

# Rightly Dividing Prayer

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We are continuing our exposition of the miracles, but we are detouring just a bit, and I think this will probably be the last time we'll do that, because I do want to return to the miracles, but I also want you to see how interrelated the miracles are to the parables, and how often it is a miracle that prompts the giving of a parable at a particular time, and sometimes it's the opposite.

But these are found in great abundance in the Gospels, and they are there for our learning and for our benefit. Paul wrote to the Romans, chapter 10, I think it was verse 13, For whatsoever things were written aforetime, and when Paul said that, he had to have been talking about the Old Testament, because the new hadn't even come into being yet.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we might have patience and comfort through the Scriptures.

It doesn't necessarily mean whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our doing, but were written for our learning. If they were written for our doing, then when's the last time you sacrificed an animal?

So you say, well, we don't do that anymore. Exactly. We don't do that anymore. Why not? Well, because the one ultimate final sacrifice has been made that actually outlaws the sacrifice of animals in order to become presentable and acceptable to God, because the program has changed.

[ 1 : 4 8 ] Jesus has died on the cross, and everything changes as a result of that, so we don't sacrifice animals anymore. Well, were they wrong to sacrifice animals back then? No. No, they were right.

And they did it as an act of obedience, because God required it. But when Christ came and became that ultimate sacrifice, that all changed. Now, most people do not have any difficulty seeing the progression and the difference there between the Old Testament and the New.

Almost all believers are together with that. But here's where we have a problem, and it's in the New Testament. And what we are saying that is so often falling on deaf ears is the fact that within the body of the New Testament, there is a change.

No argument between the Old and the New. Oh, yes, everybody can see that. But there is a compulsion on the part of many to take the whole New Testament, one fell swoop, and make the whole thing applicable.

And that's where Christendom divides. Because, and we'll look at an example, let's go there right now.

[ 3 : 1 3 ] And it is in Luke's Gospel, chapter 11. Luke's Gospel, chapter 11. And I don't know of anything that is more clearly set forth than the distinction between the kingdom and the church.

There is a determination on the part of many to make these one and the same. They are distinctly different.

The kingdom is relating to the kingdom of heaven coming to earth, being established here on earth. And everything in that kingdom will be fixed.

It will be, the planet will be fixed. It will be as it ought to be. It isn't now. We are still living and functioning in a broken, fallen planet.

As broken, fallen individuals. And the proof positive of that is the fact that we're all going to die, physically. And that's part of a fallen world, part of our fallen bodies.

[ 4 : 30 ] So, we've got to make sure that people understand there is a distinction between the kingdom of heaven coming to earth and dying while we are on earth and going to heaven.

It's two different things. The word heaven tends to throw people because they want to make that heaven and this heaven equate. And they're not the same.

The difference is incredible. So, some get around that by saying, well, this is a spiritual kingdom of heaven. Well, what does that mean?

Well, when the kingdom of heaven comes, literally, Jesus Christ will be ruling and reigning with a rod of iron and everything is going to be as it ought to be.

This is not it. And when you try to spiritualize it and say, well, he is ruling and reigning, but he's reigning from heaven. Well, got a problem with that too.

[ 5 : 34 ] Because what then do you suppose the apostle Paul meant when he said that Satan is the god of this age?

Well, if Jesus is reigning over the planet, but he's reigning from heaven, what about the god of this age? And by the way, does this planet and what's going on, does it look to you like Jesus is calling the shots?

I mean, if you think so, you've got a far more active imagination than I do. I'll grant you this.

Christ is ultimately in control. And as I've often said before, even though Satan is the god of this age, he is like a mad dog on a chain and he can go no further than what Christ is willing to let him go.

But I'll tell you this, he's got a lot of latitude. He does a lot of destruction. He creates a lot of mayhem, confusion, lying, deception.

[ 6 : 44 ] It's going on. That's all part and parcel of a fallen world. So let's make a distinction between the kingdom of heaven and going to heaven when once you die.

That's an entirely different thing. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. Yeah, you go to heaven, but that's not the kingdom of heaven coming to earth. So let's look at this. Luke's Gospel, chapter 11.

Came about that while he was praying in a certain place after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, just as John, he's talking about John the Baptist, just as John also taught his disciples.

And Jesus said unto them, When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Now, right there, fellas, we needn't go any further than to see, and I think a proof positive way, that Jesus is here suggesting that their prayer include the kingdom of heaven coming to earth.

They're praying for the kingdom. They're asking God to send the kingdom here on earth. Any question about that? All right.

[ 8 : 10 ] Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us, and lead us not, and that's not a good rendering, it ought to be do not allow us to enter into temptation, because God isn't going to lead anybody into temptation.

So this prayer is adopted by almost all of Christendom as some kind of a mantra, and you are aware that there are churches that you can attend that they would not even consider a church if they didn't at least recite the Lord's Prayer, and people are conditioned to recite it.

It's on cue, and everybody knows it automatically, and if there's any prayer that anybody knows in Christendom, and hasn't memorized, it's this. And yet, it is not intended to be a prayer that we just repeat automatically.

