

Bible Study 2022-2023

Class #21

2/28/23

Acts 15 (Cont)

- Once again we see a passage in the Bible that demonstrates its authenticity because the Elder James is reciting something from memory and thus presents the list out of the order it appears in the Scriptures
- This discrepancy will be corrected when the Council incorporates the list into its written document (**Acts 15:29**)
- The correct order as found in **Leviticus** is that one should abstain from what has been:
 - Sacrificed to idols (Lv 17:1-9)
 - Blood (Lv 17:10-16)
 - What is strangled (Lv 19:26)
 - *Pornea* (unchastity) (Lv 18:1-18)

Review of Acts 15 (Cont)

- James provided the solution by quoting from the “**Holiness Code**” from **Leviticus** stating that the Gentiles could be baptized into the Church so long as they abstained from:
 - What has been sacrificed to idols
 - Blood
 - What has been strangled
 - *Pornea*
- The council agreed
- Paul, Barnabas Judas (called Barsabbas), and Silas were instructed to take a letter containing this decision and read it to the Church in Antioch

Matthew 6

- **Matthew 6:1-2** *“Beware of practicing your piety before men...that they may be praised by men”*
 - Many believe that Jesus’ use of “hypocrites” here is the same as we will find in **Matthew 23:13, 15,23, and 29**, where Jesus attacks the Scribes and Pharisees for their obvious hypocrisy: *“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites”*
 - Father pointed out that the *Pharisees* get a bad rap, causing us to immediately think of “hypocrites,” whenever we hear the name Pharisee

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- He added that he was not quite sure if he (or most of us) were living in the 1st century we would be Pharisees
- The Pharisees were a very pious group who believed that there would be no return of the Messiah, (human or divine), or the glory cloud, until all sin had been removed from Israel, and the people were prepared for their return (Malachi's predictions)
- Unfortunately, they fell into a great deal of hypocrisy in the process of preparing the people of Israel for this return

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:3-6** *“But when you give alms,...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you”*
 - Father said that if one could do this, he would be schizophrenic
 - Jesus was telling the people not to let others know what they were doing when it came to prayer
 - At that time, the Jews prayed five times a day (every three hours) at 6 AM, 9 AM, noon, 3 PM, and 6 PM (sunrise to sunset)
 - There were also four watches in the night

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- There were also four watches in the night:
 - Evening – 6 to 9 PM
 - Midnight – 9 PM to Midnight
 - Cockcrowing - Midnight to 3 AM
 - Morning – 3 to 6 AM
- Muhammad said that he learned how to pray from the Christian monks of Syria – they pray five times a day
- We see in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples going to the temple at the hours of prayer
- Most , the Pharisees were keeping these hours of prayer, but doing so very publicly

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Father discussed several instances when he witnessed Muslims praying at a specific hour **publicly**
- Jesus was encouraging His followers to pray during these hours **privately** to avoid falling into pride by drawing attention to themselves
- Father said that this does not mean that we should not express our Christianity, but we should not draw attention to ourselves in ways that would cause us to be tempted by pride

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Jesus tells his followers to go and find a quiet place, like your room in your house, and quietly pray to your Father
- He was not, however, saying that we should not gather together as Christians in a building (Church) and all pray together because that does not draw attention to one single person

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:7** *“And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him”*
 - Most commentators agree that this was in reference to a Gentile style of prayer, in which they would pray by trying to annunciate all the names of the gods, that they were worshiping
 - They thought this was the way to make their god(s) act in their favor
 - If one said the right name, on the right day, they would get their god’s attention by keeping the words going on and on

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Jesus told his listeners to keep it simple, and pray from your heart
- Father pointed out that some Protestants today use this argument against Catholics for praying the rosary
- Yet, Jesus prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane, *“Father, if this cup can pass from me let it be, but not my will be done but yours”*

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- So, to repeat the same thing, even in a short amount of time is not what Jesus was talking about here
- He was criticizing the Gentiles for trying to work some kind of magic by saying just the right words as the right way to force their god to act or to get his attention
- What Jesus was doing in the *Garden of Gethsemane* was not trying to change His Father's will, but to announce what was in His heart
- This is something else, and there is a different purpose there

Prayer

- Four types of prayer: (ACTS)
 - **Adoration** – to acknowledge His infinite majesty as Lord and Master of all creation
 - **Contrition** – to acknowledge our sinfulness for we owe Him our complete loyalty
 - **Thanksgiving** –to acknowledge His infinite goodness because all graces come from Him
 - **Supplication** – to ask God for graces and favors we need for ourselves and others

The Lord's Prayer

- The Apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray
- His prayer teaches that God is personal and loves each one of us individually
- It is corporate prayer - “our” not “my” Father

The Lord's Prayer (Cont)

- Seven petitions: - first 3 are about God
 - ***Hallowed be thy name*** – Adoration and praise of God
 - ***May thy kingdom come*** – Ask that His grace may come to all men
 - ***May thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*** – whatever God wants not what we want

The Lord's Prayer (Cont)

- Second 4 are about the one praying:
 - ***Give us this day our daily bread*** – all our needs both physical and spiritual for today
 - ***Forgive us our sins (as we forgive those who sin against us)*** – this is hard to do
 - ***Lead us not into temptation*** – He may give us tests or trials for our own good
 - ***Deliver us from evil*** – protect us from all that can harm us

