

A Prayer Guide for the New Testament Church (Part 1)

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] I don't know if we'll get all the way through these tonight.

Let me give you my plan. I am working on a study that I want to take us all through.

A study on, I think I mentioned, and they have mentioned this last week, the big word is eschatology. The study of the theology of end things, end times.

And, you know, our men, those that have been coming on Monday nights, have been treated to a little bit of that in kind of rapid fire.

Two Monday nights, a lot of ground was covered. But even before we did that, I've been thinking and somewhat working on putting together something that would be a kind of more extensive teaching opportunity on issues related to end times.

[1:16] Now, I'll tell you right now, I'm not going to bring with me the local newspaper and open up the paper and say, well, here, this fits with this scripture and so forth and so on.

I'm not going to get into current events and try to fit them to biblical prophecy. A lot of people like that. They want to do that. There are a lot of these prophecy gurus, pardon the phrase, who think that they can see all of that in every newspaper article.

I'm not going to get into that. But rather, this is going to be, I plan, a very detailed study into some of the views, really all the major views concerning the timing of events that are going to take place at the end of things.

You know, such things as issues such as the rapture and the coming of Christ, the second coming of Christ, the judgments, the millennium, you know, all of those issues.

We'll get into all of those and look at the scriptures. I'm going to lay before you all the major views and give you somewhat of a detailed background on how people have come to their conclusions, various conclusions.

[2:47] I am going to tell you why I think all of them but one is wrong. I am. You know, I don't do that because I think just everybody ought to agree with me.

I think you probably will. But we're going to look into why some of these views are wrong, some of them way wrong, and then tell you why I believe the view that I believe and why I think it's the right one.

So we're going to kind of get quite detailed into that and probably will spend a little time on a view of end times that you may have not heard very much about but is one that's becoming more and more popular in our day.

It's kind of a revival of amillennialism. And you say, well, what is that? Well, we'll get into that. We'll get into the state, into that study. All right, so I'm planning on starting that next Wednesday, but we have a little ground to cover here.

I don't know how far we'll get, and we won't get far if I don't get to it. So this might be a little bit different, certainly a different approach than I normally take in any kind of study.

[4:03] We're not doing an expository teaching in any particular text of the Bible, but we're going to be considering a number of texts all throughout the Bible.

And also, the basis or really the basic substance of this is not original with me. That's all right.

Adrian Rogers said many, many times, heard him say many, many times, he said if you can load the gun and shoot it, I'll be glad to give you the shells, the ammunition. And a lot of people have used Adrian Rogers' ammunition over the years, and we have others like him, like John MacArthur, who's still writing and preaching today.

And, you know, his stuff is used all the time. Anyway, this kind of study is based upon, because I haven't altered some of it, but it's based upon an article or really a chapter, well, part of a chapter, in John Piper's book, Let the Nations Be Glad.

By the way, I highly recommend that book to you. Kind of one of a series of books that he wrote, kind of under the subtitle, The Supremacy of God in, and then, you know, several categories.

[5:26] This one happens to be pertaining to missions. All right, so the name of the book is Let the Nations Be Glad. The chapter in this book is The Supremacy of God in Missions through Prayer.

Through Prayer. And so this is kind of adapted from that. And I've kind of enthralled by this when I first read it years ago.

And then when I revisit this and consider this, you know, our prayers really are quite basic. Now, I'm saying our.

You know, I'm kind of including all of us in this. But I think you would agree with me if you kind of take a look at your own prayer life. And if you, you know, did your own personal audit of your prayer, your approach to prayer, your prayers that you pray, you might be surprised to discover that the very, very narrow, very limited.

We, you know, we pray maybe for four or five things or four or five categories. And then if you look further, you'll discover, I think, and I have, that even those areas of prayer that are typical in my prayer life are all personal.

[6:50] Or at least they are prayers that pertain to me or my kind of circle. Whether it's family or a little beyond that, friends, maybe including our church.

And I hope your prayer life includes your church. And then not really beyond that, but we might from time to time pray for our country like we did tonight. And maybe just a brief word, you know, about our country and so forth.

