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Scriptural Article

Prayers

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Published by Elder Sean

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This article will look at the use of Prayer Scripturally from the start of the bible through to now and explain in part how prayer is used, how it should be used and what is used for. This article also explains in part how not all prayers are necessarily answered for specific reasons that we may not be ready for them or they may not be in line with Yahweh God's plan.

The concept and use of prayer has been around since the beginning of Biblical History. I'd like to show you a couple of verses in the Old Testament regarding prayer first from Exodus:

NJB Exodus 8:8-13

The second plague: the frogs

8. Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat Yahweh to take the frogs away from me and my

subjects, and I promise to let the people go and sacrifice to Yahweh.”

9. Moses said to Pharaoh, “You are the one to gain by it: when would you like me to pray for you, your officials and your subjects, so as to rid you and your houses of the frogs so that they will be left only in the River?”

10. “Tomorrow,” he said. Moses said, “It shall be as you say, so that you will know that there is no one like Yahweh our God.

11. The frogs will leave you, your houses, your officials and your subjects and will be left only in the River.”

12. Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh’s presence, and Moses pleaded with Yahweh

about the frogs which he had inflicted on Pharaoh.

13. Yahweh did as Moses asked, and in house and courtyard and field the frogs died.

In these verses we can actually see Pharaoh entreating/begging Moses to Pray to Yahweh (Jehovah) God on his behalf to get rid of the frogs. Moses does and Yahweh (Jehovah) God hears Moses' Prayer and the frogs die.

NJB Exodus 32:7-14

Moses forewarned by Yahweh

7. Yahweh then said to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people whom you brought here from Egypt have become corrupt.

8. They have quickly left the way which I ordered them to follow. They have cast

themselves a metal calf, worshipped it and offered sacrifice to it, shouting, `Israel, here is your God who brought you here from Egypt!’ ”

9. Yahweh then said to Moses, “I know these people; I know how obstinate they are!

10. So leave me now, so that my anger can blaze at them and I can put an end to them! I shall make a great nation out of you instead.”

The prayer of Moses

11. Moses tried to pacify Yahweh his God. “Yahweh,” he said, “why should your anger blaze at your people, whom you have brought out of Egypt by your great power and mighty hand?

12. Why should the Egyptians say, `He brought them out

with evil intention, to slaughter them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth?’ Give up your burning wrath; relent over this disaster intended for your people.

13. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom you swore by your very self and made this promise: ‘I shall make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and this whole country of which I have spoken, I shall give to your descendants, and it will be their heritage for ever.’ ”

14. Yahweh then relented over the disaster which he had intended to inflict on his people.

It can be seen from these verses that

Jehovah God heard Moses prayer, so it was possible by the use of prayer to cool God's anger towards someone or something.

There are many areas in the Old Testament where prayer is used for various reasons to entreat Jehovah God for something or on behalf of somebody.

There are also many areas in the New Testament in which the Lord Jesus Christ mentions pray and he is quite often seen praying himself. Jesus Christ mentions Pray in the bible and even goes as far as indicating how to pray, which is interesting in itself as can be seen in these verses:

NJB Matthew 6:5-6

Prayer in secret

5. `And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers

standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.

6. But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

It is interesting to note in these verses that Christ Jesus tells us to pray in private and quietly, rather than doing it in the open and out loud. This seems to indicate that those that do this out loud and in the open are trying to prove something to others rather than honestly praying to Jehovah God.

NJB Matthew 18:19-20

Prayer in common

19. `In truth I tell you once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven.

20. For where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them.”

These verses may seem contradictory in relation to Matt 6:5-6 above, however it is still possible to pray as individuals for the same thing or the same purpose. This doesn't need to be done openly and loudly, it can still be done quietly and even privately, so the 2 verse sections don't counter each other or make it confusing. It also doesn't need to be done as a large group and in public; you could have 1 friend doing this, both in different locations.

NJB Matthew 6:7-13

How to pray. The Lord's Prayer

7. In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard.

8. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9. So you should pray like this:

**Our Father in heaven,
may your name be held holy,**

10. your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

11. Give us today our daily bread.

**12. And forgive us our debts,
as we have forgiven those who
are in debt to us.**

**13. And do not put us to the
test,**

but save us from the Evil One.

Many people simply copy these verses and use the excuse that it is the Lord's Prayer. It is our Lord Jesus Christ's personal prayer to Jehovah God, but it was said as an example, not as a prayer that should be simply quoted and copied by rote. Using this prayer and not actually meaning the words in them is a waste of your time and Jehovah God's. It is better for you to use your own words when you pray, remember, be direct, don't babble, after all, Jehovah God already knows what you need.

NJB Matthew 7:7-11

Effective prayer

7. `Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

8. Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds;

everyone who knocks will have the door opened.

9. Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread?

10. Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish?

11. If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

These Verses regarding prayer are very interesting. Christ Jesus tells us that if you ask, search, knock you will receive. The one thing we need to be aware of however is that Prayer alone will not always bring about what we are looking for; we need to have faith as well. Faith in

Jehovah God, faith that our request or pray is just and faith that our request is part of God's plan. This requirement of Faith can be seen in the following verses from scripture:

NJB Matthew 21:18-22

**The barren fig tree withers;
Faith and prayer**

18. As he was returning to the city in the early morning, he felt hungry.

19. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it and found nothing on it but leaves. And he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again," and instantly the fig tree withered.