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:8-9** *“Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray like this: Our Father who are in heaven, Hallowed by thy name”*
 - Everyone knows this prayer as it is the most ancient Christian prayer
 - In fact, the Lord’s Prayer is mentioned in the *Didache** as a prayer a Christian should pray three times a day

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Father suggested that a better translation of the opening verse would be: “*Our Heavenly Father*” as the word “art” does not really mean the same thing in modern English
- Again, “*Hollowed be thy name*” means “holy is your name” (set apart – *Kadosh* in Hebrew meaning different)
- The name of God is different from all other words, and the names of all the other gods

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- This name identifies the person, so *Yahweh*, the God of Israel is Holy, Holy, Holy
- Again, the word “*hallowed*” is not common in modern English, and is another place where we might need to eventually modernize it
- Father pointed out that this prayer was obviously not originally written in English, but in Aramaic, and later translated into Greek before English!

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- But, because it is such a sacred prayer, no one wants to mess with it
- To make it a bit more modern we would probably say: *“holy is your name,”* which in Greek is an imperative
- To say, *“may your name be holy,”* means set apart; always understood to be different from all other names

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:10-11** *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven, Give us our daily bread”*
 - Father pointed out that, *“Thy kingdom come”* again is an imperative
 - In English, we would say: “may your kingdom come”
 - In Greek, it is an imperative which we cannot express in English because we do not have a third person imperative
 - In Greek, *“Your Kingdom come,”* is a very forceful **command**

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- It is not simply the English “may,” which is subjective, and the only way we can make sense of it in English would be to say, “*may your kingdom come*” (or “*I pray or wish that it come*”)
- Again, in Greek, it is a command in which we pray that our heavenly Father who is distinct and separate, may have His will done, and the way His will operates in the heavenly realm, where He dwell may that also be how it is on earth
- We are praying that the Kingdom of God be established on the earth
- As said earlier, the rabbis required every prayer to request the establishment of the Kingdom of God

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- For us today, this phrase does not really mean very much
- We usually just rattle it off and not really think about its meaning
- Most thinking about what it says would think it was calling for the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, end times, or something
- But, in the context of the 1st Century, a prayer that the kingdom would be established is why Jesus went around announcing that the Kingdom of God was at hand

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- We need to think of how a Jew might have heard it, as they were looking for the restoration of the Kingdom of God
- They were looking for the return of the Glory Cloud, and for the Messiah to appear, along with everything that would come with this

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:12-13** *“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*
 - Translations vary between “debts” and “trespasses”
 - It could read, *“lead us not to the ‘test.’ But deliver us from evil”*
 - *“forgive us as we forgive others.”* Both phrases offer a comparison
 - It means for God to forgive us to the degree that we have forgiven each other
 - It assumes that we have already forgiven others

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:14-15** *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses”*
 - This is the same as, *“be merciful to us, as much as we have been merciful to others”*
 - Father pointed out that these are some scary words
 - This is a constant reminder that if we ask God for forgiveness, we must be forgiving of our fellow man

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- The second issue here concerns, *“lead us not into temptation (test)”* as we discussed in the passage concerning Jesus’ temptation or test in the desert in **Matthew 4**
- The word *“test”* is a bit closer to the Greek
- Next, Father discussed the meaning of *“lead us not”*
- Again, this is a semantic way of speaking, so the English sounds kind of funny, as if God would lead us to the test
- It sounds like we do not trust God

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Father discussed an example of this sort in the wording from **1st Corinthians 1:17**, *“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel”*
- Paul meant that his primary purpose was to go and preach the gospel, and only secondarily to baptize, since there were others who could perform the task of baptizing
- Paul would go from town to town preaching the gospel, and leave the baptizing to others
- Again, Paul was not saying that Baptism was just a public showing, and not that important (the view of Zwingli and others), rather it was simply a semitic way of speaking

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Other examples were:
 - *“He (Jacob) loved Jacob, but hated Esau”*(**Malachi 1**)
 - *“When God saw that Leah was hated but Rachael loved, he closed the womb of Rachael, and opened the womb of Leah”*
- This did not mean that *Jacob* hated *Leah*, or that God hated *Esau*
- It simply means that He preferred one over the other, (these are examples of Synonymous parallelisms)
- Thus, Matthew in this text, is using a synonymous parallelism meaning the same thing
- It could have been translated *“save us from the testing or temptations of the evil one,”* or *“deliver us from the tempting of the evil one”*

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that it is for issues like this, that Pope Francis suggested that the Our Father be changed at some point
- He was not asking that the meaning of Our Father be changed, but that it be better translated (into English) at some point
- This is especially true for small children, and for those for whom English is not their first language
- Over time, language changes
- Once again, *“Lead us not into the test but rather deliver us from evil one”* is a synonymous parallelism

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- The third issue Father clarified concerned the phrase, *"the evil one"*
 - This could be translated, *"deliver us from evil,"* or *"deliver us from the evil one"*
 - In Greek, the form is masculine/neuter
 - In the Greek both mean the same thing when looked at within Christian theology
 - We Christians see the phrase, *"deliver us from evil"* to imply that there is a personality behind that
- Thus, many scholars translate it as, *"deliver us from the evil one"*

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Even though that may not be a perfect translation, it is what is intended here
- Father expressed a hope that future translations will keep in mind the impact of changing a phrase which may cause people to lose their faith
- We have been praying the Lord's Prayer this way for generations, and without significant education, future changes may cause major problems