to boot, even said it out loud without doubting or being negative about what I claimed. Did I hit all the false teaching buttons with that? I may have missed one or two. Thinking you can have God under your control and do what you want is witchcraft.

God is not a quid pro quo God. He is a promise making grace giving God who wants us to be in relationship with Him so much Jesus Christ incarnated as a man, died for our sins and then rose from the dead and ascended to the Father where He is sitting right now interceding, praying, for you and me. The one thing we have learned about prayer as we have studied Romans is this. There are no rules for prayer. There is no magic format. There no magic words. There is no magic prayer position. And if you are seriously bummed out, He wants to hear from you.



The Holy Spirit stands in us ready to take that prayer, in the right format that the Spirit knows God will indeed hear, direct to the Throne Room. We have direct access to the King. In these last days. Needed. Dr. Mitchell tells us.

Jesus never taught or practiced any special sanctimonious prayer vocabulary as part of proper prayer protocol. Jesus prayed in the same vocabulary which He used in normal conversation. (Mitchell 1977, 144)

And don't let people hang you up on, "you have to pray out loud." I have actually had folks tell me that God only hears those prayers we say out loud. I guess no one told Hannah that as God answered her prayer even though Eli thought she was drunk (1 Samuel 1:10-17). And the answer to her prayer was the Prophet and Judge, Samuel.

Nehemiah and some around him heard the problems about the walls in Jerusalem, so they prayed. Prayer in these days will reflect on you, people will know you have been in the presence of the King. Nehemiah reflected sadness which was God's attitude for the people as they needed a shepherd to lead them.

Nehemiah did not know that was to be him and when challenged by the King, he prayed silently and God answered His prayer (Nehemiah 1:4-2:6).

And then there is the command from Paul to the church in Thessalonica. A end of the age last days kind of a call which all of us would do well to keep top of mind.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." (NASB 2020)

Unceasing prayer will include prayers that are spoken, whispered, shouted, sung, and silent as we direct our thoughts of praise, petition, supplication, and thanksgiving to God. (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

So, Jesus assumes that we will be people of prayer in the last days. It is an accepted practice and then Paul says never stop. What does that actually mean?

It does not mean 24 hours 7 days per week on your knees. For me, I would last about ten minutes before my knees wanted to know what was going on.

Paul prayed regularly, so did Jesus. As a Jew, he would pray three times a day. As a Messianic Jew, that has not stopped for him. He prays and is looking to the Lord in a time of prayer specifically carved out three times a day. Daniel did that as well.

Amos 3:3

"Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?" (NLT)

When those two people agree to meet for a time of relationship and discussion, also called prayer, things begin to happen.

When you get with the Lord, there are two in the room, you and the Lord.

This is the relationship that our Lord wants to have with us here at the end of the age. He has us here for such a time as this. We are living in this time because you and I have a job to do on His behalf. And it



starts by establishing that lifeline and communion with Him so that we do life in the awareness of His continual presence knowing He is with us and knowing we can silently communicate with Him as well as verbally and know He hears us.

Romans 8:26–28

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (ESV)

In these last days fellowship with brothers and sisters is vitally important. There is no such thing as the warrior sheep Lambo out on his own someplace conquering. We are sheep.

Matthew 18:20

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (ESV)

We know that we experience that when we celebrate communion. He is right here with us right now. Is this important? Yes. Is praying together important? Yes.

Hebrews 10:23–25

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (ESV)

What the Holy Spirit has done and is doing right now for us here at Calvary Chapel is showing us the imperative nature of us being a people of prayer. But how do you do that without a building?

Pray for me as I am going to be looking for ways for us to have a place, whether it is physical or electronic, where we can come together as His people, and pray together weekly. I am looking for this initially to be something the men can do as well as women can do as two different groups.

I also want to see how we can come together as a church monthly to do the same.

As a flock that ministers to one another, I am positive that there are those, right now in the flock, who, with the help of Holy Spirit, can lead a group of men or women, in prayer. I am going to be looking for the space for that to happen, either a physical space or an electronic one.

There will be more to come on this in the next few weeks, but I want us to be a people of prayer in these last days. We must be.

Let's pray.

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