

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 21, chapter 6 Continued 2

As we continue today in the Lord's Prayer, we'll begin at verse 13. Verses 11, 12, and 13 are sometimes called the "we petitions". This is because of the use of the plural "us" to begin each of these verses. Give US food..... forgive US our wrongs..... do not lead US into temptation. Clearly the idea is that the Lord's Prayer is a prayer form meant to show us, as individuals, the important elements of every petition we make to the Lord. At the same time these 3 verses demonstrate that we are part of a community. In Christ's day, in the Sermon on the Mount, this community was the Jewish community; or better, the community of all Israel.

While Christianity has adopted this prayer as a cornerstone of our faith, the prayer is entirely Jewish in its structure and its thoughts. Every element of the prayer consists of old themes and biblical principles; not new ones. Thus it is ironic (at least to me) that a Church that harbors so much anti-Jewishness buried in its doctrines and customs uses the Lord's Prayer as the centerpiece of Christian liturgy; because in fact this prayer couldn't be more Jewish.

Open your Bibles to chapter 6, verse 13

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 6:13 - end

Nearly all English Bible translations will read closer to the KJV.

^{KJV} **Matthew 6:13** *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

However the CJB has it worded better when it says: "And do not lead us into hard testing". Perhaps in the Old English the term "temptation" meant something a bit different than it means to us today. For us "temptation" means to wave something in front of us that we really desire, but we know we ought to resist. So temptation could be that divinely luscious Chocolate Mousse Fudge Cake that the waiter offers at the end of our meal but we know we shouldn't take it. Maybe the temptation is trying to figure out how to stuff the cost of that sexy new BMW into our already stretched thin budget... but we probably shouldn't even be thinking about it! The Greek word is **peirasmos** and it means a trial, a testing. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew word **nassah**. Here is a good example from the Torah of how we need to understand this word.

^{CJB} **Deuteronomy 8:2** *You are to remember everything of the way in which ADONAI led you these forty years in the desert, humbling and testing you in order to know what was in your heart- whether you would obey his mitzvot or not.*

So in the Lord's Prayer the idea is that the Lord would not lead us into hard testing in the manner that He did with the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt. Why? Because hard testing as often as not brings about failure. And that failure is inevitably sin. In the Talmud tractate **Berachah** 60b, we read: "Bring me not into the power of sin, and not into the power of guilt, and not into the power of temptation (testing), and not in to the power of anything shameful". So this passage in the Lord's Prayer is expressing a well established Jewish thought pattern. It is interesting that the Gnostic Christian Clement of Alexandria was known to pray: "O Lord, put me to the test". Christ says we should hope for the opposite.

James 1:13 says this about temptation:

^{CJB} **James 1:13** *No one being tempted should say, "I am being tempted by God." For God cannot be tempted by evil, and God himself tempts no one.*

Here the Greek word that is also being translated to English as tempted or temptation is **peirazo**. The Greek Lexicons say that this word means to try whether a thing can or ought to be done. So indeed it does mean "temptation" as we moderns think of the word. Thus while God will does lead us into times of testing, He never leads us into temptations.

Because as I speak to you it is the month of April in the year 2020, the world is currently in the midst of a pandemic of the Covid-19 virus; no one knows what the outcome will be. Whether by God or by serendipity, mankind is in the midst of a trial. While I cannot say that God has necessarily led us here, at the least it is certainly His will that He has allowed this to happen because it cannot be otherwise. So, Believers, what is your response to this trial that is about a serious disease and the financial meltdown that is nearly inescapable? Is your job in jeopardy? Might you lose your home or apartment as a result? Will you be one of the hundreds of thousands (that will soon turn into the millions) that will get sick? We've all witnessed the fear and panic in its various forms that this pandemic has caused. From empty super market shelves, to people being stranded due to airlines being shut down. Here is how a Believer is expected to view this situation: it is to be seen as our time of testing before the Lord.

