

THE LORD'S PRAYER: MATT 6:9-13- A THEMATIC AND SEMANTIC- STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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I. Introduction

The Lord's prayer, sometimes called "the model prayer," occurs at the heart of Jesus' most extensive preserved teaching, the Sermon on the Mount.¹ What one finds here is no less than the greatest Teacher's greatest sermon on his favorite topic: the Kingdom of God. Not only

¹ Cf. Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, on this point: "The Lord's Prayer contains the sum total of religion and morals." Quoted in F. S. Mead, ed, *Twelve Thousand Religious Quotations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) 274. Tertullian referred to it as *breviarium totius evangelii*, *De Orat.* 1., quoted in A Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (n.p.: Scott, 1915; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) 95, n. 2. This study will begin with the presupposition that the Sermon on the Mount constitutes a semantic and structural unit. Although many serious scholars look for redactional layers and source-critical units (see, for example, Plummer 93), the sermon was not read in such fashion throughout the history of the church, including the early church. For a good survey on source-critical presuppositions see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 1.590-92. Cf. R. A. Guelich: "The background of the Lord's Prayer involves an Aramaic original and a haunting similarity with at least two other well-known Jewish prayers of the first century. ..[the Aramaic *kaddish*, spoken at the conclusion of the synagogue service, and the Eighteen Benedictions). Though both Matthew and Luke reflect this Aramaic background, the agreement by both on the rare and much debated Greek term ἐπιούσιον (6:11, par. Luke 11:3) modifying bread indicates a rather firm Greek tradition as well." R. A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982) 285. Strecker sees the briefer Lukan form as original, emended by Matthew. G. Strecker, *Die Bergpredigt: Ein exegetischer Kommentar* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1984) 111.

this, but the prayer itself occupies a quite prominent place within the body of the sermon. Direct quotations within larger discourses are marked prominent. In addition, a cluster of imperative verbs occurring in the prayer itself is a sure sign of prominence. And finally, the prayer is addressed to one whom the speaker holds in special reverence: the heavenly Father himself. If prayer is important, then we should hear the greatest word on the subject, out of the greatest sermon on the greatest topic, spoken by the greatest Teacher who ever lived.

The Lord's prayer occurs in the body of the Sermon on the Mount, within the larger context of the behavior commanded of citizens in the Kingdom of God: these are not to do good, pray, or fast in order to be seen by men for earthly reward. In other words, they are not to be as the hypocrites. But they are to do all these things in secret, in order that the heavenly Father, who sees in secret, might reward them openly. Matt 6:7-15 constitutes a paragraph within the second command: "When you pray, do not repeat the same words over and over, but pray in the following manner." Jesus then proceeds to give an illustration of what he means, itself an extremely prominent feature of the discourse.

II. *A Thematic Analysis of the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13)*

A. *Introduction and Negative Example (vv 7-8)*

When we pray, Jesus explains, we are not to be like the unbelievers, who stammer or babble, βατταλογέω.² They think that God will hear them because of their rapid-fire, staccato speaking, containing many words and repetitive phrases. One has only to think of the

² See R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 100-4. "The verb may denote meaningless or repetitive speech, as in the extensive listing of divine names by pagans. They hoped that at least one of the names might prove effective for an answer." Ibid. Cf. 1 Kgs 18:36-37. Plummer, 93. On the other hand, Gundry notes that the meaning might connote only wordiness leading to ineffectual prayer, as the Aramaic root ܒܬܘܠܐ attested by the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests (DJD 2.135). Ibid., 104. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1943) 262, and H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1881, repr. Winona Lake, IN: Alpha, 1979) 144, and Davies and Allison 587-88. See also TDNT 1.598, where Delling bases the word on βατταρίζω (= "stammer," "stutter") plus λογέιν. Davies and Allison 588. W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973) 323-24. Guelich 282-83. D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 59. Tasker holds that "it would seem probable that it is meaningless rather than repetitive speech that is primarily indicated by the word." Tyndale translated the word "babble overmuch," a translation Tasker feels is as good as any. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 74.

Hindu prayer wheels, sending one prayer upwards with each revolution, or the massive, repetitious prayers of many of the modern world religions to get his point. Do not pray like that, Jesus tells us, because our heavenly Father knows what we need before we even ask him; he is not hard of hearing, What follows is notable for its economy of phrase and lack of repetition.