It is a model kind of prayer, and Jesus isn't saying, use these same exact words, because earlier, prior to this, he rebukes them for saying prayers, and we are to be people of prayer.

Prayer is a privilege for everyone who is in Christ, and if you were in Christ, you are on praying ground, and we ought to pray, but we ought not to say prayers.

[ 9 : 52 ] Huge difference. Huge difference. You can say prayers in just a mechanical, methodical way, where you're just cranking out words, and that's not the way we are to pray.

We are to pray intelligently. And, well, let's go on. He's going to give a parable. And, by the way, just let me inject something here, if I may.

Do you see this, forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgave everyone. It's just a little bit different in Matthew's gospel, but the word, it's the same. And here, it is quite apparent that the forgiveness of those who is involved is dependent upon their having forgiven others.

And it isn't all that clear right here, but it is in Matthew's gospel. You can turn to the reference for that later if you want. But, when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, it is not dependent upon you, first of all, saying, now let me see.

I would really like to be saved. I'd really like to receive Christ as my Savior, but is there anyone who has wronged me that I need to forgive or that I have wronged and I need to forgive them because if there is and I haven't forgiven them, then I can't be forgiven.

[ 11 : 29 ] And that's exactly the formula here. That's the formula in the gospels. If you want to be, if you want God to forgive you, you have to forgive others.

Now, fellas, I don't want to split hairs and I don't want to be difficult about this, but I'm saying there is a distinction, there is a difference, and it's a legitimate difference, and we need to recognize the difference.

How do we square that? For if you forgive not your brother, your heavenly Father will not forgive you. What do you do with what Paul said when he wrote to the Colossians and talked about Christ having forgiven you all trespasses?

What is that? That is a blanket forgiveness. That's complete, total forgiveness of all your sin, past, present, and future.

What's that got to do with having, should you forgive others? Should you apologize to others if you've wronged them? Of course. But is God's forgiveness of you dependent on that?

[ 12 : 37 ] No. What is dependent on that? It's Christ died for your sins. That's it. That's everything. And if you are under that blanket, you are forgiven all trespasses.

So let's go on here. Here he's going to give a parable. And he's going to illustrate the parable. He's going to use the parable to illustrate what he was talking about in teaching them to pray.

He said to them, Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and you shall go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.

I've got unexpected company from out of town, and I don't have a thing in the cupboard to feed them. Would you bail me out and come to my rescue and provide me with some food so that I can take care of this visitor who has come?

And from inside, verse 7, He shall answer and say, Do not bother me. The door's already been shut. My children and I are in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.

[ 13 : 49 ] Go away. Jesus said, I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, that means this guy who is asking for bread won't go away.

He's just hanging in there and making a nuisance of himself. He will not, because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

It's probably grumbling and complaining all the time, you know, that he is doing it. But he's doing it. And Jesus said, And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given to you.

Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.

Now, suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish. He will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he's asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?

[ 15 : 06 ] Of course not. So if you then, being evil, not suggesting that these to whom he's speaking are somehow particularly evil, but he's just saying as much that you're human beings and we all have that stroke of evil in us, you know, that lurks in us because of our fallenness.

He says, Few then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

And the thing here that he is teaching is that you persist in your prayer request and you hang on and you keep asking and you keep asking and God will, if you're persistent enough, that's the principle that's being taught here, God will answer.

And by the way, what is the main thing here in this whole passage that they're talking about and praying about? What's the big item? Kingdom. Kingdom.

Pray. Thy kingdom come. What's the big deal about that? Well, it's simple. Because when the kingdom comes, God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[ 16 : 34 ] And by any stretch of the imagination, that is not reality now. Satan is still the god of this age. He has a temporary reign and he rested the authority from Adam when Adam and Eve disobeyed.

They lost their dominion. God gave them dominion. That means the ability to dominate the planet.

And they forfeited that and now it is under the dominion of Satan himself. When Christ comes back, he will take that kingdom back.

You see, when Jesus came the first time, he paid for the kingdom. When he comes the second time, he will collect on what he paid for.

But right now, it remains under the dominion of Satan. So here, we've got the principle to persist in prayer and God will answer.

[ 17 : 41 ] And this is in connection primarily with the coming of the kingdom. Now, were these people praying for the coming of the kingdom? Of course they were. And that was why Jesus came was to provide that.

And by the way, to just inject something here because it is a hypothetical and it needs to be addressed and I don't want to spend much time on it. But the question has been asked and I remember this from my years way back as a student at Cedarville over 60 years ago.

And I can remember the people arguing about it and I was a new believer and I didn't even understand what they were talking about, what was going on. But the concept and the question was asked, so what if Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah and the kingdom would have been established without Christ going to the cross, what does that mean?

How would we have been saved? And the whole issue is resolved in the fact that the scriptures had already predicted the rejection of the Messiah, so there was no question about that.

But here is a very, very important point. For God to have said and to have prophesied through Isaiah,