

“Thy Kingdom Come!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

— As Precept and Prophecy



THE Bible clearly teaches that the divine purpose revolves around the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth. The drama that unfolded 2,000 years ago in the city of Jerusalem will soon be replayed upon earth. But this time the personality will not be a "carpenter's son," a "meek and mild" teacher of Nazareth, a man prepared to suffer the ignominy of a cruel and vengeful mob. When the Saviour of mankind appears for the "second" time (cp. Hebrews 9:28), he will complete the purpose of his heavenly Father to rid this world of its evil, bloodshed and violence, and establish the glorious Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus Christ will appear as the "Lord of lords, and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14), as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (ch. 5:5), with divine authority to "execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jeremiah 23:5). *This is the second stage of God's plan of salvation, and will vitally affect the way of life of every living being.* No longer will man be allowed to exert wicked dominance over his fellows. Good and wise laws will be proclaimed throughout the earth, requiring mankind to respond to God's precepts and principles in life. *But when will Jesus Christ appear?* There is clear evidence that his return is imminent. In fact, of the many Bible prophecies concerning events preceding his second coming, it appears not one remains to be fulfilled. Certain dramatic events, which have recently occurred, show conclusively that this world is on the eve of the most dramatic moment in all history: the majestic presence of earth's greatest Monarch!

HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

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DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION
OF THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD;
AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.



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"THY KINGDOM COME"

THE LORD'S PRAYER — *As Precept and Prophecy*

*"His disciples said unto him, Lord teach us how to pray" —
Luke 11:1.*

THE section of the Bible popularly described as *The Lord's Prayer* is probably the most widely known by people today. The prayer is repeated millions of times every day as people turn to God in prayer. It is often heard in the corridors of western Parliaments, as a testimony to the Christian basis of society.

But is its true meaning properly comprehended?

We believe that it is not...

THE LORD'S PRAYER EPITOMISED

"Our Father which art in heaven" — Expressing the relationship which believers can have with God through the Gospel (1John 3:2).

"Hallowed be Thy name" — Giving respect to the divine Name which is indicative of God's character and purpose, and including a prayer for the consummation of the latter in the earth (see Ezekiel 38:23).

"Thy Kingdom come" — The re-establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth (Jeremiah 3:17; Daniel 2:44).

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" — A prayer for the establishment of a divine way in the earth such as is prophesied in Isaiah 2:2-4.

"Give us this day our daily bread" — Humbly stating our utter dependence upon God as the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:7).

"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" — Recognising ourselves as sinners in need of forgiveness and redemption; the first steps to which is belief of the Gospel and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" — Seeking the guidance of God in life, recognising the power of prayer (Matthew 26:41; Luke 18:1; 1Thessalonians 5:17).

"For Thine is the kingdom" — Therefore the terms of salvation must come from God.

"And the power" — In Him there is revealed strength to conquer and overcome all the challenges of life (Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 4:13, 19).

"And the glory" — Which the Gospel invites us to share with God (Romans 5:2; 1Thessalonians 2:12; 2Peter 1:4).

"For ever" — Eternal life on earth is the offer made in the Gospel (Romans 2:7; Revelation 5:9-10).

"Amen" — The assurance that all will be fulfilled in Christ (see 2Corinthians 1:20).

The prayer was never designed for repetition; and there is no record of the Apostles ever repeating it or referring to it, after it had been delivered to them.

The Lord introduced the prayer with: *"After this manner therefore pray ye..."* (Matthew 6:9). Thus it was intended as a **pattern** prayer, into which must be built our personal petitions. As such it refers to matters that should form part of our faith and hope, and for which we should pray with understanding.

Prayer is only of power when we know for what we are praying, and earnestly desire its fulfilment. In providing us with this pattern prayer, the Lord showed that we should express our petitions simply, reverently and yet specifically.

