



Chapter 6

Sermon on the Mount Continued

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McGee Introduction: Chapter 6 of Matthew deals with the external part of religion. We have seen in chapter 5 that the King speaks of the righteousness which His subjects must *possess*. It must be a righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and that comes only through trust in Christ. In chapter 6 Matthew talks about the righteousness that the subjects of the kingdom are to *practice*. The motive, of course, is the important thing in what you do for God. No third party can enter into this relationship. These things are between the soul and God.

The items mentioned in this chapter—the giving of alms, prayer, fasting, money, and taking thought and care for the future—are very practical considerations.

First, our Lord talks about alms. Keep in mind that all of this has to do with externalities of religion or with ostentation in religion.¹

Religion and its rewards. The general summary in v 1 is followed by three parallel illustrations of the wrong and the right way to go about religious observance. Almsgiving, prayer and fasting were central elements in Jewish religion, and all are assumed to be valid for Jesus' disciples. The issue is not whether you should do them, but how and why. And it is focused in the question of *reward*; the reward for ostentatious religion is the human recognition for which it is seeking; but that is all (*they have received their reward in full*). Secret religion, on the other hand, which is done for God and not for human approval, may expect a heavenly reward. Notice that, as in 5:3–12, there is no embarrassment about the idea of reward.

The neat symmetry of the three illustrations (2–4, 5–6, 16–18) is broken by an extended discussion of prayer, which further explains the wrong way (7–8) and the right way (9–15). The Lord's Prayer thus appears not simply as a prescribed liturgical form but as a model of what true prayer should be like.²

Matthew 6:1

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Although the Lord Jesus is directing His remarks to the subjects of His coming kingdom, there is a great principle here for you and me.

[Take heed] Greek: *prosecho* (GSN-4337), to hold the mind, pay strict attention to, and apply one's self to (Acts 5:35; Acts 8:6,10; 1 Tim. 4:1; Luke 21:34; Hebrews 2:1). The phrase is used 29 times in the Old Testament and 28 times in the New Testament.

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Mt 6:1). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

[alms] Any good work that is intended for the glory of God. Alms were acts of charity and only solicited by the unfortunate

1. Giving of: to be done with simplicity (Matthew 6:1-4); with liberality (Deut. 15:11; Romans 12:8); and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7)
2. Enjoined (Leviticus 25:35; Deut. 15:7-11; Isaiah 58:7; Matthew 5:42; Luke 11:41; 2 Cor. 9:5; 1 Tim. 6:18)
3. Rewarded (Deut. 14:28-29; Deut. 15:10; Matthew 10:42; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33)
4. Examples of (Luke 19:8; Acts 9:36; Acts 10:2; 2 Cor. 8-9)

Poole: Alms are any acts of kindness freely done by us for the relief of any that are in distress and misery, which, when they are done from a principle of love to God, his precepts commanding them, obedience in faith to his promises made to the giving of them, and that he may be glorified, are truly good works, acts of religion, and acceptable to God, Ac 10:31, though meritorious of nothing from him; otherwise they are merely acts of humanity and morality, to the reward of which God is by no promise obliged. Therefore Christ's disciples are obliged to take heed, that in the doing of their alms, though they may do them before men, God may be glorified, Php 2:15 1Pe 2:12; yet they do them not before men on purpose that they should take notice of them, and applaud them for them, for God rewardeth no action of which he is not the end.³

[reward of your Father which is in heaven] The third of thirteen times in Matthew. Each good deed is to be rewarded if done with the right motive (Matthew 5:12; Matthew 6:1,18; Matthew 10:41-42; Matthew 16:27; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23,35; Romans 14:10-11; 1 Cor. 3:8-15; 1 Cor. 9:17-18; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 2:18; Col. 3:24; 2 Tim. 4:14; Hebrews 10:35; Hebrews 11:26; 2 Peter 2:13; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 22:12).

[heaven] *ouranos*, Greek 3772, *oo-ran-os'*; perhaps from the same as Greek 3735 (*oros*) (through the idea of *elevation*); the *sky*; by extension *heaven* (as the abode of God); by implication *happiness, power, eternity*; specially the *Gospel (Christianity)* :- air, heaven ([*-ly*]), sky.

This verse is the thesis statement that introduces the three examples of private piety in Matthew 6:2-16. Judaism stressed that one should not perform deeds for the sake of reward but nonetheless promised reward, as Jesus does here; this reward is rendered at the day of judgment, as in Judaism. Prayer, fasting and gifts to the poor were basic components of Jewish piety (Tobit 12:8), and many rabbis listed qualities (e.g., virtues on which the world was founded) in sets of three.⁴

McGee: He is saying this with biting irony. Believe me,. He knew how to use the rapier of sarcasm! When the Pharisees wanted to give something to the poor, it was their custom to go down to a busy street corner in Jerusalem and blow a trumpet. Although the purpose was to call the poor and needy together to receive the gifts, it afforded a fine opportunity to let others see their good works. Do you see parallels today in the way

³ Matthew Poole's Commentary

⁴ Bible Background Commentary

some Christians give? Our Lord said that when the Pharisees do it that way, they have their reward. What was their reward? Well, what was it that they were after? Jesus said they did it to have glory of men. They blew the trumpet, and everybody came running out to see how generously they gave, and that was their reward. Their giving was not between themselves and God.

Now, why do *you* give? There is more than one way to give. Several years ago I was asked to take an offering in a certain organization. I was told to be sure and give everybody an opportunity to stand up and tell how much he would give. For example, I was instructed to say, “How many will give one hundred dollars?” I asked, “Why in the world do you take an offering like that?” I was told that a certain man would attend who would give only one dollar if a regular offering was taken. However, if the question of how many would give one hundred dollars was asked, he would give that amount. May I say that he blew a trumpet. And I discovered when I came to know this man that this was the way he gave.

There are other people who give large checks but want to hand them to you personally. There was a man in my church who always gave me a check before I went into the pulpit. He thought this would excite me enough so that I would mention it. A friend of his came to me one day and said, “So-and-so is disturbed.” He went on to explain that I did not acknowledge the very large check his friend had given me last Sunday. “That’s right,” I said, and told this man the reason why. “Your friend is a man of means and the check he gave me, in relationship to what he has, wasn’t very much. Last Sunday a mailcarrier also handed me an envelope. He didn’t want me to open it until after the service and did not want me to say a word to anyone about it. He gave me almost twice as much money as the man of means did. If I were going to acknowledge anybody, it would have to be the mail-carrier—but he didn’t want me to do that.”

May I say to you that giving is between you and God, and the very minute you get a third party involved, you don’t get any credit in heaven.

There is a lot of so-called Christian giving today that isn’t giving at all. For example, the college I graduated from played on human nature. While I was in school, beautiful architectural plans were drawn up for a tower to be put on an old hall. It was modestly announced that the tower would be named after the donor. At least a half dozen people wanted their names on that tower. Today it is called “So-and-so Tower” in honor of a certain man. His name is carved in stone which means that his trumpet is being blown all the time. A lot of people give like that. This kind of giving is worth nothing before God.⁵

Jewish New Testament: “*alms*” *Tzedakah*, Hebrew for “righteousness,” but in a Jewish context “doing *tzedakah*” means “giving to charity, doing acts of mercy.” This is reflected in the Greek text: in v. 1 the Greek word used means “righteousness,” but in vv. 2–4 a different Greek word is used which means “kind deeds, alms, charitable giving.”⁶

⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 6:2

Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

If you get your reward from the people, God will pass. If you want your reward from the Father, you must have it a private deal.