But let's just be honest with ourselves, if with no one else. Our prayer life is quite limited. And its focus is quite narrow.

If we were to go to Scripture, and this is what this study does, and analyze all of the many prayers that are contained in the New Testament.

I mean, specific prayers that we find contained in Scriptures, as well as implications to prayer, illusions to prayer. When we do that, we're going to discover just what the New Testament church prayed for.

[8:01] And if you've looked all the way through the little study guide I gave you, it's really not a study guide, it's just kind of an outline of what we're doing. There are 28 specific areas of prayer that we can glean from the New Testament and discover how the early church prayed and what they prayed for.

Now, if they prayed for these things, then shouldn't we? Well, of course. Of course. All right? So this is instructive for us, as well as challenging to us.

And really, there's not a whole lot of commentary that needs to be added to this. Each one of these is pretty self-explanatory. So let's just take them one at a time and consider the Scriptures.

And, you know, the Scriptures themselves are very clear. Let's take them one at a time. Number one. You don't have to fill in any blank here.

All right? So you don't have to worry about how I spell that word. You don't have to do that. I've got it all here for you. Number one, they prayed for the exaltation of God's name in the world.

[9:15] That God's name would be exalted in our world. Our world, in the narrow sense. Certainly, I hope that God's name is exalted in your life and in the life of your family, if you have anything to do with it.

But beyond that, our church family and certainly beyond that, our world. And we want the name of God to be exalted.

Now, this comes from Matthew 6-9. And you remember this pretty key passage of Scripture. Jesus is the one who is giving the instructions on prayer here.

And so we need to obey this, don't we? Matthew 6-9. Pray then in this way. Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Hallowed. What does the word hallowed suggest to you? Great reverence. Great reverence. Glory. Glorified.

[10:23] And His name would be glorified. That it would be revered above all other names. By the way, what is His name? You see, the point here is not so much the proper name that you might

come to.

I think that it is Yahweh God. But it is that everything He is.

Because in the Bible, a name is so inseparable from the character of a person. Now, it ought to be that way in our culture.

It really ought to. And it used to be at one time. And still is with many. I hope it is with you. But not so much as it once was. But the name is directly related to the character of the person.

And so when we pray that God's name would be hallowed in the world, we're praying that who He is, His person, His character, His greatness, His sovereignty, His grace, every part of His nature, would be not only just revered, but absolutely held up, exalted for all to see and know, and to reject if they so choose and most will.

[11:50] This is an important prayer. That the name of God would be exalted in all the world.

Number two, and this also comes from what we call the Lord's Prayer, typically called the Lord's Prayer.

They pray for the expansion of God's kingdom in the world. And we're going to get into some of this when we look at eschatology in times about the kingdom.

That's a big subject. But here's what Jesus said in Matthew 6.10. And again, it's the answer to the disciples' questions, remember. He teaches how to pray.

And He said, pray this way. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your kingdom come. When's the last time you prayed for that?

Well, maybe you didn't pray for it in those words. You know, unless you just in your prayer life decided to quote the Lord's Prayer. And I say, that's fine to do that.

[12:53] I wouldn't do that every time you pray. But other than that, we may pray it in other ways.

But what is His kingdom? What is His kingdom?

That's not an easy question to answer, really. His kingdom is His reign, His rule. Right now, His kingdom is represented by what body of people?

The church. And even more specifically, His kingdom is represented by each individual believer. Because His kingdom has come to us in our hearts. And that is, the place where He rules and reigns is the heart of the believer.

The born-again believer. And so, I guess we could say the implication here, it's far-reaching. By the way, this prayer is.

[13:57] We need to start with ourselves. I mean, if we're going to pray for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done, how ridiculous for us to pray for such a thing if His kingdom, His reign, His rule, is not flourishing in our own lives privately, personally.

That's part of this prayer. But obviously, Jesus is pointing to something much broader than that. And that is for His kingdom to come to this world.

Now, is His will being done here as it is in heaven right now? It would be hard to say that it is.

In fact, clearly it's not. I mean, His direct will. Now, you think about His will being done in heaven.

I mean, it's done without question. His holy angels, they obey Him without question. And His will is done in heaven. One day will be done here on this earth.