DIVINE LOVE PERMEATES THE PRAYER

Divine love motivates every thought of the prayer. It commences by invoking God as a heavenly Father, expressing in that title the paternal love that He reveals toward Christ's followers, and the filial respect and affection that is due from them to Him.

The invocation *"Our Father who art in heaven,"* is followed by six petitions. The first three express our love of God in that we desire His honour to be widespread throughout the earth:

"Hallowed be Thy Name;

Thy Kingdom come;

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

The second three express our confidence in God's love toward us:

"Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

The prayer concludes with three statements that proclaim God's ability to grant these requests:

"For Thine is the Kingdom,

*and the Power,
and the Glory, for ever, Amen."*

Though love governs every request of the prayer, it is not that sickly, sentimentality that passes current for "love" in society today, but a divine love that develops out of an intellectual understanding of the purpose of God, and a readiness to sacrifice to please Him. God has manifested love toward humanity, and expects His creation to respond in kind. God's love to us is expressed in these terms: "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Notice that everlasting life is not inherent in us in the form of a supposed immortal soul, but is something to which we can attain. Everlasting life is the alternative to "perishing in death", that He has placed before man.

In return, we should manifest love toward God. How can we do that? Listen: "*This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments*" (1John 5:3). Love is sacrificing our self-will to serve Him. As He gave His Son, we give ourselves. We do so by obeying His commandments. Christ commanded his Apostles: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel... He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16).

If we love God, we will seek to understand the Gospel, and through baptism place ourselves in the way of salvation.

"OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN"

This statement challenges us! Can we really address God as "our Father"? Do we recognise His place in our lives: the love, respect, and obedience we should show Him? Only those who have laid hold of Christ in the way appointed can rightly use this prayer. Remember, Jesus delivered it for his disciples, and not for the world at large.

"*Our Father*" is not a title that can be used by the majority of sects in Christendom. They teach that God is a Trinity, and that the Son is equal in age, status and power with the Father. But in doing so, they destroy the real meaning of *Father*.

The requirements of the doctrine of the Trinity are contradictory. Is it possible for a son to be as old as his father? Of course it is not! Why does Christendom teach such a doctrine? Because, in fulfilment of the prediction of the apostles (2Timothy 4:3-4), false theories have been superimposed upon the original Christian faith.* Paul taught: "*There is*

* The doctrine of the Trinity, so widespread today, was not known until about 300 years after Christ. It finds no support in Scripture. Send to the address on our back cover for a free copy of the book: *God is One not Three*.

one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, Who is above all...** (Ephesians 4:5-6; 1Corinthians 8:6).

Jesus is the Son of God through birth of a virgin, but not 'God the Son'. He is specifically styled "*the only begotten Son of God*" (John 1:14), which is certainly not consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity which claims that he is as old as his Father.

Consider also the following statement referring to the time when all enemies are subject to Christ, and he is triumphant over every foe: "*When all things [i.e., all foes] shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*" (1Corinthians 15:28). If Christ is still subject to the Father at the moment of his greatest triumph how can it be alleged that he is equal with God? Bible teaching consistently expresses the subjection of the Son to the Father, as is both true and logical.

The Lord's Prayer invites us also to address God as "*our Father.*" How can we do that in truth? Only by establishing a relationship with Him. That requires what the Bible describes as a "*new birth.*" Jesus taught: "*Truly I say unto thee, Except a man be born [more correctly: begotten] again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). It is useless praying "Thy kingdom come," if we will never see it! And according to Christ's teaching, we will only do so if we are "*born [begotten] again,*" or "*from above,*" as it is expressed in the margin. How is that possible? Jesus explained: "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*" (John 3:5).

To be "born of water" one must be baptised. Baptism, however, is more than mere immersion in water or sprinkling. To be truly meaningful and efficacious, it requires a sound understanding of Bible teaching. Paul described it as "*obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you*" (Romans 6:17). A true knowledge of the divine purpose, constitutes the "*seed [child] of God*" through which the new birth can develop. Peter taught: "*Being born [lit. begotten] again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1Peter 1:23).

