

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE NEW EXODUS

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For almost two thousand years, Christians have recited the words of the Lord's Prayer, the only one that Jesus is recorded as having taught his disciples (Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). In the second century, Tertullian declared it to be “truly the summary of the whole gospel,” and, much later, St. Thomas Aquinas deemed it “the most perfect of prayers.”¹

But what does the prayer actually mean? More specifically, what did *Jesus himself* mean when he taught it to his disciples? And how would they, as first century Jews, have understood its language and imagery? These are important questions, and modern commentators have spilled an enormous amount of ink in the attempt to understand the prayer in its first-century context.² Despite the widespread agreement that the Lord's Prayer reflects the heart of Jesus' message, questions still remain regarding exactly what the prayer reveals about how Jesus understood himself, his mission, and the coming of the kingdom of God.

Several years ago, N. T. Wright published a brief but thought-provoking article in which he argued that the Lord's Prayer should be understood as a prayer for the “new Exodus.”³ Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets had expressed the hope that God would once again redeem the people of Israel in much the same

1 Tertullian, *On Prayer*, 1 in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Garnier and J.P. Migne, 1844–1864), 1, 1155; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [Summary of Theology], Pt. II-II, Q. 83, art. 9, cited in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2d. ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), nos. 2761, 2763.

2 The secondary literature on the Lord's Prayer is vast indeed. For our purposes here, some of the more notable treatments include: James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 226–28, 409–411, 546–55, 589–91; N. T. Wright, “The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm for Christian Prayer,” in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 132–54; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 261–64; Jürgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. James E. Crouch (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 265–71; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 292–94; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994, 2001), 2:291–302; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 1991, 1997), 1:590–615; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 147–57; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985), 2:896–909; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, (New York: Scribner, 1971), 193–203; and *The Prayers of Jesus* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1967), 82–107; Raymond E. Brown, “The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer,” in *New Testament Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 275–320.

3 See Wright, “The Lord's Prayer,” 132–54.

way that he had done in the Exodus from Egypt. In this new Exodus, God would release his people from slavery to sin and death, put an end to their exile from the promised land, and gather them, along with the Gentiles, into a restored kingdom and a new Jerusalem.⁴ According to Wright, the ancient Jewish hope for a new Exodus is the key to unlocking the meaning of the Lord's Prayer:

The events of Israel's Exodus from Egypt, the people's wilderness wandering, and their entry into the promised land were of enormous importance in the self-understanding and symbolism of all subsequent generations of Israelites, including Jews of the Second Temple period. . . . When YHWH restored the fortunes of Israel, it would be like a new Exodus—a new and greater liberation from an enslavement greater than that in Egypt. . . . And the Lord's Prayer can best be seen in this light as well—that is, as the prayer of the new wilderness wandering people. . . . This can be seen more particularly as we look at each of the clauses of the Lord's Prayer from a new Exodus perspective.⁵

4 For primary texts, see, e.g., Isaiah 40–66; Jeremiah 3, 16, 23, 30–31; Ezekiel 20, 36–37; Hosea 2, 11; Micah 4, 7; Zechariah 9–10; Sirach 36. For secondary literature, see Dale C. Allison, Jr., “Q’s New Exodus and the Historical Jesus,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium* 158, ed. A. Lindemann (Leuven: Leuven University, 2001), 395–428; Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 229 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002); F. Ninow, *Indicators of Typology within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2:130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002); Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)–interpreting the Exodus Tradition*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 181 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2:88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000); Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *The Anchor Bible* 27a (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 388–89, 483–85; W. D. Davies, “Paul and the New Exodus,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 443–63; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 40 (London: S.C.M., 1963); J. Manek, “The New Exodus in the Books of Luke,” *Novum Testamentum* 2 (1958): 8–23. See also Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (Westminster: Newman, 1960), 153–228.

5 See Wright, “The Lord’s Prayer,” 139–140. The close reader will note that I have left out the problematic elements of Wright’s hypothesis by which he ties the new Exodus of the Old Testament prophets to his concept of “the end of Exile”—that is, deliverance from pagan rule and the return of YHWH to Zion. As I have argued elsewhere, although I agree with Wright’s emphasis on the importance of the exile, I have some fundamental disagreements with his understanding of the concept. For a full discussion, see Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*, *Wissenschaftliche*

Although Wright's proposal has not yet received a great deal of scholarly attention, I believe that he has uncovered a fundamental insight into the meaning of the Lord's Prayer in its first-century Jewish context, an insight that is worthy of further exploration.⁶

In this essay, I will attempt to show that Wright's suggestion is correct and that the ancient Jewish hope for a new Exodus is, in fact, a very important key to understanding what Jesus himself meant when he taught the Lord's Prayer to his disciples. Moreover, I will attempt to strengthen Wright's proposal by examining the Old Testament and ancient Jewish background of the Lord's Prayer in greater depth.