In this time of testing that is so full of isolation and uncertainty, The Bible tells us that we are to set our fear aside and trust God because fear and trust are incompatible.

^{NKJ} 2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

We are not to ignore the current dire situation, nor to pretend that no danger exists. But fear is not something that comes from God; in fact fear is the gateway to panic, and panic reveals a lack of trust and faithfulness in the Lord. It is understandable that pagans who lead most of the world's governments, and represent most of the world's population are gripped in fear and panic and so behave the way they do. But a Believer ought not to feel the same or behave the same. If you do, you need to understand what this testing has revealed about you; and you must go to the Lord to seek remedy.

The great King David faced daunting tests and wrote many Psalms expressing what he was feeling at the time.

^{CJB} Psalm 56:4 *when I am afraid, I put my trust in you.*

^{NAS} Psalm 23:4 *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.*

CJB Psalm 46:1 ² God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

As verse 13 in the Lord's Prayer asks, the last thing we ought to do is to seek a hard testing from the Lord. King David often failed his testing. Israel often failed their testing. We often fail our testing; sometimes because we don't recognize that testing for what it actually is. But we don't have to fail. It is not inevitable that we stumble. As Believers the Holy Spirit is in us. As Yeshua's followers we have an ever present Helper to guide and assist us through hard trials. But how are we supposed to know what to do? Simply being saved doesn't inform us as to how we are to approach a hard trial; only God's Word does that. God makes it abundantly clear that it all begins with our obedience, faith and submission to Him because that is what a hard trial in our life is actually testing. Will we be obedient to Yehoveh's laws and commands or will we follow our old nature and the debased ways of the world and allow our evil inclinations to rule over us? We can't be obedient if we don't first know those laws and commands. And without doubt the most important commands that we must obey in such a time as this is to love God with all our might, and to love our fellow man as we love ourselves.

It's marvelous how God made us such that in times of testing, if we focus on Him it provides us with relief and comfort. It's ironic how in times of community or even national trial that when we concern ourselves over others rather than over ourselves that our personal level of fear subsides. Believers, now is our time to shine. These are the times that our behavior and our deeds, not our words, matter most. The world desperately needs to see this from us. These are the times that those who don't yet know the Lord can look at us and see God's love and stability when all else seems chaotic and dark..... and want Him. Let us concern ourselves with that rather than stocking our pantries to the fullest before someone else does. And if we do then we will pass the test and not fail it.

Thomas Paine made a memorable quote that while not in the Bible, certainly expresses a sentiment based on biblical principles and it is worth repeating and remembering.

“THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the

triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated"

Shall we be summer soldiers and sunshine patriots for God and His Kingdom? That is, are we only available, loyal and dedicated when times are joyful and good outcomes are certain? There is no greater tyranny than that of fear and panic. But when we look to Heaven and to the proper price that God puts upon the things of this world, then we have a far better platform from which we can resist the instinct to join the non-Believers in their inward terrors that result in unwise and ungodly outward reactions.

I realize that some of you may not hear or read these words until long after this particular trial has passed and the world has returned to normalcy. But I promise you that this will not be our last trial; there will be more in the future and perhaps greater than this one. What their exact nature or cause will be, or when they will occur only the Father knows. But as with any trial or calamity, it is best to be prepared ahead of time. Prepare of course by being vigilant. But also by drawing nearer to God, and by sincerely learning His Word so that you can stand upon it and its truth so that you can know what to do when that time does arrive.

Although I've mentioned it before, many Bible scholars claim that Jesus's words in His sermon are meant for a future time; the time of the end. When I taught the book of Daniel I explained that biblically there are not one but two Latter Days. The first has come and gone as it revolved around Christ's first coming. The second is future and will revolve around His return. I can't get into the details of it today but you can go to my teachings in TorahClass.com and research them. The point is that the Jewish people in Christ's day were certain that they were already in the End Times. Therefore Christ's words were meant both for His own time **and** for the future; it is not a matter of the one or the other. Such is a common attribute of prophecy.