Birth, however, requires a process of conception, quickening and new life. Spiritually the first occurs when a person is drawn to the Gospel of salvation (Romans 1:16); the second follows when his interest therein is enlivened by investigation; the third takes place when he is baptised into Christ.

Spirit-birth follows a similar process. Baptism is really the conception of such a birth, whilst moral regeneration, which should follow, answers to the quickening, and the change to immortality at the resurrection completes the process. Paul thus taught that "*flesh and blood cannot*

inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50), but he made reference to a spirit-body that does so (v. 44). That spirit-body is just as tangible as a body of flesh and blood (see John 20:27; Luke 24:39), but it is one that has attained unto "*divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4), and the "*glory of God*" (Romans 5:2). It is a body energised by God's spirit, not by blood. Therefore it is immortal.

In the meantime, a person can claim sonship with the Father by birth of water, but whether the claim is really legitimate depends upon Christ's endorsement of it at the resurrection, at which time the approved will be granted immortality (Luke 14:14).

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"

Have you ever pondered the meaning of this, the first petition of the prayer? How shall that Name be hallowed? What is in that Name?

In making this petition, the petitioners are calling upon God to fulfil the prophecy relating to His Name contained in the Old Testament: "*I will sanctify My great name, which hath been profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD [Hebrew: Yahweh], saith the Lord God [Heb. Adonai Yahweh], when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes*" (Ezekiel 36:23).

Notice the context of this statement. It is directed to the Jewish people, and is predicting their restoration as a nation to be ruled over by their Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Thus: "*I will take you from among the heathen [nations], and gather you out of all countries, and I will bring you into your own land... a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...*" (vv. 24-26).

God predicted both the restoration of the people of Israel (such as we see today), and their regeneration when "*the Deliverer shall come from Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob*" (Romans 11:26). The transformation to be first effected in the nation of Israel shall be extended to the Gentile world, to the honour of His glorious Name (see Isaiah 2:2-4; Jeremiah 33:8-9; 16:19-21). Why does God do this for Israel and the Gentiles, seeing that they both have lived in indifference to His requirements? Here is His own explanation: "*I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy Name's sake, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went*" (Ezekiel 36:22).

His Name proclaims His purpose, and He will fulfil it, even though in the meantime flesh ignores it.

The tragedy of the world is its ignorance of God. That is the root cause of its misery and wickedness. But when God's Name is honoured by all (as it will be when Christ reigns on earth), its influence will be seen in the moral regeneration that shall take place within all sections of

humanity on earth.

"They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD [Yahweh]: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD [Yahweh]: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34; Zechariah 13:2-3).

For the convenience of His worshippers, God superimposed a Name upon Himself. Unfortunately, that Name has been obscured in the Bible, for it is rendered as "LORD" or "God" whereas it should be rendered YAHWEH. It has also been incorrectly given as 'Jehovah' (Exodus 6:3), and 'Jah' (Psalm 68:4); there is no letter "J" in Hebrew.

The name *Yahweh* stems from a Hebrew root *Ehyeh*, meaning "I will be," and signifies that Yahweh will manifest or reveal Himself in certain ones. It is His declaration that He will extend His Being to manifest Himself in a Son and in children of His providing.

A person "*hallows*" that Name when he lives in accordance with its principles of righteousness. Thus Jesus prayed: "*Father, glorify Thy Name*" (John 12:28). Jesus glorified the Father's name by building into his life all the divine characteristics of God, and submitting to His will even unto crucifixion.

Can we say, "*Father, glorify Thy name?*"

Only if we are prepared to follow the example of the Son, and subjugate our will to that of God. This requires that we learn to devoutly approach Him "*in truth*", for it is only such that "*the Father seeketh to worship Him*" (John 4:23). Only when the Name of God is hallowed in such a way will there be spiritual receptiveness, and only then will prayer become the occasion of spiritual response.