[hypocrites] Actors—acting under a mask; feigning principles not adopted and passions not felt (Matthew 22:18; Matthew 23:28; Matthew 24:51; Mark 12:15). They literally sounded trumpets under the pretext of calling the poor, though with no other design than to gratify self by giving alms in public. See Job 27:8.

[synagogues] *sunagoge*, Greek 4864, *soon-ag-o-gay*'; from (the reduplicated form of) Greek 4863 (*sunago*); an *assemblage* of persons; specially a Jewish “*synagogue*” (the meeting or the place); by analogy a Christian *church* :- assembly, congregation, synagogue.

[They have their reward] They have their receipt in full.

Do not sound a trumpet—It is very likely that this was literally practised among the Pharisees, who seemed to live on the public esteem, and were excessively self-righteous and vain. Having something to distribute by way of alms, it is very probable they caused this to be published by blowing a trumpet or horn, under pretense of collecting the poor; though with no other design than to gratify their own ambition. There is a custom in the east not much unlike this. “The derveeshes carry horns with them, which they frequently blow, when any thing is given to them, in honor of the donor. It is not impossible that some of the poor Jews who begged alms might be furnished like the Persian derveeshes, who are a sort of religious beggars, and that these hypocrites might be disposed to confine their alms-giving to those that they knew would pay them this honor.” HARMER’S *Observat.* vol. i. p. 474.⁷

Therefore, when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee—The expression is to be taken figuratively for *blazoning* it. Hence our expression to “trumpet.”

In the synagogues and in the streets—That such chests or boxes, for receiving the alms of well-disposed people, were placed in the synagogues, we may readily believe; but what were the streets? Schoettgen supposes that courts or avenues in the temple and in the synagogues may be intended—places where the people were accustomed to walk, for air, amusement, etc., for it is not to be supposed that such chests were fixed in the public streets.

⁷ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

The term *hypocrites*, as used here, describes people who do good acts for appearances only—not out of compassion or other good motives. Their actions may be good, but their motives are hollow. These empty acts are their only reward, but God will reward those who are sincere in their faith.

Matthew 6:3

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

[let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth] An idiom of true humility. In many cases, works of charity must be hidden from even our nearest relatives, who, if they knew, would hinder us from doing what God has given us power and inclination to perform. We must go even farther; and conceal them as far as is possible from ourselves, by not thinking of them, or eyeing them with complacency. They are given to GOD, and should be hidden in HIM.

When Jesus says not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, he is teaching that our motives for giving to God and to others must be pure. It is easy to give with mixed motives, to do something for someone if it will benefit us in return. But believers should avoid all scheming and give for the pleasure of giving and as a response to God's love. We should ask ourselves Why do we give?

The Pharisees were often guilty of not following their own teachings:

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 17b - *Don't do good deeds to be noticed.*

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 9b - *He who gives alms in secret is greater than Moses*

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 10b - *The greatest form of charity is when you give and do not know to whom you give, and the recipient takes and does not know from whom he takes.*⁸

Matthew 6:4

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Which seeth in secret—We should ever remember that the eye of the Lord is upon us, and that he sees not only the act, but also every motive that led to it.

Shall reward thee openly—Will give thee the fullest proofs of his acceptance of thy work of faith, and labor of love, by increasing that substance which, for his sake, thou sharest with the poor; and will manifest his approbation in thy own heart, by the witness of his Spirit.

⁸ <http://www.yashanet.com/studies/mat6d.htm>

It's easier to do what's right when we gain recognition and praise. To be sure our motives are not selfish, we should do our good deeds quietly or in secret, with no thought of reward. Jesus says we should check our motives in three areas: generosity (Matthew 6:4), prayer (Matthew 6:6), and fasting (Matthew 6:18). Those acts should not be self-centered, but God-centered, done not to make us look good but to make God look good. The reward God promises is not material, and it is never given to those who seek it. Doing something only for ourselves is not a loving sacrifice. With your next good deed, ask, "Would I still do this if no one would ever know I did it?"⁹

McGee: Don't reach in your pocket with one hand and then put the other hand in the air to let people know how much you are giving! Our Lord is saying that when you put your hand in your pocket to get something to give, be so secretive about it that the other hand doesn't know what you are doing. All of this is biting sarcasm.¹⁰

Poole: There are some who think that our Saviour here reflects upon some practice of the Pharisees then in use for ostentation, who, under a pretence of a means to call people together, caused a trumpet to be sounded when they distributed their alms; but those learned in their writings assure us they could never find in them any foundation for such an opinion. The speech is rather metaphorical, prohibiting all ostentation in acts of charity, and inviting others to take notice of them, as Jehu invited Jonadab to come and see his zeal, 2Ki 10:16; as the third verse is but a proverbial expression expounded Mt 6:4, That thine alms may be in secret. Not that it is not lawful to give a poor body money or bread, &c., in the sight of others; but only to do it for that end, that we might be seen of others. The thing forbidden under the metaphorical expression is ostentation, and seeking our own honour and applause. The thing commanded is sincerity with respect to our end. The apostle calls it a giving with simplicity, singly aiming at the glorifying of God, by an obedient performance of our duty. He tells us those who give their alms to be honoured of men have their reward, that is, all which they are like to have; men applaud and cry them up, there is their reward: others shall have their reward from God, who seeth in secret, and so needeth not such a publication of our good deeds; and he will reward them openly before men and angels at the last day, Mt 25:31,32,34, and ordinarily in this life, Ps 37:25; 41:1 Ps 112:9,10.¹¹

Matthew 6:5

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

The key to the answer of secret prayer (Matthew 7:7-11)

⁹ Life Application Notes

¹⁰ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ Matthew Poole's Commentary

And when thou prayest prayer, is compounded of *προς* with, and *ευχη* a vow, because to pray right, a man binds himself to God, as by a vow, to live to his glory, if he will grant him his grace, etc. *Ευχομαι* signifies to pour out prayers or vows, from *ευ* well, and *χεω*, I pour out; probably alluding to the offerings or libations which were poured out before, or on the altar. A proper idea of prayer is, a pouring out of the soul unto God, as a free-will offering, solemnly and eternally dedicated to him, accompanied with the most earnest desire that it may know, love, and serve him alone. He that comes thus to God will ever be heard and blessed. Prayer is the language of dependence; he who prays not, is endeavoring to live independently of God: this was the first curse, and continues to be the great curse of mankind. In the beginning, Satan said, Eat this fruit; ye shall then be as God; i.e. ye shall be independent: the man hearkened to his voice, sin entered into the world, and notwithstanding the full manifestation of the deception, the ruinous system is still pursued; man will, if possible, live independently of God; hence he either prays not at all, or uses the language without the spirit of prayer.

The parallel structure of the larger section (Matthew 6:1-18) and of this passage on prayer is augmented by the presence of a sample prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; thus how one should not pray, Matthew 6:5, 7-8; and how one should pray, Matthew 6:6, 9). Judaism was much more serious about regular prayer than were Greek and Roman religions.