B. *The Lord's Prayer: Positive Example and Comment* (vv 9-13)

Jesus then illustrates by giving his hearers a positive example of what he means by prayer, an exemplar. He begins with an orienter in v 9a, building upon the teaching which has gone before: "You, therefore, pray in the following manner."³

1. *Three petitions concerning the glory of God* (9b-10). Notice our Lord's priority: his first concern is for the reputation of God the Father, for his kingdom to be established, and for his will to be accomplished upon the earth exactly as it is now in heaven. He begins, "Our Father in heaven, may your name be venerated [hallowed, esteemed, revered as holy]." The kingdom of God is more than kingship: it implies a king, of course, but also a people, and the establishment of the king's right to reign over them. Here, in the very heart of the Sermon on the Mount, the King is himself declaring what he expects of those who inherit and inhabit his kingdom, the standards by which his subjects are expected to live.⁴ How often do modern Christians begin their prayers with a petition for the Father's reputation upon this earth? How many have ever prayed for such a thing? Jesus placed this request first. Secondly, Jesus is also praying for God's kingdom to be visibly realized upon the earth. Finally, he asks that the Father's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. What a world this would be if for only one day the Father's perfect will could be realized for each individual to the same degree that it is currently being realized for

³ A parallel is found in Luke 11:2-4 (see also Mark 11:25-26). Basically Luke omits "our," "who are in heaven," and one of the six petitions, having only five in all. The third petition, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is missing as is the restatement of the sixth petition, "but deliver us from the evil one," which Gundry takes as a seventh petition. Gundry 105. Luke's form can be accounted for 1) as a shorter redaction of the prayer recorded in Matthew 6, 2) as a similar teaching of Jesus delivered on another occasion. Tasker 72, or 3) as the original form of the teaching, later expanded by Matthew. D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London/Grand Rapids: Marshall, Morgan & Scott/Eerdmans, 1972) 134-35, and Strecker 111-12. The first alternative is preferred by those who equate the "Sermon on the Mount" and the "Sermon on the Plain" with the same historical event.

⁴ Here at the feet of Jesus, in repentance and total dependence upon the will of God, is the place where the Law of Moses had been designed to bring Israel, cf. Exodus 19-20.

his heavenly attendants! What would become of our crime statistics? What would happen in our families, what confession, what repentance, what reconciliation! Notice the elegant sense of priority: Jesus places the reputation of the Father, the kingdom of God, and the will of God first in priority before any mention of himself or physical needs. And even when he does pray for himself, he prays corporately.⁵ He is living selflessly for the glory of the Father just as he will die selflessly for all mankind. The selfishness which inundates the present age finds no place in Jesus' prayer.

2. *Three petitions concerning the needs of his followers and himself, and a clarification* (vv 11-13) a. *Their provision* (11), "Give us today the food necessary for existence." Two observations need to be made at this point. First, this is the first time Jesus has prayed for himself--this far into the prayer! Second, note that Jesus prays only for necessity, not for abundance. Seen as a prayer for literal bread to meet the physical need for survival, he prays only for what is necessary, But elsewhere in the Gospels he would say that "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34b NKJV). Jesus knew that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Deut 8:3; Luke 4:4b NKJV). While it would not do to stretch the point dogmatically, it seems unlikely for Jesus to pray for physical sustenance alone in an immediate context of 1) God's kingdom and glory, 2) the bread necessary for survival, 3) forgiveness, and 4) deliverance. Jesus knew that people needed more than physical provision in order to have life, and to have it more abundantly. Therefore, while this context does not rule out his praying for the literal bread necessary for survival, it would include that only within the larger, more spiritual requirements for sustenance.⁶ He also does not treat God as a junior executive: "I want this." He petitions corporately and sensitively. b. *Their need* (12), Jesus' insight into human need is staggering. We have a primal, basic need for total forgiveness, and we need to forgive others just as desperately. Jesus intercedes that the Father would forgive us our debts (note here his identification with us in need of forgiveness, anticipating his bearing upon himself the sin of all mankind at the cross, as did his baptism at the beginning of his public ministry). Here he adds a qualification and a reminder, "as we forgive those who trespass against us," We also need to forgive those who have done us wrong. In this Jesus was more than willing to set the example. Later, Jesus will prominently lift this admonition out for

⁵ Cf. Plummer, 100-101. "Give us,' once realized, is a safeguard against self-seeking." Ibid., 101.

⁶ Davies and Allison, 1.609-10.

clarification; Matthew uses it to round out the paragraph after Jesus has finished the prayer. c. *Their protection* (13). God does not tempt us (as does Satan, that we might fall into sin), but he does allow us (as he did Job) to be tested in order to be found genuine. This allowed testing refines us, makes us more Christlike, and glorifies his name. When Jesus prays, "Do not deliver us into temptation," he prays that we will not be tempted (*πειράζω*) unto failure (cf. Luke 22:32), but instead will be rescued, delivered, from the clutches of the Evil One.⁷ Jesus himself would become the answer for his prayer at this point. d. *The benediction* (13b). This sentence brings closure to the prayer as a whole in humble recognition of the Father's 1) right to establish the kingdom, 2) power to bring the petition to pass, and 3) eternal glory. Not only does this final observation bring the prayer full circle to worshipful acknowledgement of the Father's glory, it echoes David's prayer in 1 Chr 29:11-13 of total dependence on the will of the Father, that all resources are his and should be used for his glory.⁸ d. *A comment on v 12, lifted out for clarification* (14-15). These verses, prominently singled out after the conclusion of the prayer, restress the hearers' need for true, total forgiveness. Whether they actually receive that forgiveness will depend upon their willingness to forgive: this is a key principle of the kingdom (cf. Matt 5:17-20; 7:12).