Those who are called to the Truth, are "*taken out of the Gentiles, a people for His Name*" (Acts 15:14). They will justify that call by trying to build into their lives the spiritual qualities of the Father manifested by the Son. By so doing, they will "*hallow the Name*" of the Father, whilst anticipating the time when all society will be motivated by such principles.

Therefore a weighty obligation rests on those who recite this prayer to hallow the name of God themselves, and to use their utmost influence that it may be hallowed by others. Where the Name is hallowed in the family, domestic life is sweetened and the home becomes a sanctuary of God. The day is coming when all life on earth will reflect the glory of its Creator, for "*all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*" (Numbers 14:21). That will be brought about when the next petition of the prayer is fulfilled.

"THY KINGDOM COME"

Rebellion against God is the catastrophe of the moral universe.

Where it exists, and while it continues, there must be dislocation, disorder and disaster.

The world is in the shocking state it is, because mankind lives in disregard of the requirements of God. God will not always tolerate that state of affairs. He has declared His intention to send His Son to *"judge the world in righteousness"* (Acts 17:31), with the ultimate result that *"righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all the nations"* (Isaiah 61:11). Then shall *"glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill toward men"* prevail.

That will be brought about by the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth .

What is the nature of that Kingdom?

The prophet explained: *"The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"* (Daniel 2:44).

By the exercise of authority and force all mankind will be brought under the rule of Christ, and he shall reign on earth as his Father's representative. Again the prophet declared: *"The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him"* (Daniel 7:27).

Where is that kingdom to be set up? Obviously on earth. Notice how specific is the prophet. It is *"the greatness of the kingdom UNDER the whole heaven"* that shall be *"given to the people of the saints of the Most High."* They will *"reign on earth"* (Revelation 5:9-10), not in heaven. The result of this reign is expressed in the following terms: *"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever"* (Revelation 11:15).

The clear, certain teaching of Scripture is that Christ is coming to reign on earth. As the Apostles saw him taken from them into heaven 2,000 years ago, they were told: *"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11).

Christ's reign on earth will completely change civilisation. Life will be governed by divine principles to the glory of God and the wellbeing of man. The selfishness, ruthlessness, and violence that are characteristic of today will go; to be replaced by righteousness and universal peace:

"He [Christ] shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

What an age of glory it will be when men are governed by divine principles, and shall so seek the welfare of each other, as to be a mutual blessing instead of a mutual curse as at present! Then *"the meek will inherit the earth"* as Christ promised (Matthew 5:5). In doing so, he quoted from the predictions of Psalm 37:11. That Psalm clearly shows that God has a future for this earth. It concludes on this glorious note: *"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off"* (Psalm 37:35-38).

The prayer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, challenges many doctrines of Christendom. How many really believe in the coming of Christ to establish on this earth a Kingdom of God? How many realise that the Kingdom of God was once established in the earth, in the nation of Israel (see 1Chronicles 29:23 and compare with Jeremiah 3:17), and will be re-established through the same channel in the age to come (see Acts 1:6)?

The Bible shows that Christ will reign from Jerusalem over a world at peace. It proclaims that at that time *"they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it"* (Jeremiah 3:17). The *"throne of the LORD"* was the very title given to Jerusalem in the past. We read that *"Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered"* (1Chronicles 29:23).

Thus the throne of David represented the throne of the LORD and he reigned as the earthly representative of the great Monarch in the heavens. In line with that thought, consider the statement made by the angel to Mary the mother of the Lord: *"Thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end"* (Luke 1:32-33).

When a person prays: *"Thy kingdom come,"* he makes request for the establishment of a divine order of rule on earth. This is called the Kingdom of God. In the past it was limited to Israel, but in the future it will incorporate all nations. In the statement made to Mary she was promised that her son would reign on *"the throne of David"*; elsewhere it is predicted that his rule will extend *"to the uttermost parts of the earth"* (Psalm 2:8), that *"all nations shall serve him"* (Psalm 72:11), and the *"kingdom and nation that will not serve him shall perish"* (Isaiah 60:12). Only by the exercise of such force will the wickedness of man's rule be abolished to the wellbeing of humanity.