“Thou shalt not be as the *hypocrites* are”—my, our Lord used strong language, didn’t He! “They have their reward.” They pray so that they may be seen of men. A man might go wearing a prayer shawl, which advertises the fact that he is praying. Jesus said that when a man prays like that, he has his reward. He gets what he wants—that is, to be seen of men. But his prayer never gets above the rafters of the building.¹²

Poole: Our Saviour here cautions them against the same thing in prayer, as he had done before in giving alms, viz. hypocrisy and ostentation, doing this duty upon that design, merely to be taken notice of and applauded by men; it was lawful to pray standing in the synagogues, but not to do it merely to be taken notice of by men for devout persons, nor yet to confine themselves to praying in the synagogues. If they chose to pray standing, that they might be more conspicuous, and in the synagogues, because those places were more holy, (as they might dream), or, which seems rather to be here meant, because there most people would see them, for which purpose only they chose corners of streets, as was the old popish custom upon which account they set up crosses at three way leets?, &c., these things were sinful: but to pray standing was usual, Mr 11:25; and to pray in the synagogues and in the temple standing was usual, Lu 18:13. But those who do it merely for vain glory have their reward, and must expect none from God.¹³

¹²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹³ Matthew Poole’s Commentary

Matthew 6:6

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

[**closet**] Greek: *tameion* (GSN-5009), storehouse, or room for privacy or retirement; secret chamber (Matthew 6:6; Matthew 24:26; Luke 12:3,24). Your private room.

[**thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly**] Secret giving will be honored openly by God (cp. Matthew 10:40-42).

But thou, when thou prayest—This is a very impressive and emphatic address. But THOU! whosoever thou art, Jew, Pharisee, Christian—enter into thy closet. Prayer is the most secret intercourse of the soul with God, and as it were the conversation of one heart with another. The world is too profane and treacherous to be of the secret. We must shut the door against it: endeavor to forget it, with all the affairs which busy and amuse it. Prayer requires retirement, at least of the heart; for this may be fitly termed the closet in the house of God, which house the body of every real Christian is, 1 Corinthians 3:16. To this closet we ought to retire even in public prayer, and in the midst of company.¹⁴

Reward thee openly—What goodness is there equal to this of God to give, not only what we ask, and more than we ask, but to reward even prayer itself! How great advantage is it to serve a prince who places prayers in the number of services, and reckons to his subjects' account, even their trust and confidence in begging all things of him!

Some people, especially the religious leaders, wanted to be seen as “holy,” and public prayer was one way to get attention. Jesus saw through their self-righteous acts, however, and taught that the essence of prayer is not public style but private communication with God. There is a place for public prayer, but to pray only where others will notice you indicates that your real audience is not God.

McGee: The concept we are dealing with here is revolutionary. Did you notice that the Lord uses the term *Father* These are citizens of the kingdom that the Lord is talking about. How do you become a child of God today? John 1:12 gives us the answer: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that [do no more or less than] believe on his name.” Our Lord even said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (see John 3:3)—until then, you can’t call God your Father. And in the Old Testament you will not find the word *Father* used in relation to a man with God. The nation Israel as a whole was called by God, “... Israel is my son ...” (Exod. 4:22), but not an individual. The Lord Jesus is speaking of a new relationship.

¹⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Concerning the subject of prayer, we are told that it should be secret and sincere. Many an unknown saint of God will be revealed at the judgment seat of Christ as a real person of prayer.¹⁵

Poole: By this public prayer is not condemned, but secret prayer is established, and made every Christian's duty; and Christians are warned not to think that their duty of prayer is discharged by their going to places of public worship, and praying there: but that which our Saviour here cautions us against is ostentation, by which men may as much offend in their closets as elsewhere. Wherever we pray, we must take heed that our ends be right, that the glory of God be our principal end, and yielding obedience to his command; and there is no better means in order to this than the right setting of God before our eyes, as he that seeth in secret, and knoweth the most secret designs, scopes, and intentions of our hearts, and who, if we thus perform our duty, will reward us of his free grace and mercy; not as persons who by our prayers have merited any thing at his hand, (for what merit can there be in our prayers?) but as having showed our obedience to his will, and in the fulfilling of those many promises which he hath made to those that seek his face for the hearing of their prayers.¹⁶

Matthew 6:7

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

“vain repetitions”: Mal 2:17. Should we pray for something more than once? Paul did for his thorn in the flesh; 2 Cor 12. Also our Lord Jesus Christ at Gethsemane prayed more than once, yet limited repetition to three times.

Public prayer is O.K. (Cf. 1 Tim 2:8). Jesus notes that our most important prayers are to be in private.

[repetitions] *battologeo*, Greek 945, *bat-tol-og-eh'-o*; from *Battos* (a proverbial stammerer) and Greek 3056 (*logos*); to *stutter*, i.e. (by implication) to *prate* tediously :- use vain repetitions.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions—“Babble not” would be a better rendering, both for the form of the word—which in both languages is intended to imitate the sound—and for the sense, which expresses not so much the repetition of the same words as a senseless multiplication of them; as appears from what follows.

as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking—This method of heathen devotion is still observed by Hindu and Mohammedan devotees. With the Jews, says LIGHTFOOT, it was a maxim, that “Every one who multiplies prayer is heard.” In the Church of Rome, not only is it carried to a

¹⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁶Matthew Poole's Commentary

shameless extent, but, as THOLUCK justly observes, the very prayer which our Lord gave as an antidote to vain repetitions is the most abused to this superstitious end; the number of times it is repeated counting for so much more merit. Is not this just that characteristic feature of heathen devotion which our Lord here condemns? But praying much, and using at times the same words, is *not* here condemned, and has the example of our Lord Himself in its favor.¹⁷

Jewish New Testament:

Compare the Mishna:

“Rabbi Shim’on said, ‘... When you pray, do not make your prayer fixed [repetitive, mechanical], but [appeal for] mercy and supplication before the Omnipresent, blessed be he.’” (Avot 2:13)

Likewise the Gemara:

“When you address the Holy One, blessed be he, let your words be few.” (B’rakhot 61a)

New Testament scholars enjoy finding parallels to New Testament teachings in the writings of the rabbis. I enjoy it too—see 5:23–24N, vv. 9–13N, 7:12N and elsewhere throughout this commentary. Nevertheless, it is wise not to take this enterprise too seriously. To explain why I say this, let me present two of the “weighty conclusions” one might be tempted to draw—along with some weightier reasons for being very cautious:

(1) *Conclusion:* Judaism and New Testament religion are really the same, since Yeshua (or Paul, or the gospel writers) and the rabbis teach the same things.

Caution: The logic is faulty, resembling the syllogism, “Grass is green. Money is green. Therefore grass is money.” Moreover, traditional Judaism, as it has developed *since* the first century, has consciously distinguished itself over against Christianity, consciously defending itself against the possibility of accepting such a conclusion; and Christianity, throughout most of its history and in most of its expressions, has done the same. There is indeed room to speak of a “Judeo-Christian tradition” consisting of the common elements, but that is a far cry from simplistically proclaiming the identity of two streams which equally stress their differences. I myself expect that in the future these streams will become confluent, but they are not now congruent (see my *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*, Chapter III).

(2) *Conclusion:* The rabbis assimilated or copied Yeshua’s teaching without giving him credit. *Opposite conclusion:* Yeshua, Paul and/or the New Testament writers assimilated or copied the rabbis’ teachings without giving them credit.

Cautions: The rabbinic writings mostly date from long after Yeshua (the Mishna was compiled in the third century, the Gemaras in the fourth to sixth, other writings still later), so *prima facie* one would suppose the borrowings would be mostly by the rabbis.

On the other hand, these writings report many statements made by persons who lived long before the date of compilation, and sometimes long before Yeshua. Moreover, they also summarize unattributed traditions which may be very old indeed—so that the ideas reported may well predate Yeshua.

Jacob Neusner, a well-known Jewish scholar who deals with New Testament materials as pertinent to establishing the course of Jewish history, stresses the importance of dating any rabbinic or New Testament reference, together with its antecedents, before

¹⁷ JFB Commentary

drawing conclusions about who influenced whom. Since the same first-century Jewish society was the crucible out of which came both Messianic and rabbinic Judaism, often the most reasonable conclusion is that both the rabbis and the New Testament figures and writers drew on a common pool of ideas.