In conclusion, the Lord's prayer presents not only a model prayer, but a summary of Jesus' priorities embodied in a pattern for all true prayer.⁹ God's glory must come first, then his kingdom, then his will upon the earth. Jesus does not pray negatively, beginning

⁷ ὁ πονηρός is viewed substantively here. Meyer, 150. Guelich, 297. In favor of this reading stand Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Theophylact, Erasmus, Beza, and others. In favor of a neuter reading connoting evil in general stand Augustine, Luther, Ewald, Lange, and others. Meyer, 150. Cf. Mark Twain's twisting of this verse in the conclusion of his short story, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." The revised town motto, after a charlatan exposed the town's leaders to be money-loving hypocrites, was "Lead us into temptation." Twain's idea seemed to be that genuine Christians should relish the chance to have their genuine faith tested in order to glorify God. In other words, "Give us the chance to prove ourselves." Such sentiments are commendable, but the Greek for that is δοκιμάζω, not πειράζω.

⁸ Of course the modern editions of the Bible follow Hort and Westcott in omitting the line as being absent from the "oldest and best" MSS (i.e., Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), but the Majority Text includes it, along with the closing word, Amen. The critical reading is shorter and harder (it strikes the present writer as puzzling that an orthodox Jew would conclude a prayer to his God with a reference to "the Evil One" or evil), but this could be due to other factors besides reflecting the original reading.

⁹ "The Lord's Prayer is the prayer above all prayers. It is a prayer which the most high Master taught us, wherein are comprehended all spiritual and temporal blessings, and the strongest comforts in all trials, temptations and troubles, even in the hour of death." Martin Luther, quoted in Mead, 273-74.

with the problems and vicissitudes of life, but positively, in total commitment to his Father's will and what that might mean (it means Golgotha). When he does pray for himself, he does so corporately, and for necessity rather than for abundance. He notes that our need for protection from Satan and for forgiving and for being forgiven are as important as the bread that keeps us alive. This elegance in priority is easily lost. Finally, the kingdom of God is Jesus' favorite topic--again and again he returns to it in parable and teaching. Jesus is not merely practicing at prayer. Let us never forget that it is here in the Lord's prayer that he first petitions the Father, "Thy kingdom come."

III. *A Semantic-Structural Analysis of Matt 6:7-15*

A. *Introduction*

The following provisional semantic structure analysis for Matt 6:7-15 is based upon the linguistic theories proposed by J. Beekman, J. Callow, and M. Kopeseć¹⁰ This approach, properly applied, can assist the Bible student in discovering the meaning communicated by the original writer to his audience. But this approach also attempts to formulate a consistent theory of the structure of meaning which is operative both at the largest and smallest levels of discourse structure.

B. *The Communication Situation*

According to the theory proposed by Beekman, Callow, and Kopesec, a written document will reflect the general historical situation as well as the particular communication situation which gave rise to it. Therefore, some background information is helpful in ascertaining the overall purpose of the document. This will aid the translator or Bible student in making more accurate judgments in exegesis.

C. *The Situational Framework*

The author of the Gospel of Matthew has been traditionally thought to be Matthew, Levi ben Alphaeus, a disciple of Jesus Christ. He does not identify himself by name within the Gospel itself. The social status of the author seems to be that of eyewitness to fellow Israelites, or apostle to fellow believers. The Gospel of Matthew has been said to be somewhat deprecating to the tax collector Matthew whereas none of the other Gospels are; this may be a mild reference to a humble Matthew as author much as the eyewitness "whom

¹⁰ *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 5th rev. (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981).

Jesus loved" has been associated with John. But this must remain speculative.

The time of writing has been variously set at A.D. 90-95 to A.D. 110;¹¹ A.D. 40-45 to A.D. 50;¹² or the late 50s to early 60s A.D.¹³ The location of writing seems to be northern Palestine or Syria, perhaps Antioch¹⁴ The presuppositions of the author seem to include the fact that his audience will either be Christians or at least interested in the Christian message. He also expects a basic familiarity with Jewish feasts and customs.

The addressees constituted the early church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles. These are the often persecuted believers in Christ located throughout the Mediterranean basin co-extensive with the spread of the gospel. Their status is that of believers or seekers needing information about Jesus for salvation or edification in the faith.