The restoration of the Jewish State in modern times is a sign of the imminent coming of Christ and re-establishment of the Kingdom of God. The Bible declares: "I [God] will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all..." (Ezekiel 37:21).

Note the sequence provided in this reference:

1. **The restoration of scattered Jewry from all nations;**
2. **The reconstitution of the nation of Israel;**
3. **The establishment of it as a monarchy.**

The Jews have returned; Israel has been restored as a nation; but there is no king as yet over it. That king is obviously the Lord Jesus who bore over his stake on Golgotha the superscription: *Jesus of Nazareth: The King of the Jews*. He will return to discipline the Jewish people, and to establish his rightful authority over them. Reigning from Jerusalem, he will extend his power throughout the earth, until the words of Zechariah 14:9 are fulfilled: "*The LORD shall be King over all the earth.*"

How comforting it is to know that soon the strong, infallible hands of the Lord Jesus will take control of this sorrowing, sinning world in the name of God, and will administer it to the benefit of all. In view of that hope, how fervently we should pray, "*Thy kingdom come!*"

"THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IN HEAVEN"

"*Kingdom*" implies organisation, order, law; and "*reign*" expresses administration and rule. The kingdom of God will produce such governmental changes as to result in God's will being done in earth as it is today in heaven.

Meanwhile the world is disorganised and disturbed, so that the very foundations of society are crumbling. In spite of the material developments of this age, the greater leisure, and increasing opportunity for pleasure, the world is desperately unhappy. The suicide rate is on the increase; the spirit of revolt grows more violent; the drug and "hippy" crazes express forms of exhibitionism underlining current discontent.

There is widespread impatience for change, a gnawing hunger for a more satisfying way of life.

Where is it to be found? Only in the Christ-life. Paul taught: "*It has promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*" (1Timothy 4:8). Despite the discipline and restriction that the way in Christ demands, it is productive of more happiness and contentment now than the materialism of the world. Moreover, it provides hope of life eternal at Christ's coming.

On the other hand, the world's general indifference to the will of God is painfully evident, and the consequences of that indifference are appalling. They are found in conditions that undermine society: juvenile delinquency, broken homes, dissatisfaction, discontent, violence, war. This leads to moral deterioration: the growth of vice and crime, degeneracy, wretchedness, permissiveness and immorality; all so typical of this present age. What can save the world? The only adequate remedy for the flood of evil that threatens to destroy civilisation is the establishment of the will of God as the law of society.

How will that be brought about? Our prayer reminds us: by the reign of Christ on earth. He shall *"rule the nations with a rod of iron"* (Revelation 2:27). Perfect justice will be blended with understanding mercy to bring about a state of society that will be honouring to God. Christ will *"rebuke strong nations afar off"* (Micah 4:3), and will demand such standards of morality and of education as to cause people to seek God: *"Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 2:3).

There will be a time of wonderful peace and security in the days of the Kingdom of God on earth: *"In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth... He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy"* (Psalm 72:7-13).

Paul further taught of the reign of Christ: *"He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"* (1Corinthians 15:25-26).

In the new world order that Christ will establish, all forms of opposition will be suppressed for the benefit of mankind, and the evils so rampant today will be eliminated. The petition of the prayer makes request for God's will to triumph over that of the flesh. It pleads not merely for the establishment of the Kingdom, but for the eradication of ways of life that today blot the thought of God from the minds of men. It asks for the manifestation of those vast changes in the earth that shall be brought about by Christ's coming, and the blessings that his theocracy shall reveal.