As for giving credit, one can make the case (it is beyond the scope of this commentary) that in fact the New Testament does acknowledge positive contributions made by “tradition” (i.e., the rabbis; see Mk 7:5–13N) and by the *P.rushim* (23:2&N).¹⁸

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 55a - *One who prays too intensely and too lengthily brings on himself heartache.*

Matthew 6:8

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Compare Isaiah 65:24.

Note: “Father”; these are citizens of the kingdom he is talking about...not an Old Testament term. Prayer should be marked by sincerity and simplicity:

1. Sincerity—Matthew 6:6. Go in and close the door. Your prayer is between you and God.
2. Simplicity—Matthew 6:7. Don’t use vain repetition. Get right down to the nittygritty and tell the Lord what you have on your mind.

“Disciples’ Prayer”

- Jesus couldn’t really pray this prayer; it was only a model for the disciples.
- There is no further mention of it in the Book of Acts or any of the epistles.
- For the *real* Lord’s Prayer, a study in intimacy with the Father, see John 17.

Lord’s Prayer

Title of “The Lord’s Prayer,” yet Jesus could not pray this prayer (the words are not appropriate for the Messiah to be saying to the Father). It was given to instruct us as to how to pray. Should be called the “Disciple’s Prayer.” (The Lord’s Prayer *should* refer to John 17.) See John 17. (Note in v. 9, prays for His own, not for the world).

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of—Prayer is not designed to inform God, but to give man a sight of his misery; to humble his heart, to excite his desire, to inflame his faith, to animate his hope, to raise his soul from earth to heaven, and to put him in mind that THERE is his Father, his country, and inheritance.

In the preceding verses we may see three faults, which our Lord commands us to avoid in prayer:—

- 1st. HYPOCRISY. Be not as the hypocrites. Matthew 6:5.

¹⁸Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:7). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

2ndly. DISSIPATION. Enter into thy closet. Matthew 6:6.

3rdly. MUCH SPEAKING, or UNMEANING REPETITION, Be not like the heathens. Matthew 6:7¹⁹.

Model Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). According to the Latin fathers and the Lutheran Church, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are *seven* in number; according to the Greek fathers, the Reformed Church and the Westminster divines, they are only *six*; the two last being regarded—we think, less correctly—as one. The first three petitions have to do exclusively with God: "Thy name be hallowed"—"Thy kingdom come"—"Thy will be done." And they occur in a *descending* scale—from Himself down to the manifestation of Himself in His kingdom; and from His kingdom to the entire subjection of its subjects, or the complete doing of His will. The remaining four petitions have to do with OURSELVES: "Give *us* our daily bread"—"Forgive *us* our debts"—"Lead *us* not into temptation"—"Deliver *us* from evil." But these latter petitions occur in an *ascending* scale—from the bodily wants of every day up to our final deliverance from all evil.²⁰

Repeating the same words over and over like a magic incantation is no way to ensure that God will hear your prayer. It's not wrong to come to God many times with the same requests—Jesus encourages *persistent* prayer. But he condemns the shallow repetition of words that are not offered with a sincere heart. We can never pray too much if our prayers are honest and sincere. Before you start to pray, know what you plan to say to God.

McGee: Prayer should be marked by sincerity and simplicity:

1. Sincerity—Matthew 6:6. Go in and close the door—your prayer is between you and God.
2. Simplicity—Matthew 6:7. Don't use vain repetition. Get right down to the nitty-gritty and tell the Lord what you have on your mind. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" v. 8. Even though He already knows what we need, He wants us to come to Him and ask.

Now He gives us a sample prayer—"After this manner therefore pray ye."

Before we look at this so-called Lord's Prayer, let me say that I never use it in a public service. I don't think that a Sunday morning crowd should get up and pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" when they have a roast in the oven at home—they already have their meal. It is a very meaningful prayer for those who are hungry, but a well-fed Sunday morning congregation ought not to pray this because for them it is vain repetition.

However, it is a wonderful model prayer for believers of all conditions.²¹

¹⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

²⁰ JFB Commentary

²¹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 6:9

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

No Scriptural follow through: No mention of this prayer in Acts or in the Epistles, so there is no reason to believe that they took this prayer literally and repeated it in the early church.

[Father] only a “born again” can really use this phrase. “Our Father”: Prayer of the saved, as an unsaved person can’t pray this because he is not a child of God. Must be “born” into the family to be able to use the term, “Father.” [The only thing higher than His Name is His Word. (Ps 138:2)]

On the cross Jesus did not call out Father but he called out My God My God. He was in our shoes at the time.

Twenty-three Elements in the Lord's Prayer

1. Relationship: Our Father
2. Recognition: which art in heaven
3. Adoration: Hallowed be thy name
4. Anticipation: Thy kingdom come
5. Consecration: Thy will be done
6. Universality: in earth
7. Conformity: as it is in heaven
8. Supplication: Give us
9. Definiteness: this day
10. Necessity: our daily bread
11. Penitence: And forgive us
12. Obligation: our debts
13. Forgiveness: as we forgive
14. Love and mercy: our debtors
15. Guidance: And lead us
16. Protection: not into temptation
17. Salvation: but deliver us
18. Righteousness: from evil
19. Faith: For thine is the kingdom
20. Humility: and the power
21. Reverence: and the glory
22. Timelessness: for ever
23. Affirmation: Amen

Note: the first 3 petitions of the prayer make 7 points concerning God; the last 4 petitions make 16 points concerning man.²²

McGee: Notice that this so-called Lord’s Prayer could not be the prayer of the Lord Jesus. He couldn’t pray this prayer. He couldn’t join with you and me and say, “*Our*

²² Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

Father” because the relationship between the Father and the Son is the relationship in deity. It is a position, not a begetting. I became a son of God only through faith in Christ; therefore Christ couldn’t join with me in saying, “Our Father.”

“Which art in heaven.” God is not a prisoner in this universe—He is beyond and above it. He is in the air spaces, in the stellar spaces, but He is far removed from His universe today. He is more than creation! He is the One sitting upon the throne of the universe, and He has it under His control!

“Hallowed be thy name,” more correctly translated, would read, “Let thy name be made holy.” The name of God stands for God, for all that God is. In what way can you and I make God’s name holy? It is my conviction that by our lives we are to make God’s name holy. When Abraham went into Canaan, a Canaanite passing by observed that they had a new neighbor, for he had seen Abraham’s altar. Everywhere Abraham went he built an altar to God. And when Abraham began to do business with the Canaanites, they found him to be honest. They found that everything Abraham said invited their confidence. Finally, they reached the conclusion that the God whom Abraham worshiped was an holy God, and Abimelech said to Abraham, “... God is with thee in all that thou doest” (Gen. 21:22). The children of Heth said, “... thou art a mighty prince among us ...” (Gen. 23:6). The entire life of Abraham revealed the reverence he felt for God. Surely the name of God was made holy in Canaan because of Abraham.²³

Matthew 6:10

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

[**thy Kingdom come**] Refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Cf. Isa 61:2, when Jesus read this passage He stopped at a comma, following which describes His Coming Kingdom. The prayer of believers for the coming kingdom and the second coming of Christ (Zech. 14; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 19:11-20:10; Matthew 25:31-46).

[**Thy will**] Multiple “wills” in the universe. Cf. Isa 14 where Lucifer proclaimed the 5 “I wills” (Isa 14:12+). Sin is doing that which is not in the Will of God.