The larger context from which the passage under consideration is drawn, Matt 6:1-34, is a hortatory passage taken from the Sermon on the Mount. The time of presentation was approximately A.D. 27-29, during the Galilean ministry of Jesus Christ. The location was somewhere in Palestine, perhaps in the north around Capernaum. The audience consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, both disciples of Christ and inquirers. In his exhortation, Jesus is presenting a contrast between currently held religious beliefs concerning the law of Moses and his own teaching, intended to fulfill, deepen, and restore the law to its original function (summarized in Matt 5:17-20). Jesus contrasts the teachings of the Pharisees and their religious observances to the true intent of the law, along with the observances and motives God required all along. He also contrasts the false teachings of the Pharisees with his own and reveals true authority. The genre is hortatory, and the medium is oral discourse. The referential content of Matt 6:1-34 gives information in the form of basis-APPEAL contrasting the false motives and observances of the hypocrites with the true motives and observances required by God of kingdom citizens. Proper attitudes must underlie proper observances. These, in turn, must lead to the proper ordering of priorities which will glorify God, not self, and lead ultimately to lasting heavenly rewards instead of ephemeral, earthly ones.

¹¹ *IDB*, 3.312.

¹² *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed., s.v. "Matthew, Gospel of" by Merrill F. Unger.

¹³ R. H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 83, 364.

¹⁴ *IDB*, 3.312.

C. The Context of Matt 6:7-15: The Constituent Organization of Matt 6.1-34

							DC6:1-18	
							SECTION	
SC 6:1	SC 6:2-4		SC 6:5-15			SC 6:16-18		
Para.	Para.		Para. Cl.			Para.		
							PCC 6:5-6	PCC 6:7-15
							Para.	Para.
							DC 6:19-34	
							SECTION	
SC 6:19-21	SC 6:22-24		SC 6:25-32			SC 6:33-34		
Para.	Para. Cl.		Para. Cl.			Para.		
	PCC	PCC	PCC	PCC	PCC	PCC	PCC	
	6:22-23	6:24	6:25	6:26	6:27	6:28-30	6:31-32	
	Para.	Para.	Para.	Para.	Para. Cl.	Para.	Para.	

D. The Context of Matt 6:7-15: Thematic Outline of Matt 6:1-34

DIVISION CONSTITUENT 6:1-18 (Section) (Role: Specific of Sermon on the Mount principle stated 5:17-20) Be careful that you do not do your righteous works before men in order that you might be seen by them. Specifically, when you do good works, pray, and fast, you should not do your works like the hypocrites, but do your works in secret since God, who sees in secret, will reward you.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:1 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD of 6:1-18) Be careful that you do not do your righteous works before men in order that you might be seen by them.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:2-4 (Paragraph) (Role: Specific₁ of 6:1-18) (Specifically,) when you give alms do not announce it like someone blowing a trumpet, but do not even tell your closest friends since God, who sees in secret, will reward you.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:5-15 (Paragraph Cluster) (Role: Specific₂ of 6:1-18) (Specifically,) when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, but enter into your room and shut the door since God, who sees in secret, will reward you. When you pray, do not repeat the same words over and over like the people who do not know God, but pray as Jesus prayed.

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:5-6 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD₁ of 6:5-15) (Specifically,) when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, but enter into your room and shut the door since God, who sees in secret, will reward you.

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:7-15 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD₂ of 6:5-15) When you pray, do not repeat the same words over and over like the people who do not know God, but pray as Jesus prayed.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:16-18 (Paragraph) (Role: Specific₃ of 6:1-18) (Specifically,) when you fast, do not act like the hypocrites, but anoint your head and wash your face since God, who sees in secret, will reward you.

DIVISION CONSTITUENT 6:19-34 (Section) (Role: Specific of Sermon on the Mount principle stated 5:17-20) Do not accumulate treasures on earth but in heaven. Do not worry about your life or your body. But seek first the kingdom of God and live a righteous life since God will take care of your physical needs.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:19-21 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD₁ of 6:19-34) Do not accumulate treasures on earth, but accumulate treasures in heaven.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:22-24 (Paragraph Cluster) (Role: Grounds of 6:19-34) If your eye is healthy (that is, if you are generous), then your whole body will be full of light (that is, you will be entirely devoted to serving God). But if your eye is evil (that is, if you are covetous), then your whole body will be full of darkness (that is, you will be entirely devoted to greed). It is impossible to serve both God and greed (in order to amass wealth on earth).

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:22-23 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD₁ of 6:22-24) If your eye is healthy (that is, if you are generous), then your whole body will be full of light (that is, you will be entirely devoted to serving God). But if your eye is evil (that is, if you are covetous), then your whole body will be full of darkness (that is, you will be entirely devoted to greed).

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:24 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD₂ of 6:22-24) No one is able to serve two (absolute) masters. It is impossible to serve both God and greed (in order to amass wealth on earth).

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:25-32 (Paragraph Cluster) (Role: HEAD₂ of 6:19-34) Do not worry about your life or your body.

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:25 (Paragraph) (Role: Specific₁₋₂ and grounds₁₋₂ for 6:25-32) Do not worry about your life or your body.

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:26 (Paragraph) (Role: Illustration of 6:25a-d) Look at the birds of the sky (and see how God) your father in heaven feeds them.