[15:05] When will that be, by the way? This gets into eschatology and gets into my view of it. One day that will take place during the millennium when Jesus truly, from His throne, reigns here on this planet.

And His will will be done without question during the millennium. Now, we're not there yet. So, I'm kind of throwing this out here like a shotgun.

You know, we've got all these different areas. And all these are included. We're praying for His kingdom to come, that His will be done in our own lives. I think we could add to that that His kingdom would come, His rule would come in the hearts and lives of unbelievers.

That could be included in this. We're praying that His rule, His lordship, would be advanced, would flourish in our world today.

How do we bring that about? It's not by voting for certain presidents, although that's an important thing. We bring that about by ministry of the gospel.

[16:21] That's our avenue to bringing His kingdom here. It is the advance of His kingdom. And His kingdom does not advance by, you know, just simply adding people to the church roles.

His kingdom is advanced through the salvation of souls. So, that's a part of this. Alright, so we're praying. They prayed.

We ought to pray for the expansion of God's kingdom in the world, in the present sense as well as in the future sense. Third, they prayed for the successful spread of the gospel around the world. That's very much like the second one. In fact, I think the outcome is the same. 2 Thessalonians 3.1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly.

That's the New American Standard. I really like the King James, that it would have free course. Now, I know that's not near as clear as spread rapidly, but I don't know, there's just something about the wording free course, uninhibited advancement of the gospel.

[17:37] We're to pray for that. It may seem to us that that's not possible. In fact, from our observation, the gospel doesn't seem to be free at all. It seems to be inhibited most of the time and rejected nearly by all people.

But nevertheless, it's not our business. That part is not our business. Our business is to pray and go beyond prayer, of course, to participate in the advancement of the gospel.

That it would have free course. And this is what Paul is saying that we're to pray for. That it would spread rapidly and be glorified just as it did also with you.

I like that attached on the end. Just like it did also with you. What's he talking about there? Well, the gospel was spread to your life.

The love of God was shed into your heart. God used someone, God used someone, a parent, a family member, or some preacher somewhere, or however it happened.

[18:49] God used someone to bring the gospel to you, to present it to you. God quickened the heart and the spirit, and you were saved.

So he's saying, just like that. How that happened to you. Not the specific way necessarily it happened to you, but that the gospel was spread to you.

That's what you need to pray for the rest of the world. Now, is the whole world going to be saved? No. There's no promise in Scripture that they will. In fact, the Bible really speaks of the saved as a remnant.

Now, I don't know how large a remnant is, but a remnant is less than the whole. In fact, if it was going to be the majority of people saved, then I don't think remnant would have been the term used. But is that our business? No. Our business is to pray. Just like he said here, that the word of the Lord, the gospel, would spread rapidly, have free course, and be glorified just as it did also with you.

[20:00] Number four, they prayed for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Luke 11, 13, If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

He's speaking to believers here. here. And so when he's talking about giving the Holy Spirit, he's not talking about salvation necessarily here. He's talking about the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, the active presence and leadership and control of the Holy Spirit in your life.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ephesians 3, 19, Paul prayed that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. And the Holy Spirit is not mentioned there, but that's the idea of the subject. Number five, they prayed that God would avenge His people who suffered for the cause of Christ. Who suffer for the cause of Christ. this, you know, is something that I do quite a bit, especially every time I get a newsletter from BOM or an email from BOM.

[21:16] If I didn't pray for the persecuted church or haven't for a few days, then sometimes I get lax on that. I don't know about you. Now, I'm reminded that there are God's people around the world, even in this country, but especially, of course, in those countries where Christianity is illegal and certainly the evangelism is illegal.

And the men and women of Christ are being persecuted. Some of them severely. We read about it all the time. Even the secular news, we read about it. And we're to pray for them.

And Luke 18, 7, Will not God bring about justice for His elect? New King James Version uses the word avenge.

And I like that better. Avenge His own elect who cry to Him day and night. And will He delay long over them?

You know, it does seem that God delays. But He won't delay long over them.