Ten facts about God's will: (Dake)

1. Pray for it to be done on earth (Matthew 6:10).
2. Make doing it our food (John 4:34).
3. Seek it as Christ did (John 5:30).
4. Understand it (Ephes. 5:17).
5. Do it from the heart (Ephes. 6:6).
6. Live it (1 Peter 2:11-17).
7. For all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).
8. Not be conformed to world (Romans 12:2).
9. Possess own body in holiness (1 Thes. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

²³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

10. To ask what you will (John 15:7).²⁴

Thy kingdom come—The ancient Jews scrupled not to say: He prays not at all, in whose prayers there is no mention of the kingdom of God. Hence, they were accustomed to say, “Let him cause his kingdom to reign, and his redemption to flourish: and let the Messiah speedily come and deliver his people.”

The universal sway of the scepter of Christ:—God has promised that the kingdom of Christ shall be exalted above all kingdoms. Daniel 7:14-27. That it shall overcome all others, and be at last the universal empire. Isaiah 9:7. Connect this with the explanation given of this phrase, Matthew 3:2.²⁵

Matthew 6:11

Give us this day our daily bread.

“...daily bread”: Like a Hebrew thanksgiving, bread can be ascribed to the manna or the Bread of Life. The primary point being the thanksgiving for the sustenance at hand.

McGee: As I have indicated, this prayer is a model for our own prayers. Now I want you to notice this petition for a moment. It is a wonderful petition, so simple yet one that should come from our hearts with great enthusiasm. It speaks of our utter dependence upon God. Our bodily wants, our physical necessities, all are supplied by Him day by day. “Give us ... our daily bread”—just as Israel gathered manna for the day, they gathered nothing for the morrow. They were not permitted to gather manna for the next week. They could not hoard it. This prayer gathers manna every day, “Give us this *day* our daily bread.” It shows man that he lives from hand to mouth. It shows man that even his bodily necessities, his basic needs, come from God.²⁶

Matthew 6:12

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

Your forgiveness is not conditional upon forgiving someone else. You are forgiven because Jesus Christ paid for your debts. Because you are forgiven you should forgive (Cf. Eph 4:32; Col 3:13). [70x7 is how many times God forgave Israel, 70x7 is also link to Dan 9.]

Jewish teaching regarded sins as “debts” before God; the same Aramaic word could be used for both. Biblical law required the periodic forgiveness of monetary debtors (in the seventh and fiftieth years), so the illustration of forgiving debts would have been a graphic one (especially since Jewish lawyers had found a way to circumvent the release of debts so that creditors would continue to lend).²⁷

²⁴ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

²⁵ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

²⁶ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁷ Bible Background Commentary

McGee: Our Lord Jesus could not pray this—He had no sin to be forgiven. You see, it is not the Lord’s prayer; it is the disciples’ prayer.

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive those that are indebted to us” is legalistic; it is not grace. I thank God for another verse of Scripture, Ephesians 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Today God is forgiving us on the basis of what Christ has done for us, not on the basis by which we forgive—as touching the matter of our salvation. The redemption of God is in full view when God forgives us. It does not refer to our salvation when we read, “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” He is speaking here to those who are already saved, those who already have the nature of God. He does not wait for you to forgive before He forgives. This is not His method of settling the sin question. He gave His Son to die, and it is on this basis that God forgives.

In some churches today where there is formal religion, liturgy and ritual, they use “forgive us our debts” while others will use “forgive us our trespasses.” Two little girls were talking about the Lord’s Prayer as repeated in their churches. One said, “We have trespasses in our church,” and the other said, “Well, in our church we have debts.” (Probably they both were right as far as the churches of our day are concerned—they have both debts and trespasses.) So which phrase is accurate? There is no difficulty here at all since all of these words refer to the same thing, and that thing is sin.²⁸

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.

This word *lead* gives us the wrong impression because James says God does not tempt any man. “Temptation”: Study the book of Job. Nothing can come upon you that is not filtered by the Father. Does He allow Satan to put us through trials? Yes, Job tells us that. Yet, all is under control and limitations by the Father. “evil” = evil one. The source of those trials. The last part is not found in some of the manuscripts.

The Lord’s (Own) Prayer

The Lord could not pray the model He gave His disciples. John 17 details the true Lord’s prayer : His relationship; His commitment—and the Father’s—to us. (He prays for His own, *not* for the world; John 17:9.)²⁹

[evil] evil one. The source of those trials.

[And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil] Do not permit us to be overcome by evil but deliver us from the evil one.

²⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:37). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁹ Chuck Missler, Commentary on Matthew, khouse.org

[For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen] Some critics omit the doxology, but out of over 500 codices which contain this prayer only 8 omit it.

Parallels with ancient Jewish prayers, and possibly the Aramaic wording behind this verse, suggest that the first line means: “Let us not sin when we are tested”—rather than “Let us not be tested” (cf. Matthew 4:1; Matthew 26:41 in context; cf. Psalm 141:3-4). Some scholars have suggested an allusion to the final time of suffering here, which was expected to precede the coming kingdom. Because Jewish prayers were commonly used in liturgical contexts that ended with a statement of praise, later texts’ addition of the benediction (“Thine is the kingdom . . .”) to the original text of Matthew is not surprising.

McGee: “Lead us not into temptation.” This word *lead* gives us the wrong impression because James says God does not tempt any man. That is true—God does not tempt any man. A better translation here would be, “Leave us not in temptation.” It does not mean to keep us out of it, but when we are in it, do not leave us there.

“Deliver us from evil”—this deliverance is from the evil *one*. Deliver us from the evil one—deliver us from the Devil. Satan is today an awful reality. The world has tried many times to get rid of him. They laughed at Martin Luther who threw an inkwell at him. But recently we have had a turn in events. Any man who stands for God knows the awful reality of Satan. As we work in any church we become conscious of the presence of God and also dreadfully conscious of the presence of Satan. But we have this petition, “Deliver us from the evil one.”

May I say that this is a marvelous prayer for a new believer to pray privately in learning to pray. My own mother was not saved until late in life. She didn’t know how to pray, and she began by just repeating the Lord’s Prayer. Finally she graduated from this, and she could pray her own prayer.

When we are teaching our children to pray, we begin them with, “Now I lay me down to sleep.” Then one day little Willie adds, “God bless mama and God bless papa.” That is a thrilling moment for us, because they are beginning to pray on their own. And our Lord gave the so-called Lord’s Prayer as a model. It is a glorious, wonderful prayer, and it shows us what we should include in our own prayers. He would like us to learn to pray in our own words when we talk to Him.