20. The disciples were amazed when they saw it and said, "How is it that the fig tree withered instantly?"

21. Jesus answered, "In truth I tell you, if you have faith and

do not doubt at all, not only will you do what I have done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be pulled up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done.

22. And if you have faith, everything you ask for in prayer, you will receive."

These verses are interesting. It shows several things to us. Firstly, and most obviously, it shows us that Christ Jesus is the Lord and Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, it shows us his divine nature and that he is the Son of Jehovah God. It also shows the faith he has in his commands and prayers, understanding and accepting completely that it will occur, no doubt, something us mere mortals find hard to have, mainly because of the constant disappointments we

suffer during our life. We tend to forget however that not everything we ask for is in our own best interest, and that maybe some of the things we ask for do not fit into Jehovah God's plans, either in full or for us specifically. This can be seen in the following verse:

NJB Matthew 26:36-46

Gethsemane

36. Then Jesus came with them to a plot of land called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there to pray."

37. He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And he began to feel sadness and anguish.

38. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and stay awake with me."

39. And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed. "My Father," he said, "if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it."

40. He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "So you had not the strength to stay awake with me for one hour? 41. Stay awake, and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing enough, but human nature is weak."

42. Again, a second time, he went away and prayed: "My Father," he said, "if this cup cannot pass by, but I must drink it, your will be done!"

43. And he came back again and found them sleeping, their

eyes were so heavy.

44. Leaving them there, he went away again and prayed for the third time, repeating the same words.

45. Then he came back to the disciples and said to them, "You can sleep on now and have your rest. Look, the hour has come when the Son of man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46. Get up! Let us go! Look, my betrayer is not far away."

Notice in this prayer to Jehovah God, Christ Jesus asks in verse 39 that the Father, if it is possible, let this cup (the period of sacrifice Jesus must undergo) pass by him. At the end, Jesus adds, that it be as Jehovah God would have it, according to Jehovah God's will, not Jesus' will. Again, in verse 42, Christ

Jesus comments that if this cup cannot pass by, and that he must drink of it, that Jehovah God's will be done. In other words, although Jesus is praying to Jehovah God that the period of sacrifice may be taken from him, he places himself in God's hands and will do as required according to God's will not his own. Many of us seem to forget that all prayers, although asked for, are still subject to God's will. God knows what we want, Jesus tells us this in Matthew 6:8 when he tells us "... your Father knows what you need before you ask him". This also returns to the Faith issue. Not only should we have faith that our prayers will be answered, but the faith we have should also be faith in Jehovah God to know what is best for us. This can be hard for us, all too often we tend to believe that we

know what's best for ourselves. For example, I'm sure that many of us would believe that we need 1 million dollars, and with that I'm sure we all think we would know how to handle and use that type of money if it was given to us, yet if you honestly sit down and think about this, unless you have actually had 1 million dollars before, would you really know what to do with it? Would it in fact corrupt us and destroy our relationship with God if he gave it to us? Money is the root of all evil, it is a thing of this world and the god of this world, Satan, is the one that will ensure our pure wealth. So with this understanding, if you are honest with yourself, can you understand why Jehovah God, who knows us better than we will ever know ourselves, would give us something that we could not

handle? It would be like asking for food and Jehovah God giving us rotten food to eat when he knows that it will not be healthy for us and will make us sick.

Jesus also explains to us that prayer should be offered from a humble position, to show this, he uses a parable in the bible, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector shown below:

NJB Luke 18:9-14

The Pharisee and the tax collector

9. He spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else,

10. `Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

11. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, 'I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here.

12. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get.'

13. The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'

14. This man, I tell you, went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up."

One can see that all the Pharisee

does in his prayer to Jehovah God is extol his supposed virtues while comparing himself to other so called worse people. All the Tax collector does is mention that he knows he is a sinner and asks Jehovah God to be merciful to him.

Looking through the bible, you will find that Prayer is mentioned numerous times throughout. In many cases, prayer is said by one or more people for others, very rarely do you see prayers being made directly for something personal; however it is done and should be. Prayers are always better if requests, coming from somebody else. Prayers aren't just for asking for something either. Pray is also a form of worship, talking to Jehovah God is also a prayer, telling him how much you Love him, thanking him for the things he does in your life, even

though you may not be able to see exactly what or how he does those things. Telling him about your day, what happened, how it affected you. Many things can be done in prayer, constant prayer between yourself and Jehovah God, whether simply to talk about your day, thank him for something, perhaps the glorious weather you might have had, asking for his help or aid, either for yourself, a loved one or even an enemy means that you are praying, and praying brings us closer to Jehovah God, it creates a bond and a relationship, it helps strengthen the personal relationship we have with God. This is what Jehovah God wants with us, a personal relationship, one between Father and Child, Creator and Created, the best, quickest and easiest way for this to occur is for us to pray to him

and do it often. The relationship has to be built from our side, the bridge is already and always built from his side towards us.

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