When verse 13 asks God to "deliver us from evil", we find that the CJB and some other Bible versions will say "evil one"; that is, it refers to Satan. The Greek word is **poneros**. The Lexicons say it means hardships or annoyances. So the sense of it is not so much of wickedness nor that it is directly attached to Satan. So I can't agree with the idea that to "deliver us from evil" intends to mean "deliver us from the Evil One". In fact, in Hebrew and Aramaic literature from that time, the

term "Evil One" is never attached to the person of Satan. It simply was not a Jewish thought. Rather it is a Church term from later times. Instead I think we have to consider the context of it's meaning as clearly having to do with the first part of this verse: "Don't lead us into testing". So the petition to God is that rather than leading us into a some kind of hard thing to overcome, please deliver us from it. And what we don't want to be led into is testing and trial. Rather we want to be delivered from hardships and calamities that are by their very nature what tests and trials consist of (just as we are currently experiencing). And by the way, being delivered from something doesn't mean avoiding it altogether. It means to be rescued from the bad situation you are experiencing, or perhaps being shown the way through it.

Scholars call the final words of verse 13, which are "For Kingship, power, and glory are yours forever, amen", a doxology. That is, it is a standard ending to a worship service or to a prayer or song. And the wording of this is very much typical of the Synagogue liturgy of Christ's day. So: the Lord's Prayer is indeed Jewish from the "Our Father" to the "amen".

Let's move on now from the Lord's Prayer to verse 14. What we have here is yet another quid pro quo. That is, God will respond according to how we behave. Specifically: if we forgive the offenses of others against us, then in equal measure He will forgive us for our offenses against Him. For emphasis, and to be sure the point Yeshua is making is not misconstrued, Yeshua now states the same again only in the negative. That is, He says, if you do NOT forgive others for their offenses against you, God will NOT forgive you for your offenses against Him. Notice how this is connected directly to verse 12 of the Lord's Prayer ("Forgive us for what we have done wrong, as we too have forgiven those who have wronged us").

Let's talk about forgiveness for a minute because it is a difficult subject to put into practice. Forgiveness does NOT mean that the earthly, natural, or legal consequences of our wrong actions get erased. Perhaps one of the best examples of this I could draw upon comes from a film entitled "O Brother, Where Art Thou". The setting is the Great Depression of the 1930's. Three knuckleheads escape from a deep south prison chain gang. At one point in their attempt to journey back home and to evade the police, one of them hears the worship songs of a baptism that is taking place just off the road at a rather muddy river. Although there is a long line of white robbed people waiting their turn, he races to the front (as if drawn by a magnet) and gets dunked. When he comes up

out of the water he is ecstatic and tells his criminal friends that God has forgiven him of all his sins, including the Piggly Wiggly market he robbed. The ring leader of the group expresses doubt and tells him that while God may have forgiven him it's not likely that the governor of Mississippi sees it quite the same way.

The point is that the kind of forgiveness that humans give to other humans is as spiritual in nature as the kind that God gives to us. Whether human to human or God to human forgiveness does not mean that we escape rightful punishments on earth for our wrong actions (although especially in a family or among friends that does happen). What it ultimately does mean is that such complete forgiveness regards our eternal future and status before God. The key principle that is being invoked is reconciliation. This is because reconciliation between humans begins with forgiveness, and it mimics the reconciliation between God and humans that we call salvation.

The next subject Christ speaks about is fasting. His instruction on the matter boils down to this: what matters to God is our inward humility and not some outward display intended to gather attention. Once again, Yeshua is not pronouncing a new way to look at fasting, but rather He is trying to restore what God intended from times of old. Seven hundred years earlier, God said this through the prophet Isaiah.