His universal reign provides for one supreme king (Zech. 14:9), one religion (Zech. 13:2-4), and one empire (Micah 4:8). His firm and wise administration will govern for the benefit of men's minds whilst not neglecting the needs of their bodies (Isaiah 11:4; 23:18; 33:24; Amos

9:13). By a process of enlightening instruction, humanity will be weaned away from the performance of those evils that today disgrace it, and will find pleasure in following ways of truth and righteousness. Thus the Gospel message will find its political fulfilment in that *"all nations will be blessed"* in the Lord's administration (Galatians 3:8).

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

This is the first of the three petitions that express our confidence in God's love and care for us. It is the request of trusting faith that recognises that God *"is the Giver of every good and perfect gift"* in life (James 1:17). It is vital that we realise this if we would please Him. His love is such that His good gifts are poured out upon all His creation *"just and unjust"* alike, a phrase describing the righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). What good thing has humanity received that has not come from God? What has man created of himself? Absolutely nothing! He has learned to use that which he has found on this earth, but who placed it there in the first instance?

Does mankind generally show its thanks to God for His goodness; for when the rain comes and the sun shines? By no means! In that which it receives there is the witness that God exists, but men delight in a philosophy that seeks to get rid of God. It puts confidence in the fallacy of evolution because it desires to shrug off accountability to God as the all wise Creator. Nature witnesses to the fact of God as Paul taught: *"He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness"* (Acts 14:17).

How has man responded? Paul replies: *"When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"* (Romans 1:21-22).

Paul shows that God gave mankind up to its own resources, with the result that the earth became *"filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit"* and so on (Romans 1:29-32).

That is the environment of the modern world. How has it got into that condition? Through people *"not retaining God in their knowledge"* (v. 28). That is the root cause of modern distress and misery.

On the other hand, this prayer inculcates a trustful faith in God by true believers. *"Give us this day our daily bread."* It does not ask bread for a year; it does not seek resources in reserve; it does not plead for great wealth; it does not petition for means to accomplish great works. It only requests the needs of today.

Such a prayer is out of date in this age of materialism, when the "necessities" of life are so complex, that mankind has come to confuse "wants" with "needs," seeking the former as though they were the latter.

The Psalmist declared that in all his experience *"he has never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread"* (Psalm 37:25). Paul was one such. He did not have great material resources, but he could say that *"though he was poor, he made many rich"* (2Corinthians 6:10), rich in spiritual values and benefits.

For forty years in the wilderness in the days of Moses, the nation of Israel was sustained by a daily portion of manna. God told them that He had subjected them to that experience that they might learn to place confidence in Him to provide. He declared that He *"suffered them to hunger"* and *"fed them with manna"* each day, that they might know that *"man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live"* (Deuteronomy 8:3).

In other words, *"life does not consist in the abundance of things possessed"* (Luke 12:15); true living consists in striving to do the will of God, whilst recognising that He knows our needs and will provide (Matthew 6:32). Christ declared: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Let us show faith in God, seeking to do His will, and be content with the things that we have, and see if He does not shower blessings upon us! They may not be blessings of material resources, but it is not always the wealthy who are the happiest. A united home, an unwavering faith, and a confident hope far outweigh the value of riches.

The curse of this age is the discontent of men, their demands for material advantages which do not guarantee happiness.

The daily portion of manna in the wilderness sustained the bodies of the Israelites. It was designed as a figure to represent the Word (or "bread") of God which the people were likewise expected to "consume" day by day. The daily absorption of the Word is just as vital to our spiritual existence, as natural food is for our bodies. *"Give us this day our daily bread"* should comprise a prayer requesting God to bless us with both natural and spiritual food.

But remember that God expects us to help ourselves. He will never bless us with increase if we ignore the means that He has placed within our power. If we do not work we will not be blessed with food; if we fail to study the Word we will not grow in knowledge. Let us search the Scriptures, and pray God that He grant us wisdom in understanding. If we approach Him thus, in the right frame of mind, we will not go hungry (James 1:5-6).