[22:29] Now, I for one believe that the fulfillment of this, of the promise of this text, the promise to answer the prayers, this kind of praying, as well as this idea about Him delaying long, the whole

idea of avenging His elect is something that does occur in this life.

not always though. In fact, there have been many, many, many, many, thousands, countless thousands, Christians who have died a martyr's death.

and that death has not been avenged. Not yet. But one day it will be. When all of God's people, at the end of all time, when all God's people will be avenged, they will be vindicated, will be, in a better word, vindicated for our work for the gospel and all that we have claimed to be true that others have rejected.

And not just simply rejected as in I don't want to hear it or I don't believe you, but have rejected in forceful ways to try to silence believers and do silence them in a physical sense.

But one day all God's people will be vindicated when Christ comes. And they will know that we were right.

[24:04] But the prayer here is, I think, it's still twofold. It is for the immediate sense. We need to pray for God's servants today, God's preachers, God's evangelists and missionaries and just God's people, especially those who live in Muslim countries, in communist countries.

Pray for them as they are being persecuted that God would bring justice for his elect. So that's a part of how they pray and that's how we ought to pray. Number six.

See, we're not going to get very far. Oh, you know, it's the way I am. Alright, number six, they prayed for the salvation of unbelievers.

And a lot of these kind of overlap with one another. But Romans 10, 1, brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer for God, for them, and of course, them specifically in this text is Israel, is for their salvation.

Alright, so here's Paul. Whatever else you might think he means, and there is a context to consider, but we don't need to get into that tonight, but whatever else specifically he's talking about here, clearly he's praying for the salvation of souls, for unbelievers to be saved.

[25:24] In this instance, it's his people, Israel, who have rejected Christ and have murdered their Messiah.

And he's praying for their salvation. And we need to take Paul's lead. We need to pray for the salvation of unbelievers. And I'm sure that you do.

Probably, in most instances, it would be personal people you know, family members, and so forth. But we need to be fervent. I've been praying for a man, a man who was my best friend in high school.

I have been praying for him for how many years? I graduated in 1975. You can do the math. And I've been praying for Chris Everyt all these years.

And I haven't seen him for years. I don't even know where he is now. I had the opportunity to witness to him when I was in college. And went to college near where I grew up, where he and I were buddies, and had a lot of contact with him then.

[26:35] But I don't know what has happened to him since, but I continue to pray for him. Pray for his salvation. And you probably have someone like that that you've known for a long time, and maybe you don't pray every day.

I don't pray every day for Chris. But quite often, I pray for him that he would be saved. And so that's part of our prayer life. Pray for the salvation of unbelievers.

Number seven, they pray for God's direction in the use of his word. This is an interesting prayer.

Ephesians 6, 17, and take the word of the Spirit, the sword of the Spirit, excuse me, that's what? That's right here. That's God's word. Well, it says so right next to it, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit.

Now, I'm suggesting to you that part of this prayer is how we take the word, the sword of the Lord.

[27:38] How we take it. That is how we use it. Sword, and I think the imagery there, the metaphor, is purposeful. You wield a sword.

Now, obviously, a sword is usually used for destruction or the taking of life. So, you can only go so far with the metaphor. But it is like a sword.

It's like an instrument, like a weapon. It can be even a tool. It's the way you wield it and use it. And so, the prayer here has as much to do with how you take God's word and use it and direct it as it is about that you take his word and direct it.

So, we need to pray for God's direction in the use of God's word. Can you use God's word in the wrong way? Well, that might be debatable. You know, God is sovereign and he can take our idiot

attempts.

We may even miss quotes of a scripture sometimes. But, it is important, and this is a prayer that you ought to pray for me.

[28:57] Because when a pastor, preacher, stands behind the pulpit, he's taking the sword of the word, sword of the Lord, God's word, and he's wielding that.

And so, pray for me that God would direct me to use his word in the right way, in a proper way, in a correct interpretation of it, in a correct application of it.

Those things don't just come naturally for preachers. I didn't go to seminary a number of years ago, and now I know exactly how to do it all. It's daily study, and there's a lot of hard work, and then when I stand behind the pulpit, I am presenting God's word.