CJB Isaiah 58:1 *Shout out loud! Don't hold back! Raise your voice like a shofar! Proclaim to my people what rebels they are, to the house of Ya'akov their sins. ² "Oh yes, they seek me day after day and [claim to] delight in knowing my ways. As if they were an upright nation that had not abandoned the rulings of their God, they ask me for just rulings and [claim] to take pleasure in closeness to God, ³ [asking,] 'Why should we fast, if you don't see? Why mortify ourselves, if you don't notice?' "Here is my answer: when you fast, you go about doing whatever you like, while keeping your laborers hard at work. ⁴ Your fasts lead to quarreling and fighting, to lashing out with violent blows. On a day like today, fasting like yours will not make your voice heard on high. ⁵ "Is this the sort of fast I want, a day when a person mortifies himself? Is the object to hang your head like a reed and spread sackcloth and ashes under yourself? Is this what you call a fast, a day that pleases ADONAI? ⁶ "Here is the sort of fast I want-releasing those unjustly bound, untying the thongs of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free, breaking every yoke, ⁷ sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked*

when you see them, fulfilling your duty to your kinsmen!"⁸ Then your light will burst forth like the morning, your new skin will quickly grow over your wound; your righteousness will precede you, and ADONAI's glory will follow you.⁹ Then you will call, and ADONAI will answer; you will cry, and he will say, "Here I am."

Yeshua says that rather than fasting and going around looking miserable so that people will think how pious you must be to go through such agony of self-imposed hunger, fast in private. Don't make a show of it. Fasting in Christ's era was regularly accompanied with the wearing of sackcloth and throwing ashes over one's head, obviously meant to have people notice. It was even a rather scheduled thing. As recorded in Talmudic tract ***Taanit*** 27b, private fasting was ordained to take place on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th days of the week. The other days it was prohibited. The point of fasting isn't for a public demonstration but rather it is for an inward expression of repentance that only God can see. Let me continue with a theme: nowhere do we find Paul dealing with fasting in any of his Epistles. Fasting was a very Jewish religious element that showed up mainly in the Holy Land, and far less so among the Diaspora. Christians have merely borrowed the practice of fasting. Nothing wrong with that... in fact it is what should be done.... but unfortunately its practice is usually based on various denominational doctrines and traditions because to do otherwise would require delving into the Old Testament and into Judaism. So allow me to once again make the point: fasting is all about sincere personal repentance. The idea is that un-confessed and un-repentant sin hinders the communication channel between us and God. It is NOT that the more we fast and the more we suffer from it the more we get what we want. That is a self-centered attitude. The former is a God-centered attitude.

It is classic Jesus that He mentions The Father twice in rapid succession. It is the Father who ordains, judges, and takes action. It is The Father who sees all and knows all according to Christ. It is the Father who is to be worshipped and praised. And certainly while Christ in Heaven, Our Messiah, is to also be glorified it is only because He is the Father's agent. The demotion of The Father and the promotion of Yeshua within Christianity has as its basis nothing scriptural at all; but rather such role swapping is only anti-Semitism and it needs to be confronted. This in no way is meant to diminish Jesus. But the Father reigns supreme over Him, and just as the Lord's Prayer says we are to do, Christ says we are to direct our prayers to The Father. And yet, does that mean that we don't ever address Our Savior in Heaven? Or more directly: do we pray to Yeshua or

don't we?

We'll take a few minutes with this rather important question because it is far more than about mere theology. There is simply no getting around that Christ tells His disciples and everyone at the Sermon on the Mount that when they pray they are to pray to the Father. And yet, in John 14 we read this:

CJB John 14:10-16 ¹⁰ *Don't you believe that I am united with the Father, and the Father united with me? What I am telling you, I am not saying on my own initiative; the Father living in me is doing his own works.* ¹¹ *Trust me, that I am united with the Father, and the Father united with me. But if you can't, then trust because of the works themselves.* ¹² *Yes, indeed! I tell you that whoever trusts in me will also do the works I do! Indeed, he will do greater ones, because I am going to the Father.* ¹³ *In fact, whatever you ask for in my name, I will do; so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* ¹⁴ *If you ask me for something in my name, I will do it.* ¹⁵ *"If you love me, you will keep my commands;* ¹⁶ *and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another comforting Counselor like me, the Spirit of Truth, to be with you forever.*

From this passage it might seem that even after the example of the Lord's Prayer we have choices A and B to pray to: either The Father or Yeshua. And yet the waters are instantly muddied when Christ says that if you love Him then He will **ask** the Father to send the Spirit. Clearly Jesus is saying that of all the things He does have Heavenly authority over, the sending and directing of the work of the Holy Spirit is not one of them.