The need for humanity for that food is desperate. The tragedy of modern civilisation is that it suffers from acute spiritual mal-nutrition.

What does that spiritual "food" reveal? That we are sinners, and are in need of salvation. Thus it provides a foundation for the next petition:

"FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS"

In Luke 11:4 (where the Lord's prayer is repeated), the word "debts" is rendered "sins."

The consciousness of sin makes obvious our need of divine grace and mercy. Therefore there is both humility and comfort in the petition: humility in that we recognise our true state before the Father, and comfort in that we realise that He has made it possible for sins to be forgiven.

At the same time it imposes responsibility. We request that our sins be forgiven to the extent that we are prepared to forgive the sins that others have committed against us. If we are not prepared to forgive others, the petition has the most dangerous implications. Virtually, we are calling upon the Father to recognise our lack of grace to others, and judge us accordingly. In other words, the request recognises that we need to do something ourselves if we would be forgiven the sins that we daily commit.

As mentioned earlier, this prayer was never intended for the world at large, but only for Christ's disciples. It is a prayer, therefore, that only they can offer who have put themselves in the way of righteousness.

And what is required for that?

Christ himself declared that "belief and baptism" are the necessary steps to that end (Mark 16:16). His teaching was endorsed by the apostle Peter, for, in answering a question put to him by people who enquired as to what they should do, he replied: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

What has baptism to do with the remission of sins?

Baptism identifies a person with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. A person correctly understanding and fully accepting the Gospel is "baptised in his [Christ's] death" (Romans 6:3). This is the only way he can be identified with the shed blood of Jesus, without which there is "no remission" of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Churches that teach that baptism is unimportant, or not essential to salvation, are themselves completely in sin, for they have not aligned themselves with the "Lamb of God" who "taketh away sins" in the only way possible. It is not enough to say, "I believe on the Lord Jesus," if at the same-time, the study of the Scriptures is neglected, or baptism is refused, for if one truly believed on him, he would obey his commandments which involve both (Mark 16:16).

Past sins are wiped out, washed away, in the waters of baptism, by which a believer is also figuratively inducted into the Lord Jesus Christ. Henceforth, all that is necessary is to plead the fact of sin, seek forgiveness which will be freely granted, and take steps to reform (2John 1:9). Having enjoyed the grace of forgiveness, however, the same mercy should be extended by us to others. Thus the power and responsibility of this petition.

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL"

The word *peirasmos* can signify both 'trial' and 'temptation,' and is used in the former way in this prayer as well as in the following places: Luke 22:28; Acts 20:19; 1Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 4:14; James 1:2, etc.

For example, the Lord declared to his disciples: "*Ye have continued with me in my temptations*". James wrote: "*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*" (James 1:2). In both places the word is used in the sense of trial, and not of soliciting to do evil. God never tempts anybody in that way (James 1:13). But does it mean when we pray "*lead us not into temptation*" or trials? The Revised Version renders it "*bring,*" and thus clarifies the meaning. Yes, God will bring us into trials to test our loyalty to Him, or to purify our characters.

The prayer, therefore, recognises the omnipotence of God, and the fact that nothing happens without His knowledge. Our own folly may result in developing a situation of testing or trial, and God may, for our own good, allow it to do so. In a scriptural sense, it could then be said that God has "*brought us into trial*" even though it was caused by our own action. The Bible speaks in that way because of God's omnipotence and omniscience. For example, it declares that God "*hardened Pharaoh's heart*" when, in fact, "*Pharaoh hardened his own heart*" (Exodus 9:12, 34). Both statements are correct, for it was when God caused the plagues to cease that Pharaoh, in his stubbornness, hardened his heart and refused to let the people go (Exodus 9:34).

The request of the prayer, therefore, is an appeal to God to deliver us from circumstances of trial into which we might be brought through our own folly. Christ exhorted his disciples: "*Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*" ("trial" — Luke 22:40; Mark 14:38). It is a plea for divine guidance on the part of one who is prepared to trustingly leave his future in the hands of God, knowing His ability to "*bring us into trial*" and to "*deliver us from [out of; through]*" it.