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:27 (Propositional Cluster) (Role: Grounds₃ for 6:25a-d) No one can add one small length (of time) to his life by means of worrying [Rhetorical Question].

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:28-29 (Paragraph) (Role: Illustration of 6:25e-f) Consider the wild flowers growing in the field; King Solomon was not clothed as well as one (of them).

PARAGRAPH CLUSTER CONSTITUENT 6:31-32 (Paragraph) (Role: HEAD of 6:25-32) Therefore do not worry about what you will eat, drink, or wear.

SECTION CONSTITUENT 6:33-34 (Paragraph) (Role: Summary of 6:19-34) Seek first the kingdom of God and live a righteous life since God will take care of your physical needs.

IV. *Analysis and Conclusion*

The schematic at the end of this article highlights the following about the paragraph which contains the Lord's Prayer. First, the paragraph divides broadly into two commands, one negative (vv 7-8) and one positive (vv 9-13). Second, each command begins with an orienter which specifically sets the bounds for the command (i.e., each will involve prayer and is directed towards the original hearers). The first command does not just communicate that Jesus' hearers are not to repeat their prayers again and again. On the third discourse level this behavior is compared to that of people who do not know God (v 7c).

Furthermore, the motivational grounds for the command are given in v 7 d-f: they think that they will be heard by God because of their "much speaking." Instead of stating that they will not, Jesus restates the command in v 8a, thus compressing and intensifying the discourse. The restatement of the original command, "Therefore, do not be like they (are)," is further supplied motivational grounds in v 8b-c: God the father knows our needs even before we ask. The implied conclusion is that the behavior of the heathen is ignorant and counterproductive; those who truly know God will behave otherwise.

Verses 7-8 therefore serve to establish a strong command together with underlying motivational appeal for that which follows.

The positive command for prayer consists mainly of the content of the prayer itself. The word-for-word content given is in itself a prominence device, being imbedded within a direct command. The orienter for the Lord's Prayer, v 9a, gives the command itself, "You, therefore, pray in the following way." The content of the prayer is arranged around six petitions; three in the third person singular imperative, and three in the second person singular imperative, all addressed to the Father. The orienter in 9b is a title of respectful address "Our Father in heaven," which gives the Person toward whom the three permissive imperatives and then the three imperatives of entreaty are addressed. Verse 9c represents the proper beginning point for worship: that the name of God be revered and honored. Verse 10a calls for the kingdom of God to come, a state of affairs much desired by the faithful in Israel, many of whom comprised Jesus' audience. The order of appeal repeats the order of revelation given to Moses: first God's name and nature, then his deliverance. Verse 10b, the third permissive imperative, calls for God's will to be done on earth, an acknowledgment both of the eschatological nature of the prayer and of the "not yet" conditions regnant in the earth at the time of the prayer. The level-three comparison in v 10c makes the third command a bit more prominent and calls out the faith of the hearers: God's prophetic will, so often spurned and mocked on earth (which, incidentally, is the theme of much intertestamental literature), is already being carried out in the heavenlies. The implied argument is therefore from greater to lesser; fulfillment is just a matter of time.

The first three permissive imperatives have dealt with the name, the kingdom, and the will of God the Father. The second group of imperatives of entreaty will center around his people.¹⁵ The first, v 11a, consists of a petition for subsistence, ostensibly of a physical nature (though not necessarily limited to such, to the exclusion of the "spiritual food" of doing the Father's will).¹⁶ The basic need for survival strikes at the heart of Israel's desert wanderings and Jesus' own temptations in the Judean wilderness.¹⁷ After that comes our need of forgiveness and restoration with God, equally basic spiritually, in v 12a. But this command is also qualified by a comparison: God is to forgive

¹⁵ Since the time of Tertullian, interpreters have distinguished these two broad areas of concern as the "heavenly" and "terrestrial." Meyer 151.

¹⁶ See Gundry, *Matthew*, 107, E. M. Yamauchi, "The 'Daily Bread' Motif in Antiquity," *WTJ* 28 (1966) 145-56.

¹⁷ See J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le "Notre Pere"* (Paris: Letouzey & Ane, 1969) 121-43, 214-20. Gundry 108.

us as we forgive those who wrong us (v 12b). The entire paragraph closes with an extremely prominent elaboration on this very point in vv 14-15, a comment upon the twin commands of vv 7-8 and vv 9-13. The final command, v 13a, is that God would not let the believers be tempted (by Satan), together with its equivalent by negated antonym in v 13b.¹⁸ "Deliver us from evil" would then amount to a positive equivalent, a mild prominence device pointing back to a Semitic *vorlage*. The doxology included in the majority of the Greek MSS, if inserted here, would serve as grounds for all six petitions and bring the prayer full circle to the glory of the Father. One's text-critical presuppositions would determine the outcome here. Those who hold that the Alexandrian text tradition represents the "oldest and best" conclude with Gundry that the original prayer was left open-ended and a later redactor completed the prayer. He cites an example of just such an earlier, truncated prayer from Did. 8.2.¹⁹