As the Lord Jesus said in the verses preceding the Lord’s Prayer, prayer is not to be done for display. It is a relationship between you and God, and the most effective prayer is when you enter into your closet—that is, a private place. I am not enthusiastic about public prayer meetings because of the fact that the deadest service of any in the church is the prayer meeting. As a pastor, I used to try to build up the prayer meeting, but I soon discovered that if you have fifty dead saints praying, you don’t improve it by getting a hundred dead saints. It still is a pretty dead prayer meeting. What we need is a great deal more *private* prayer. It should take place between an individual and God.³⁰

³⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The verses commonly known as, "Lord's Prayer," can be paralleled to concepts found in other Jewish sources. It is a combination of ideas already familiar to His audience:

<p>Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.</p>	<p><i>Our Father who art in heaven</i> (Babylonian Talmud; Yoma 85b, Sotah 49b, Avot 5:20; Vayikra Rabbah ch 32.)</p>
<p>Thy kingdom come,</p>	<p><i>May God's kingdom be established during the days of your life. (Kaddish prayer)</i></p>
<p>Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.</p>	<p><i>Do thy will above and give comfort to those below, and to everyone his need. (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 29b)</i></p>
<p>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.</p>	<p><i>One who is merciful toward others, God will be merciful toward them. (Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 151b)</i></p>
<p>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:</p>	<p><i>Bring me not into temptation, and lead me away from iniquity ... and save me from the evil one.</i> (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 80b)</p>
<p>For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.</p>	<p><i>For Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty (Tenakh, 1 Chronicles 29:10)</i></p>

Jewish New Testament Commentary: These verses include what is widely known as the Lord's Prayer, since it was taught by the Lord Yeshua. All of its elements may be found in the Judaism of Yeshua's day, so in this sense it is not original with him; but it is properly revered for its beauty and economy. Its first words, **Our Father in heaven** (*Avinu sh.baShammayim*), open many Hebrew prayers. The next two lines recall the first portion of the synagogue prayer known as the *Kaddish*, which says, "Magnified and sanctified (*Yitgadal v.yitkadash*) be his great name throughout the world which he has created according to his will, and may he establish his Kingdom in your lifetime" The plural phrasing—"Give us ... forgive us ... lead us"—is characteristically Jewish, focussing on the group rather than the isolated individual.

The Evil One. The Greek may also be translated simply, “evil,” in the sense of “bad things that happen.” The Talmud (Kiddushin 81a) reports that “Whenever Rabbi Chiyya ben-Abba fell on his face [in prayer] he used to say, ‘May the Merciful One save us from the Tempter.’ ”

[For kingship, power and glory are yours forever. Amen.] This doxology echoes 1 Chronicles 29:11. The oldest New Testament manuscripts lack it, hence the brackets. Roman Catholics do not include it when reciting the Lord’s Prayer; Protestants do. On “Amen” see 5:18N; here it signals an expected congregational response.³¹

Matthew 6:14

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Does this mean that your forgiveness is conditional? This verse appears this way, yet in the context of Chapter 5 we are admonished to be perfect. All this leads up to our need to be in Jesus Christ. Your righteousness will not be dependent upon your acts, but on the completed acts of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 6:15

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Does this mean that your forgiveness is conditional? This verse appears this way, yet in the context of Chapter 5 we are admonished to be perfect. All this leads up to our need to be in Jesus Christ. Your righteousness will not be dependent upon your acts, but on the completed acts of Jesus Christ.

Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: if we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don’t forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means (see Ephes. 4:32). It is easy to ask God for forgiveness, but difficult to grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask ourselves, “Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?”

Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17a - *Only if you forgive others will God forgive you.*

Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 151b - *One who is merciful toward others, God will be merciful toward him*

³¹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:9). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 6:16

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

[**disfigure their faces**] Smear their faces with ashes.

[**They have their reward**] Praise of men is their full receipt.

Matthew 6:17

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

Matthew 6:18

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Fasting is also for today: privately. Check out *God's Chosen Fast*, et al.

Fasting was a third example of Pharisaic “righteousness.” The Pharisees loved to **fast** so that others would see them and think them spiritual. **Fasting** emphasized the denial of the flesh, but the Pharisees were glorifying their flesh by drawing attention to themselves. The Lord’s words emphasized once again that such actions should be done **in secret** before God. Nor was one to follow the Pharisees’ custom of withholding olive **oil** from his **head** during fasting. As a result, God alone would know and would **reward** accordingly.

In all three examples of Pharisaic “righteousness”—almsgiving (vv. 1-4), praying (vv. 5-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18)—Jesus spoke of **hypocrites** (vv. 2, 5, 16), public ostentation (vv. 1-2, 5, 16), receiving **their reward in full** when their actions are done before men (vv. 2, 5, 16), acting **in secret** (vv. 4, 6, 18), and being rewarded by the **Father, who sees** or “knows,” when one’s actions are done secretly (vv. 4, 6, 8, 18).³²

Matthew 6:19

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

[**treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal**] Eastern treasures were of fine clothes, polished armor, weapons of war, gold, and jewels. Moth and rust were as destructive to most of them as thieves.

vv. verses

³²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:32). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Ancient teachers like Hillel, a famous Jewish teacher, generally acknowledged the corruptibility of earthly treasure. Because thieves could dig through walls and steal a strongbox in one's home, well-to-do people usually tried one of several other methods to safeguard their wealth: investing money with moneychangers, depositing it in a temple for safekeeping (even most robbers balked at "robbing gods") or burying it in the ground or in caves, where, however, moth (for expensive apparel) or rust (for coins) could destroy its value in time.

Jerusalem Talmud, Pe'ah 15b - *It happened that manobaz had squandered his father's wealth to charity. His brothers admonished him: "Your father gathered treasure and you wasted it all!" He replied: "My father laid up treasure where human hands control it; I laid it up where no hands control it. My father laid up a treasure of money; I laid up a treasure of souls. My father laid up treasure for this world; I laid up treasure for the heavenly world."*

Matthew 6:20

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

[But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven] To lay up treasures in heaven is to consecrate fully to God and to help all people who have need. Even every cup of cold water given in the right spirit will be rewarded (Matthew 10:40-42).

[moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal]

Mansions and furnishings in heaven are secure from moths and termites; metals are free from rust; precious stones are free from thieves; and all hearts are safe from fear or loss forever.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven—The language in Luke (Luke 12:33) is very bold—"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not," &c.

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

"Where your treasure is there your heart will be also": You will become like the gods you worship (Ps 135:18).

"You can't take it with you." Yes, you can: you send it on ahead! Convert your position, your leverage, your opportunities to opportunities for the Lord. In so doing you lay up your treasures in Heaven. Cf. The parable of the unjust servant, Luke 16:1-13.

Where your treasure is—If God be the treasure of our souls, our hearts, i.e. our affections and desires will be placed on things above. An earthly minded man proves that his treasure is below; a heavenly minded man shows that his treasure is above.

For where your treasure is—that which ye value most.

there will your heart be also—"Thy treasure—thy heart" is probably the true reading here: "your," in Luke 12:34, from which it seems to have come in here. Obvious though this maxim be, by what multitudes who profess to bow to the teaching of Christ is it practically disregarded! "What a man loves," says LUTHER, quoted by THOLUCK, "that is his God. For he carries it in his heart, he goes about with it night and day, he sleeps and wakes with it; be it what it may—wealth or pelf, pleasure or renown." But because "laying up" is not in itself sinful, nay, in some cases enjoined (2 Cor. 12:14), and honest industry and sagacious enterprise are usually rewarded with prosperity, many flatter themselves that all is right between them and God, while their closest attention, anxiety, zeal, and time are exhausted upon these earthly pursuits. To put this right, our Lord adds what follows, in which there is profound practical wisdom.³³

McGee: A great many folk think that money cannot be used in a spiritual way and that when you talk about money, you are talking about something that is only material. However, our Lord says that we are to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. How can we do that? Well, instead of putting it in a bank in Switzerland, put it in heaven by giving it to the Lord's work down here—but make sure it is in the *Lord's* work. You ought to investigate everything you give to. Make sure that you are giving to that which will accumulate treasure for you in heaven. If it is used for the propagation of the gospel and to get out the Word of God, it becomes legal tender in heaven, and that is how we gather treasure in heaven.

Perhaps you are saying, "But I don't give for *that* reason." You ought to, because our Lord said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." That is a laudable motive for giving. And He gives the reason: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If you get enough treasure laid up in heaven, you are certainly going to think a lot about heaven. But if it is in the bank, your thoughts are going to be on the bank. There is an ever-present danger of worshiping mammon rather than God.³⁴

Matthew 6:22

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

[light] Greek: *luchnos* (GSN-3088), lamp fed by oil, burning for a time and then going out. Translated "light" 6 times (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34; Luke 12:35; John 5:35; 2 Peter 1:19; Rev. 21:23) and "candle" 8 times (Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; Luke 11:33,36; Luke 15:8; Rev. 18:23; Rev. 22:5).