Christ taught that we should "*watch and pray*" to avoid trial. Duty and dependence thus go hand in hand. If the former is neglected, the latter becomes a presumption. In confident assurance that "*His way is best,*"

and that "all things work for our ultimate good" let us "commit our way unto the LORD", knowing that He will "direct our path." He has promised: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee" (Psalm 32:8). Our response should be: "I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23-24).

God does not promise us immunity from all troubles and evils, but He will make available to us the strength to surmount them. Christ himself prayed on behalf of believers: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:5).

Only by God's help through Christ will we rise above the evils of these times to the moral status of children of God. The Gospel is a divine invitation to that end: "God is taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). The separation of this people from the moral, political, religious and social evils of the times is the only way for them to have a relationship with God (see 2Corinthians 6:17-18). Therefore, there is a close connection between the first and last petitions of this prayer.

Our heavenly Father will protect us in trial, and deliver us from evil, if we do our part. This requires that we lay hold of Christ in the way appointed, and walk with him along the pathway of righteousness to life eternal in the future.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOR EVER"

Some claim that this doxology, or ascription of praise, should not form part of the prayer for it is excluded in some ancient manuscripts, though other authorities are just as insistent in claiming that it does.

Certainly it is appropriate. It provides three concluding statements expressive of God's ability to grant the requests that we make.

Thine is the kingdom, — the right to command.

Thine is the power, — the ability to perform.

Thine is the glory, — the capacity to change.

The future reign of Christ on earth will provide the dynamics of a new spiritual national life. This will result in those changes that are necessary to fulfil the purpose of God to "fill the earth with His glory" (Numbers 14:21). Paul taught: "God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Fulfilling prophecy indicates that this "day" is near at hand. It will reveal an epoch of rule, power and glory such as the earth has never seen. This will be brought about by Christ's own irresistible intervention in human affairs. He alone can provide that one wise head and that one strong hand that will be equal to the stupendous task of seizing and transforming the entangled skein of human life, destroying much and reconstructing much, with the result of establishing a perfect system of human society, in which all the ideals of enlightened intelligence will be realised on the only possible foundation of human wellbeing: absolute submission to God in the enthusiasm of a loving worship through Christ.

"AMEN!"

This exclamation concludes the prayer. It is translated from a word that signifies that which is true or beyond doubt. Thus it speaks of that which is trustworthy, or certain of accomplishment.

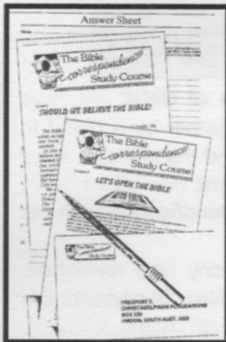
The prayer is based upon the revealed purpose of God, the fulfilment of which is beyond doubt. It speaks of God's coming Kingdom on earth; the hallowing of His name; the fulfilment of His will on earth as in heaven. All this is certain of accomplishment.

The uncertain factor relates to ourselves. Have we put ourselves in the way of Christ? Are we prepared to seek into the meaning of Scripture to ascertain the truth of the Gospel? Will we humble ourselves by submitting to baptism?

These are matters of personal responsibility. It is useless pouring out a prayer for help, if we are not prepared to act ourselves; it is vain to address God as our Father, if we refuse the means provided to establish such relationship.

Let us so act as to honour Him, and there will not be the slightest doubt as to whether the petitions will be fulfilled. We therefore urge you to re-examine your standing in the sight of God in the light of this prayer.

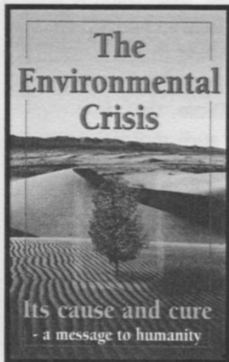
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