Finally, the necessity of forgiving others as God is willing to forgive is lifted out of the content of the prayer and given prominent treatment in vv 14-15. Love, not law, is to be the basis for our relationship--with God, our fellow believers, and with our enemies. By this we will truly be acting as his children. Verse 14a states the condition under which we may expect the consequence (marked HEAD on the third level) of v 14b, "then your father in heaven will forgive you also." But equally prominent is the negative upon which the entire paragraph is brought to a close: anticipating a rejection of the positive condition/consequence given in vv 14, 15a-b sounds a warning by means of a parallel construction. The warning resonates to the present day, just as Jesus intended: "But if you do not forgive others [condition], then your father in heaven will not forgive you [consequence]." Such a breach of relationship would undermine the entire purpose for praying in the fashion God the Father desires of his kingdom citizens. A restored, loving relationship with the Father lies at the heart of prayer and makes it efficacious.

¹⁸ Cf. Matt 5:17; 21:21, and Rom 9:1 for further examples. Beekman, Callow, and Kopesec 95.

¹⁹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 109. Hill notes that both Davies and Moule consider the possibility that the doxology might be original and adds that it was probably based on 1 Chr 29:11 and added not later than the early 2nd century. "Even in the time of Jesus it would have been very unusual for a Jewish prayer to have ended without a doxology, expressed or assumed, but the form of words may have remained the choice of the person praying until this prayer became increasingly used as a common prayer in worship when a fixed form of doxology was established." Hill, 139. But cf. Davies and Allison, 1.615, n. 54, who quote Jeremias that many prayers in Judaism could be closed with a "seal," or a freely formulated conclusion (cf. Tertullian, *On Prayer* 10), subjoined to a standard prayer as is the practice in eastern liturgies today, where the congregation speaks the prayer after which the priest alone vocalizes the doxology. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London/New York: Scribner, 1971) 203. The text history may reflect exactly such a sequence of events.

A Semantic-Structural Analysis of Matt 6:7-15 (The Lord's Prayer)

MATTHEW 6:7-15 (Paragraph) (Role: Head₂ of 6:5-15)^a

THEME: When you pray, do not repeat the same words over and over like the people who do not know God, but pray as Jesus prayed. --

SCHEMA	RELATIONAL STRUCTURE	CONTENTS
	--orienter (topic)	(6:7a) And when you pray ^b
HEAD ₁ (neg.)	HEAD	(6:7b) do not repeat the same words over and over
	comparison	(6:7c) like the people who do not know God
	-orienter	(6:7d) since they think
	grounds (mot)	(6:7e) that they will be heard (by God)
	reason	(6:7f) because they repeat their words (often)
	restatement	(6:8a) Therefore, do not be like they (are) ^c
	grounds (mot)	(6:8b) since (God) your father knows what you need
	circumstance	(6:8c) before you ask (him)
	orienter	(6:9a) You, therefore, pray in the following way: ^d
HEAD ₂ HEAD	orienter	(6:9b)(God) our father in heaven,
(pos.)	HEAD ₁	(6:9c) Let your name be honored (because it is holy) ^e
	HEAD ₂	(6:10a) Let your kingdom come (to the earth) ^f
	HEAD ₃ HEAD	(6:10b) Let your will be done on earth
	Comparison	(6:10c) As it is (done now) in heaven
	HEAD ₄	(6:11a) Give us today the food we need for today ^g
	HEAD ₅ HEAD	(6:12a) and forgive us when we disobey your laws
	comparison	(6:12b) just as we forgive those who do us wrong
	HEAD ₆ HEAD	(6:13a) And do not allow us to be tempted (with evil) ^h
	equivalent	(6:13b) but deliver us from (Satan, the source of) evil
	comment	(6:14a) If you forgive others when they do you wrong, ⁱ
	HEAD ₁ condition (pos.)	(6:14b) then (God) your father in heaven will forgive you also
	HEAD ₂ Condition (neg.)	(6:15a) But if you do not forgive others when they do you wrong,
notes follow on next page	HEAD	(6:15b) then (God) your father in heaven will not forgive you ^j

^a BOUNDARIES AND COHERENCE Relatively few of the authorities surveyed began a new paragraph at 6:7 (Z. C. Hodges and A. L. Farstad, ed., *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* [Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1982], NIV, RSV, and NEB). It seems, however, to be warranted because of the repeating summary phrase "and your father, who sees in secret, will reward you." Not only has this identical phrase marked a paragraph ending once before, but we have the linker *δέ* as well. This does not signal so much a shift in topic as in focus. Now the comparison is to be with the "nations" who use vain repetitions in prayer. At the close of the Lord's Prayer, the subject shifts to fasting, and we have the *ὅταν* clause plus the shift from future tense. The structure of 6:7-15 is also markedly different from what has been encountered in the parallel structure. When conjoined to the preceding paragraph, 6:7-15 makes a long paragraph, and then it must be explained why the repeating structure was not allowed in this instance.