[single] Clear, not blind by specks or cataracts.

³³ JFB Commentary

³⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 6:23

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

[evil] Greek: *poneros* (GSN-4190), wicked, diseased, blind, full of evil, as in Matthew 20:15; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:29-32; Galatians 5:19-21. To the Jews an evil eye denoted a covetous, envious, evil man, perhaps able to "cast a spell" upon another and cause him harm.

Jewish New Testament Commentary: “The eye is the lamp of the body.” Apparently Yeshua quotes a common proverb and comments on it. **If you have a “good eye.”** This is in the Greek text, but the explanation, **that is, if you are generous,** is added by me the translator because in Judaism “having a good eye,” an *ayin tovah*, means “being generous,” and “having a bad eye,” an *ayin ra-ah*, means “being stingy.” That this is the correct interpretation is confirmed by the context, greed and anxiety about money being the topic in both the preceding and following verses. This passage is another link in the chain of evidence that New Testament events took place in Hebrew; I made this point when analyzing v. 23 in Section I of the *JNT* Introduction. See also David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Destiny Image Publishers, 1984.³⁵

“yashanet.com” Here we have a verse that is consistently misinterpreted. What is this "evil eye?" Note the context of the verses before and after the term. In both cases Yeshua is talking about serving God and not money. Why would He interrupt this discussion about "God and money" to interject something about an "evil eye?"

The answer is that the term "evil eye," in this context, is a Hebrew figure of speech for being *stingy with your material wealth*. This verse alone offers evidence that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew as whoever translated it into the Greek, was not aware of what the term "evil eye" meant. They simply copied the phrase, which loses its meaning in the Greek and English.

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Mammon” (KJV) is an Aramaic word for possessions or money. **Aramaic** is a language related to Hebrew that was the standard international language of the ancient Near East before Alexander the Great’s conquests made Greek the standard; it was still widely spoken in different forms in Syria-Palestine and farther east in Jesus’ day. Most Jewish

³⁵Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:22). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

people in first-century Palestine probably spoke both Greek and Aramaic. Also, a Punic (Augustine) or Syriac (Jerome) word for “riches.”³⁶

The issue is not wealth; the issue is who you serve and who you worship.

[No man can serve two masters] Stating an utter impossibility.

[hate the one] To hate here is an idiom of preference (note, Luke 14:26). If men prefer sin and Satan to God, then they are of the devil (1 John 3:8) and will be sent to hell with him (Matthew 25:41).

[Ye cannot serve God and mammon] The second time this impossibility is stated in this verse.

He will hate the one and love the other—The word hate has the same sense here as it has in many places of Scripture; it merely signifies to love less—so Jacob loved Rachel, but hated Leah; i.e. he loved Leah much less than he loved Rachel. God himself uses it precisely in the same sense: Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated; i.e. I have loved the posterity of Esau less than I have loved the posterity of Jacob: which means no more than that God, in the course of his providence, gave to the Jews greater earthly privileges than he gave to the Edomites, and chose to make them the progenitors of the Messiah, though they ultimately, through their own obstinacy, derived no more benefit from this privilege than the Edomites did. How strange is it, that with such evidence before their eyes, men will apply this loving and hating to degrees of inclusion and exclusion, in which neither the justice nor mercy of God are honored!³⁷

Jesus says we can have only one master. We live in a materialistic society where many people serve money. They spend all their lives collecting and storing it, only to die and leave it behind. Their desire for money and what it can buy far outweighs their commitment to God and spiritual matters. Whatever you store up, you will spend much of your time and energy thinking about. Don't fall into the materialistic trap, because “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Can you honestly say that God, and not money, is your master? One test is to ask which one occupies more of your thoughts, time, and efforts.

Matthew 6:25

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

“Therefore”: Important as it links it to what He just said. You will miss the intent if you do not link it with the verse prior. “thought” = anxiety.

³⁶ Chuck Missler, Commentary on Matthew, khouse.org

³⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary

“Be Not Anxious”

- Worry is a sin. It is a form of blasphemy.
- Worry is assuming a responsibility that God did not intend for you to have.
- *Worry is a trickle of fear that soon cuts a crevice so deep it drains all other thoughts away...*

The issue is not to be anxious, it does not say not to think about tomorrow. It is linked to verse before about who is your master; who do you get your provision from? Many mistake this verse and assume that it is not necessary for us to do any planning.

Do not worry, be overly anxious, or fretful.

Eight Reasons Why We Should Not Worry: (Dake)

1. Life is more than food (Matthew 6:25).
2. The body is more than clothing (Matthew 6:25).
3. Human beings are greater than materials (Matthew 6:25).
4. People are more important than birds whom God feeds without their labor (Matthew 6:26).
5. Worry cannot change the body (Matthew 6:27).
6. People are better than plants that do not worry about clothing (Matthew 6:28-30).
7. God's providence is over all creation, not just birds and plants that never buy, sell, manufacture, or labor (Matthew 6:26-32).
8. Worry is useless and sinful and must not be tolerated (Matthew 6:33-34).

Quit Worrying Because It Is: (Dake)

1. Sinful and produces fear
2. A disease causing other ills
3. Borrowing trouble that cannot be paid back
4. Brooding over what may NOT happen
5. Creating trouble, misery, death
6. A burden borrowed from tomorrow and others who should carry it
7. A weight that kills prematurely
8. Mental and physical suicide
9. A gravedigger that has no sympathy
10. Needless and wastes time and effort that should be spent on worthwhile things
11. A robber of faith, peace, and trust in a never-failing, heavenly Father
12. A stumblingblock for others
13. A disgrace to God and should never be indulged in by Christians
14. Anxiety over what is nothing today and less tomorrow, in view of faith
15. Anticipating troubles which seldom come to those who trust God
16. Torment over something that will likely be a blessing if it comes
17. Living like an orphan without a heavenly Father
18. A crime against God, man, nature, and better judgment
19. Mental cruelty to self and others

20. Foolish, for whatever is going to happen cannot be stopped by worry; and if it doesn't happen, there is nothing to worry about. Should adversities actually come, one may still be victorious by trusting in God.

Matthew 6:26

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

McGee: Birds cannot sow. Birds cannot reap. Birds cannot gather anything into barns, but you and I can. We are to sow, reap, and gather with the same abandon that a little bird has. The little bird is trusting God to take care of him, and we are to trust Him, also. "Are ye not much better than they?" This does not mean that we shouldn't exercise judgment, because God has given us this ability. Once a Christian asked me, "Do you think a Christian ought to have insurance?" My reply was, "Yes!" Insurance is one means we have today to put our minds at ease concerning the care of our families and ourselves. The important thing is that we are not to go through life with material things becoming a burden to us.³⁸

Matthew 6:27

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Matthew 6:28

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Matthew 6:29

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

His point is, what is driving you or worrying you? God the Father is our provider. [Solomon, in the Scriptures, is always used negatively.]

I think He wants us to be as beautiful as possible. Some of us don't have much to work with, but we ought to do the best we can with what we've got. [Greek *cosmos* = bring order out of chaos. The same word from which we get "cosmetics."]

³⁸McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 6:30

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

[oven] People in the East burned grass and straw to heat their ovens (1 Kings 17:10; Psalm 58:9).

