

The Lord's Prayer (Week 1)

I have been asked if we could look in detail at the Lord's Prayer. I will try to break it down into small phrases over a number of weeks. We begin with an acknowledgement of who God is and our relationship to Him.

The Context

First a bit of background to the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ on prayer. In Matthew's Gospel, the text of the Lord's Prayer is included in the Sermon on the Mount near the beginning of Our Lord's public ministry.

The text in Luke's Gospel is given in response to the disciples' request - "Teach us to pray"

Our Lord Jesus says that we are not to "*babble like the heathen*" (literal translation!). When we pray we are not giving God information that He does not already have, without which He cannot answer our prayers. Our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask Him!

Maybe the illustration of a loving earthly father, waiting (and hoping) that his child will ask for help when in need, gives us some idea of the reason for prayer.

The Lord's Prayer then is a pattern of how we should pray to our loving heavenly Father.

The Text (Matthew 6 verses 9 – 13: New International Version)

*'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

Our Father

The teaching throughout Scripture is of God as Father of mankind. In Genesis we read that God made men and women in his own image. The apostle Paul, when preaching at Athens echoed this "*. . . and He made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth . . .*" (Acts 17, verse 26). If this is so, **any** form of racism is a denial of the Fatherhood of God! That in itself is an item for sustained prayer in these uncertain times.

In learning the language of our Amerindian brethren in Northern Argentina, the "Wichi"; we had to recognise that they use distinctive pronouns for different relationships. Ojcha = my father: Ijcha = our father (family inclusive = our father but not yours!); Thajcha = father of us all. The translators of the Wichi Bible got it right when they used Thajcha, "Father of us all", in the text of the Lord's Prayer. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to say "Father of us all" when praying to the Lord God.

In Heaven

In the Bible, heaven is the dwelling place of the Lord God. In the Old Testament, the Israelite is to pray "*Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven*" (Deuteronomy 26, verse 15). King Solomon in his prayer to God at the dedication of the Temple acknowledges that "*. . . heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee . . .*". So although the dwelling place of God is said to be "in heaven" that does not, and cannot, confine Him to being "otherwise and other-where"! He is ever present with us in His Holy Spirit, strengthening and sustaining His people.

Heaven is also the abode of the angelic host (Nehemiah 9, verse 6 and Mark 13, verse 32). It is also to be the ultimate destination of His saints on earth (1 Peter 1, verse 4)

If you wish to further reflect on the relationship of mankind with God the Father, can I suggest that you read and meditate on Psalm 8.