I'm saying, thus says the Lord. I need to need God's wisdom on how to direct that word in the right way. But we all need that as well. If you're a Sunday school teacher, you need that.

If you're a parent, you need that. If you have friends, and you're going to share with them the word of God, and you're going to do it in multiple ways, then you need to pray, God, help me to direct your word in the right way, correct way.

[30:15] This is a very important prayer. prayer. Let's see if we can get another couple here.

Number eight, they prayed for boldness in proclaiming the gospel. Ephesians 6, 18, and 19, with all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert, with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf.

Here's a request for personal prayer. Pray on my behalf that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.

Here's Paul asking for boldness. Now, this is a prayer. We need to pray, not for Paul.

He doesn't need boldness now. It's hard to believe he needed any then. He's a pretty bold preacher. but here's a model for us, something that we need to do, for ourselves as well as for our brothers and sisters, for our church, that we would have a boldness to proclaim the gospel.

Not a belligerence, but a boldness. You know, you don't bully people into the kingdom of God.

[31:40] And you don't save them into it either. God does all that. But you understand my point.

But really, most of us are a long way from even being bullies of the gospel.

We need boldness. Boldness to share the truth of God's word and the saving name of Jesus Christ. And so, this is an important prayer for the church.

Acts 4.29, And now, Lord, take note of their threats and grant that your bondservants may speak your word with confidence. Confidence or boldness.

You know, that's what we need. Have you ever been afraid, timid, to speak God's word in a situation, you know, maybe it's, you know, in the company of co-workers that have a different view. Matthew and I talked about this a number of times when he was, you know, in Afghanistan before that in Iraq. Really, every time he goes to drill, they, you know, they seek him out.

[32:52] He is constantly being led into these conversations about the Bible and about Jesus and different things like that.

And they seek him out. And so, you know, he needs a confidence. I pray for them, for him in that way, that he would have a confidence in what he has learned about God's word and we'd be able to answer in a way that honors God's word and his Lord and Savior.

And we need that same kind of confidence so that we don't shrink back from opportunities to speak a word, to stand for the truth.

You know, we may overhear this conversation or maybe someone brings up a question and we just sit silent because we're afraid to speak or you know, we're fearful of how it might be received.

Well, you may be criticized but you can still speak with a confidence that what you're speaking is true. Now, whether they believe it or not, that's their business and God's business as he works in their heart and applies that word.

[34:14] But we need to be bold, be confident, to always be ready to give an answer for the reason we believe, the basis of our faith.

Alright, one more and we'll quit. Number nine, they prayed for God to perform signs and wonders to validate the truth of the gospel.

Is there still a valid prayer today? Well, it is and it isn't. The age of what I really believe, the age of signs and wonders is over.

In the sense of it being a specific approach that God took for a time, for a season, I believe a season that existed before God's word was complete.

And so, you have the apostles and some of the disciples, followers of Christ, some, you know, maybe one or two removed from the apostles. Even Jesus himself, performing miracles, signs, and wonders.

[35 : 29] And Jesus and the apostles never performed any miracle just for the value of the miracle. You know, wow somebody or to, you know, even healing was not just for compassion to the one hurting or sick or whatever.

Much broader than that, it was as a sign. Something that was to validate the truth until God's word is completed.

So, in that sense, the age of signs and wonders, I believe, is over. Can God still perform miracles today for that purpose?

I think so. I think this is probably more applicable for the mission field than it is here in this, quote, Christian mission, where the word of God is plentiful and people are, to some extent, versed on it whether they're believers or not.

From the mission field, there are people there who have no knowledge whatsoever of God's word. No Christian framework at all in their thinking.

[36 : 48] And added to that, they have something in its place, whether it's superstition or the occult or other cults or whatever it may be.

And so, God, I think, is still today will perform miracles as a validation for what that missionary is proclaiming and preaching.

In some of those places where they still don't have God's word, and there are many people groups in our world today, thousands, you'd be surprised, do not have a copy of God's word in their language or in their dialect.

And you would think after all these years that would be done, but it's not done yet. And so, I think we can still pray today that God would show himself, manifest himself in some sign, some miracle to validate the truth of God's word.

Thank you.