[little faith] Four occurrences of "little faith":

1. Concerning necessities of life (Matthew 6:30)
2. Concerning danger (Matthew 8:26)
3. Concerning working miracles (Matthew 14:31)
4. Concerning food (Matthew 16:6-12)

Jewish New Testament Commentary: How much more. This phrase signals a form of argument known in rabbinic literature as *kal v. chomer* ("light and heavy"), corresponding to what philosophers call *a fortiori* reasoning: If A is true, then, *a fortiori* (Latin, "with [even] greater strength"), B must also be true. The English phrase, "how much more," equivalent to Hebrew *kol sh. khen*, expresses this sense and force. Explicit *kal v. chomer* arguments appear in the New Testament twenty-one times, the others being at 7:11, 10:25, 12:12; Lk 11:13; 12:24, 28; Ro 5:9, 10, 15, 17; 11:12, 24; 1C 12:22; 2C 3:9, 11; Pp 2:12; Pm 16; MJ 9:14, 10:29, 12:25.

The fact that the New Testament uses *kal v. chomer* reasoning so often points to a foundational principle of New Testament hermeneutics overlooked by most Christian scholars. The Jews who wrote the New Testament participated in the thoughtforms of their time, and these included certain principles of interpretation (hermeneutical rules, Hebrew *middot*, "measures, norms") widely used to understand the Hebrew Bible. There have been several listings of such *middot* in Judaism; best known are the thirteen *middot* of Rabbi Ishmael. They are found in the introduction to Sifra, a halakhic commentary on the book of Leviticus compiled in the fourth century, but Rabbi Ishmael himself was a *tanna* (a teaching rabbi quoted in the Mishna) who lived in the late first and early second century, and he is undoubtedly summarizing principles "earlier than Hillel" (fl. 10–20 C.E.; *Encyclopedia Judaica* 8:367). They are also included in the *Siddur* (Jewish Prayerbook) to be recited daily as part of the *Birkat-HaShachar*, the "morning blessings" that begin the synagogue service. More than half of the article on "Hermeneutics" in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (8:366–372) is devoted to them.

I have heard the objection that Yeshua came to bring newness, so that "old" rabbinic principles are not to be taken into account in understanding the New Testament, that its writers had "freed themselves" from rabbinic attitudes and practices and were no longer "bound" by them. Just as at 5:18N I said it was facile to invoke Yeshua's "originality" to justify assuming that Yeshua's "Amen" has a novel meaning, so I say it is likewise facile to invoke his "newness" to justify ignoring the historical, social, religious and intellectual ambience of the time and place in which he lived, and imagining instead a hothouse environment insulated from the Judaism and Jewishness of his surroundings. The *middot* were surely part of everyone's conscious or unconscious background in approaching Scripture, and it is gratuitous to suppose that Yeshua, Sha'ul or the other New Testament

writers constituted an exception. Traditional, rabbinic viewpoints are an essential element to take into account in understanding the text of the New Testament.³⁹

Matthew 6:31

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

As someone has said, Today is the tomorrow that we worried about yesterday.

Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 48b - *He who has what to eat today, and says, "What shall I eat on the morrow?" has little faith.*

Matthew 6:32

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

[things do the Gentiles seek] The belly and back of the sinner make his god and these he worships in the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17).

Poole: Our Lord repeateth the precept before given, Mt 6:25, wherein he forbids not all moderate and provident thoughts for things necessary, but only such thoughts as shall argue our distrust in God, or perplex and distract our minds, or be inconsistent with our duty, and the employment of our thoughts about higher and better things. This he here presseth by two arguments.

1. Because these are the things which people spend all their thoughts upon, who are not aware that they have souls to take care for, or do not understand the providence of God, or have no such relation to God as Christians have, who call God Father.
2. You have (saith he) a heavenly Father, who, being the God of heaven, knoweth what you need, and, being your Father, will also supply your needs.⁴⁰

Matthew 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

This is a good memory verse for this session.

When anxiety begins, faith ends; When faith begins, anxiety ends.

George Muller

[seek] Hunt eagerly, as in Luke 15:8; Luke 17:33.

³⁹ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:30). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁴⁰ Matthew Poole's Commentary

[**kingdom of God**] Only 5 times in Mt. (Matthew 6:33; Matthew 12:28; Matthew 19:24; Matthew 21:31,43), but "kingdom of heaven" is used 33 times.

Matthew 6:34

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

[**Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself**] Do not fret about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have its own troubles. The care of each day is enough to master. Thoughtful preparation for the future is not rebuked, but fretting about it is condemned.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof—*Αρκετον τη ημερα η κακια αυτης*, Sufficient for each day is its own calamity. Each day has its peculiar trials: we should meet them with confidence in God. As we should live but a day at a time, so we should take care to suffer no more evils in one day than are necessarily attached to it. He who neglects the present for the future is acting opposite to the order of God, his own interest, and to every dictate of sound wisdom. Let us live for eternity, and we shall secure all that is valuable in time.

There are many valuable reflections in the Abbe Quesnel's work, on this chapter; and from it several of the preceding have been derived.

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent; worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference. Careful planning is thinking ahead about goals, steps, and schedules, and trusting in God's guidance. When done well, planning can help alleviate worry. Worriers, by contrast, are consumed by fear and find it difficult to trust God. They let their plans interfere with their relationship with God. Don't let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.

Tsuris, Yiddish adaptation of Hebrew *tzarot*, "troubles." Leo Rosten's informal lexicon, *The Joys Of Yiddish*, lists under "*tsuris*" what he calls a "folk saying": "Don't worry about tomorrow; who knows what will befall you today?" This could be an instance of New Testament material, purged of its origin, resurfacing in a Jewish context (see 5:21N); or, alternatively, Yeshua may in this verse be quoting a proverb already current in the Jewish culture of his own time.⁴¹

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 9b - *Each day has enough of its own troubles.*

CHART: SEVEN REASONS NOT TO WORRY

⁴¹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 6:34). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

- Matt. 6:25 The same God who created life in you can be trusted with the details of your life.
- Matt. 6:26 Worrying about the future hampers your efforts for today.
- Matt. 6:27 Worrying is more harmful than helpful.
- Matt. 6:28-30 God does not ignore those who depend on him.
- Matt. 6:31-32 Worry shows a lack of faith in and understanding of God.
- Matt. 6:33 There are real challenges God wants us to pursue, and worrying keeps us from them.
- Matt 6:34 Living one day at a time keeps us from being consumed with worry.

Eighteen Facts about God in Matthew 5-7

1. He can and will be seen (Matthew 5:8).
2. He loves peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).
3. He dwells in heaven (Matthew 5:16,34-48; Matthew 6:9).
4. He is glorified by good works (Matthew 5:16).
5. He blesses the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45).
6. He is perfect (Matthew 5:48).
7. He rewards obedience (Matthew 6:1-6,18).
8. He is omniscient (Matthew 6:4,6,8,18,32).
9. He forgives all sins (Matthew 6:12-15).
10. He is Father to all who obey (Matthew 5:44-48; Matthew 6:4,6,8-15,33; Matthew 7:7-11,13-23).
11. He hates hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-8,16-18; Matthew 7:1-5).
12. He hears all prayers (Matthew 6:6,33; Matthew 7:7-11).
13. He has a kingdom to set up and a will to be done on earth (Matthew 6:10,33).
14. He his providence is over all (Matthew 6:11-25).
15. He delivers from evil (Matthew 6:13,33; Matthew 7:11).
16. He accepts wholehearted service (Matthew 6:24).
17. He is an infinite Father (Matthew 7:7-11).
18. He will judge all (Matthew 7:21-23).