PROMINENCE AND THEME The phrase *ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν* "because by their much speaking," is placed before the verb in marked prominent position. This ties in with the theme of the paragraph in that the nations are not necessarily being heard for their much speaking, and Jesus (and Matthew) wish to call attention to the proper way to be heard by God. The Lord's Prayer is in itself prominent, being a direct quotation within a larger discourse. Also, it contains an unusual cluster of imperatives. It is also being addressed to God himself in addition to the hearers.

^b 6:7 TRANSLATION AND RELATION "repeat the words over and over" *βατταλογήσητε*. This is an aorist subjunctive of *βατταλογέω* "to gabble, patter," M. Zerwick and M. Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, rev. ed. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981) 15. "Stutter, stammer," H. L. Boles, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1976) 157-58. Perhaps derived from the Aramaic *ܠܘܬܐ* "idle, useless," or perhaps it is an onomatopoeic word like the English "babble." D. A. Carson, W. W. Wessel, and W. L. Liefeld, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 8 (Expositor's Bible Commentary; 12 vols.; ed. F. E. Gaebelin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8.166. *Ἐν* is translated by Zerwick and Grosvenor as a Semitic causal "because of"--this fits reason--RESULT well in 6:7f. Zerwick and Grosvenor 15. Matt 6:7c was labeled HEAD--comparison instead of HEAD-illustration because it represents a lower level, and because of its brevity.

^c TRANSLATION AND RELATION "Therefore do not be like they (are)" *μη οὖν ὁμοιωθῆτε αὐτοῖς* originally was labeled grounds for HEAD₁ in 7b. This was later seen to be a restatement of 7b for which 8b is the grounds. *Ὅμοιωθῆτε* "become like" (aorist, passive, subjunctive) signals the HEAD-comparison relationship in the surface structure.

^d 6:9 TRANSLATION "pray" *προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς*. There is a free pronoun pointing to the ones who are being contrasted to the heathen, Boles 159. It is not however, fronted in the word order. The question arises whether the author was really calling attention to it in such a way as to need to be reflected in the propositionalization itself. It seems to be used as an orienter, merely underlined for the purposes of contrast. "Hallowed" *ἁγιασθήτω* means to render or pronounce holy, or "let be celebrated, venerated, or esteemed as holy." A. Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical: Matthew and Mark* (ed. P. Frew; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949) 66-67.

^e So Plummer 97-98. "The petition requests that God's name be set apart in honor and glory to evoke respect and awe." Guelich 289.

^f 6:10 TRANSLATION "your kingdom" *ἡ βασιλεία σου*. The Kingdom of God is a recurring motif in Scripture. It has so many facets that it was felt best to let it stand as a technical term. Some of the aspects included in the concept are: "dominion," Zerwick and Grosvenor 16, "heavenly reign and rule of God through Christ in the gospel of grace," Lenski 266, "that God may reign everywhere, that his laws may be obeyed, and especially that the gospel of Christ may be advanced," Barnes 67. "Messianic kingdom," H. A. W. Meyer, *Kritisch exegetisches Handbuch "ber das Evangelium des Matthaus* (Gottingen:

Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1844) 154-55. "Extension of God's reign and rule in the hearts of self and others according to the divine will," R Earle, H. J. S. Blaney, and C. W. Carter, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts*, vol. 4 (Wesleyan Bible Commentary; 6 vols.; ed. C. W. Carter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 4.39. "That prayer in which there is no mention of the Kingdom of God is not a prayer," the Talmud, quoted in Plummer 98. "The prayer 'Thy Kingdom come,' if we only knew, is asking God to conduct a major operation." G. A. Buttrick, quoted in Mead 273. "Christians ought not utter this petition lightly or thoughtlessly." Carson, *Sermon*, 66.

^g 6:11 TRANSLATION AND CONTENT "we need for today" ἐπιούσιον. This may be translated three major ways: (1) "for the coming day, that is, today or tomorrow," from ἐπ-εἰμί; (2) "for the present day, today," from ἐπὶ τῆν οὐσαν; and (3) "necessary for existence," from ἐπὶ οὐσία, Zerwick and Grosvenor 16, B. M. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971) 70. The context clearly mentions "today," though the word may be redundant; but that would not be as serious as omitting the element of necessity if it is indeed present. The word seems closer related etymologically to (3). But cf. Broadus: "Epiousios comes easily and naturally from the epioussa, 'the oncoming (day),' a very common expression for 'to-morrow' or 'next day.'" J. A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society; repro Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990) 136, n. 1. In other words, "'Give us to-day our bread for to-morrow,' would mean that our daily bread, if we remember that one should not let the day close without knowing how he is to have food for the next morning." Ibid., 136. Carson, *Matthew*, 67. Both alternatives [(1) and (2) above] refer to the amount of bread, a measure, the equivalent of a day's needs regardless of whether it also connotes 'today's' or 'tomorrow's'." Guelich 293. Luther translated it "was zum Dasein gehort," quoted in Lenski 269. "Give us today the food we need"-an accepted translation but "linguistically artificial" according to Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, 8:171. One article which may be helpful in this regard is H. Bourgoin, "'Ἐπιούσιος explique par le notion de prefixe vide," *Biblica* 60 (1979) 91-96. "Daily bread"--only here and in Luke 11:3. See further Davies and Allison 607-8, Hendriksen 332-33, and Guelich 292-93.