Later in John 16 we read:

CJB John 16:19-28 ¹⁹ *Yeshua knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Are you asking each other what I meant by saying, 'In a little while, you won't see me; and then, a little while later, you will see me'?"* ²⁰ *Yes, it's true. I tell you that you will sob and mourn, and the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.* ²¹ *When a woman is giving birth, she is in pain; because her time has come. But when the baby is born, she forgets her suffering out of joy that a child has come into the world.* ²² *So you do indeed feel grief now, but I am going to see you again. Then your hearts will be full of joy, and no one will take your joy away from you.* ²³ *"When that day comes, you won't ask anything of me!*

Yes, indeed! I tell you that whatever you ask from the Father, he will give you in my name. ²⁴ Till now you haven't asked for anything in my name. Keep asking, and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete. ²⁵ "I have said these things to you with the help of illustrations; however, a time is coming when I will no longer speak indirectly but will talk about the Father in plain language. ²⁶ When that day comes, you will ask in my name. I am not telling you that I will pray to the Father on your behalf, ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸ "I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and returning to the Father."

Here it seems as though Christ is turning things a bit from what He said only 2 chapters earlier. Yeshua spoke earlier of we, His followers, asking Him, but now He speaks of asking the Father but in Jesus's name. Yeshua knew what He was saying had to be befuddling. He didn't intend it to be a puzzle; it's only that what we're dealing with is the very substance of God. Humans have tried all manner of way to illustrate God's substance. Water is used (it can be solid, fluid or gas). The egg is used (hard shell, soft white surrounding a yellow yoke). The various Trinity Doctrines try to explain the inner workings of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. It is my opinion that while not wholly adequate, we need to think of God as a set of identifiable attributes, each with a distinct purpose. Of those attributes Yeshua, The Son, is God's agent who brings about the Father's will. In another sense, the Father and The Son are so perfectly unified in will (even so, it is the Father's will that The Son puts on as His own will) that it seems that under many circumstances The Son can receive a request from one of His followers and act because His job (His attribute) is to act on the Father's behalf, but still only within the Father's will.

I notice that Jesus NEVER says to pray to Him; instead He says to pray to The Father. What we see is that in place of using the word "pray" Jesus says He Himself is to be "asked". Is there is a difference between **praying** to The Father versus **asking** Jesus? I think there must be in Jesus's mind, but I'm not sure exactly what that difference might be. I've said on numerous occasions that all we humans have at our disposal to communicate with God (and with one another) and to discern matters of the spiritual world are human words. The only illustrations of the spiritual world we have that we can use necessarily come from the physical world. But because the spiritual world is so different from and superior to the physical world, there is no vocabulary or illustration available..... and I don't believe our minds are built to understand it anyway.... to help us grasp

how the exact relationship between the Christ and the Father..... the substance of God..... works. So we only have the vaguest idea of it and need to be satisfied with that for the time being although we yearn for more conclusive answers. But I caution: such yearning out of curiosity is fine. But if that yearning is more of a demand for proof otherwise belief is held back or suspended, then what we're doing is putting God on trial.

Therefore is it wrong to pray to Jesus? No. But as with all that He has been telling us so far in the Sermon on the Mount, our intent and motive behind our prayer is the key. If we are praying to Jesus to avoid praying to The Father (who so many in the institutional Church regard as the God of the Jews and NOT of gentile Christians, or they see The Father as the obsolete God of the Old Testament and Jesus the New God of the New Testament) then we have a problem of motive. However if we pray to Jesus in the sense that He and the Father are unified in some immutable way that He has plainly said is the case, something that is beyond our limited human ability to grasp, and that whatever we pray to Him will either be taken to The Father or that Jesus will act in the Father's behalf as the Father's agent, then it must be fine to pray to Jesus.

Thus in the same vein, verse 18 ends by Yeshua saying that since you are praying to The Father, and The Father sees what is done in secret (and secret, private, is where most personal prayer ought to take place), then it is the Father that will issue any rewards.

Verse 19 moves on to one of the more challenging subjects especially for Westerners. The subject is money and the want of it. I will say upfront that the Prosperity Doctrine is near bizarre and undefendable after reading verses 19-24. But in a doctrine oriented Christianity, whatever new doctrine that comes around that pleases and seems to personally benefit the congregation is usually adopted. It also needs to be said before we begin that even though verses 19-24 speak directly about God and money, verses 24 -35 are connected to the same subject.

The question at hand is this: What should I do about personal wealth, and how does that affect my relationships with fellow humans and (more importantly) my relationship with God?

Thus starting at verse 19 and moving well into chapter 7, we will begin to deal with what we must call "social issues", with money being the first. The instruction

is to not store up personal wealth on earth but rather to store up wealth in Heaven. Although our CJB says "wealth" most other versions say "treasure" and I think that is closer to the mark. The Greek word is **thesauros** and the Greek Lexicons say it means precious things that are collected and put in a treasury. One can have wealth and not necessarily consider it treasure or precious. But the words treasure and precious indicate something's worth and importance. So the idea is for us to not concentrate the purpose of our lives on laying up material things that are so very precious to us, but rather to use that time and mental energy to store up different things that are also precious to us but for different reasons. So if we are not to focus on acquiring the material things (money being the prime thing) on earth, then what is the nature of the non-material treasure we lay up in a spiritual Heaven? If you answer that it can only be spiritual things, then my question is: what spiritual things? If it is spiritual things then how do we acquire them? I think the answer comes in the next several verses and basically it is that the Heavenly treasure amounts to our good deeds and generosity. So it is not an issue of the tangible (material wealth) versus the intangible (spiritual wealth). The precious treasure we are to lay up in Heaven begins as something that is quite tangible. Yeshua also says that laying up precious material things on earth are destined to have a short life span anyway. Moths are certain to eat fine and valuable garments, and rust is certain to destroy things made of metal (metal of all kind was expensive and valuable in Christ's era). But the things we lay up in Heaven are eternal and nothing can sully them, devalue them, or destroy them. But again we come back to the question: what are those things? The answer can be found in Matthew 23:23.

^{CJB} **Matthew 23:23** ***"Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You pay your tithes of mint, dill and cumin; but you have neglected the weightier matters of the Torah- justice, mercy, trust. These are the things you should have attended to- without neglecting the others!"***

Mint, dill and cumin were expensive spices. Only the more well to do could give those things, or perhaps the more pious would sacrifice much in their lives to buy such things to offer. And yet, as valuable as they are in earthly wealth terms, Christ says that justice, mercy, and trust are more true treasure to God. The reality is that justice, mercy and trust are only valuable when put into action. These God-principles must be encapsulated within our properly motivated good deeds and not for our own benefit. Nor can justice, mercy and trust exist in our lives via mere words, philosophies or theories that we intellectually agree with. Thus one can certainly store up such treasures as those precious and expensive

spices and there is nothing inherently wrong with that; but they have no positive eternal effect, either. Better that one focus on storing up the rewards that God gives to us from our behaving and acting with justice, mercy, and trust. So while on earth justice, mercy and trust indeed must manifest themselves in visible tangible ways, they also have their ethereal and eternal side as well.

We'll end here and spend considerably more time with the important matter of God and money when we meet again next week.