^h 6:13 RELATION AND TRANSLATION "and do not allow us to be tempted [with evil], but deliver us from [Satan, the source of] evil." καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμὸν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. Ἐπὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ may be translated "from evil" (neuter), or "from the evil one" (masculine). Boles says, "The petition is not merely to be delivered from evil, either the moral or physical sense, but to be delivered from the devil who is the author of the temptations," Boles 162. Seen as two options by Zerwick and Grosvenor, Zerwick and Grosvenor 16. The masculine usage has been used in the chart because in 6:34 it is obvious that the Christian cannot escape being exposed to affliction (κακία). However, Christ did come that he might deliver us out of the kingdom of the evil one, and into his own kingdom. The prayer seems to be not so much to deliver us from being tempted, as to deliver us from the power and dominion of the tempter. Plummer 103. Davies and Allison 1.614-15. Carson, Wessel, and Liefeld, 8:174. Broadus 139.

A further question arises whether the ἀλλά adversive combines the sixth and seventh imperatives into one petition with positive and negative aspects. Lenski holds that it does not and attaches value to the number seven. The adversive is due merely to the negative form of the sixth petition, according to Lenski. Lenski 271, Gundry 105, and Strecker 128. Augustine and the German Lutherans interpreted this way. Origen, Chrysostom, Calvin, Keirn, Hendriksen, Plummer, and Meyer note only six. Meyer 151. Plummer 96. Hendriksen 325, n. 313. It seems, however, that 6:13a and b stand in the relation HEAD-equivalent, an example of restatement by negated antonym (see Beekman, Caland Kopesec 95). Carson concurs, calling it a *litotes*, or a figure of speech which ex-something by negating the contrary. Carson, *Matthew*, 70. The ἀλλά would then a forceful way to underline the contrast, which works out to saying the same thing

much more emphatically, only in a positive vein.. “Deliver” ῥῶσαι means to rescue, or deliver; Christ came not to deliver us from temptation (1 Cor 10:13), but from the power of Satan.. Cf.. *Ber.* 60b: “Do not bring me into the power of a sin, a temptation, a shame,” quoted in Hill 189.

6:13 TEXT The Alexandrian tradition ends with the word “evil,” whereas the Majority Text tradition reads “for thine is the kingdom,” UBS has an A reading in favor of omission. There are six majuscules in favor of the longer reading, and four (including **Ⲛ**) in favor of the shorter. The reading is determined by the presuppositions of the textual theory one holds. Convincing arguments can be adduced for both. The UBS reading is both shorter and simpler; however, in favor of the longer ending it should be said that it is not so abrupt an ending for a prayer, and it would then begin and end with a respectful address to the father, rather than on a note of petition for one's own needs. The prayer began with a petition for the father's glory to be manifest; it would end upon the same note. Thematically, the longer ending seems more balanced. Cf. Lenski, “The textual authority for the genuineness of the doxology with the amen is rather greater than one is led to think by commentators who sometimes refer to II Tim. 4:18 as the source.” Lenski 271. Hendriksen 338-39. Externally, the shorter reading has a bit more evidence in its favor. Broadus 139, n. 1.

ⁱ 14-15 RELATION These verses were labeled HEAD-comment because they do not seem to be an integral part of the Lord's Prayer. Rather, they make an aside concerning HEAD₅ (6:12a-b). A spirit of unforgiving bitterness hinders prayer (cf. 1 Pet 3:7); perhaps that is why this comment is given such a large portion of the discourse as well as the prominent position of a summary statement.

^j 6:15 TEXT “if you do not forgive men when they do you wrong” ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφῆτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. Some texts add τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν. UBS D reading. Only **Ⲛ** and D and a few minor authorities favor the shorter reading here; even the UBSGNT goes with the minority text tradition here. Seven majuscules, and many minuscules, plus the usual MSS backing the majority tradition appear in favor of the longer reading. The shorter reading is poorly attested, yet preference is given to it on the basis of **Ⲛ** being the oldest MS. The fuller reading brings out the parallel in 14a and 15b and helps to develop the theme. As an obvious structural parallelism is in evidence here, both internal and external evidence are in favor of the longer reading.

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