As we will see, each line of the prayer is rooted in the language and imagery of the Scriptures of Israel and in the prophetic hope for a new Exodus. When this Old Testament background is adequately taken into account, the Lord's Prayer does, in fact, appear to be a prayer for the new Exodus and all that it entails: the coming of the Messiah, the release of God's scattered people from exile, and the ingathering of the Israel and the Gentiles to the promised land of a new Jerusalem. To borrow a felicitous phrase from Wright himself, the Lord's Prayer reveals what can be called a "typological eschatology," in which the events of the first Exodus establish a prototype for how God will save his people in the end-times.⁷

I will operate with several basic presuppositions. First, while I recognize that the brief and powerful petitions of the Lord's Prayer are inherently open to a multitude of interpretations, my primary goal here is to try, insofar as is possible, to ascertain what Jesus himself meant when he taught the prayer to his disciples. Along these lines, I will assume, following most scholars, that the Lord's Prayer is historically authentic to Jesus.⁸ Second, because Matthew and Luke's Gospels preserve slightly different versions of the prayer, I will focus my attention on the opening address and the five petitions that they have in common. I do this primarily for reasons of space, but also because most scholars recognize that these elements originated with Jesus. Third and finally, I will argue that the key to unlocking the original meaning of the Lord's Prayer can be found by closely examining the Old Testament context of the language and imagery used by Jesus in each petition. As we will see, when this is done, in remarkable fashion, each of its petitions can be tied to the ancient Jewish hope for the coming of the Messiah and the ingathering of Israel and the Gentiles in a new Exodus.

Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2:204 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 31–40.

6 I have already drawn on Wright's insights in *Jesus the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 132–59. In this article, I will expand on these initial arguments.

7 Wright, "The Lord's Prayer," 146.

8 I address the scholarly debate on questions of historicity in detail in Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 154–58. As I show there, most scholars conclude that the elements of the prayer common to Matthew and Luke are authentic.

“Our Father”

The first aspect of the Lord’s Prayer that evokes both the Exodus from Egypt and the new Exodus is the opening address to God as “Our Father” (πάτερ ἡμῶν) or “Father” (πάτερ) (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:1). Although at first glance the practice of addressing God as “Father” in prayer may seem unremarkable, when we turn to the Old Testament, it is by no means common. Although on several occasions God is depicted as, or compared to, a father, *he is almost never addressed as “Father” in a prayer*—except in a few key instances.⁹ When these are examined we find that both the image of God as father and the practice of addressing God as “Father” in prayer are tied with remarkable consistency to *the Exodus from Egypt* and the prophetic hope for a *new Exodus*.

As Wright points out, God’s command to Pharaoh to release the Israelites was directly based on his paternal relationship to Israel: “Thus says the Lord: Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may worship me’; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son” (Exod. 4:22–23). Moreover, we find the same link present in the book of Hosea, when God refers to the past Exodus in terms of his paternal relationship to Israel: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos. 11:1). Finally, the first explicit use of the Hebrew word “father” (אב) for God in the Old Testament comes from the famous “Song of Moses,” which is, of course, a recollection of God’s past act of deliverance in the Exodus from Egypt (see Deut. 32:9–14). In light of such texts, Wright concludes:

Calling God “Father” not only evokes all kinds of associations of family life and intimacy; more importantly, it speaks to all subsequent generations of God as *the God of the Exodus*, the God who rescues Israel primarily because Israel is God’s first-born son. The title “Father” says as much about Israel, and about the events through which God will liberate Israel, as it does about God.¹⁰

We can go much further than Wright, however, for this connection between the fatherhood of God and the Exodus is not only present in passages that refer

9 Most frequently, Israel is referred to as the sons or children of God, without God explicitly being called “father” (Deut. 14:1; Hos. 11:1–3; Wis. 5:5). In a few cases, God is explicitly called a “father”: either with reference to him as creator (Deut. 32:6; Mal. 2:10), or by way of analogy (Ps. 103:13), or as a protector of orphans (Ps. 68:5), or with regard to his special relationship with the king of Israel under the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:27). Apart from the examples we will discuss below, the only cases of God being addressed as “Father” in prayer in the Old Testament come from the books of Sirach and Wisdom, where God is called “Father” on a few occasions (see Wis. 14:3; Sir. 23:1, 4; 51:10). For a concise discussion of references, see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2: 902–903; Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:600–602. See further Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 11–29.

10 Wright, “The Lord’s Prayer,” 140.

to the first Exodus. It is even more explicit in prophetic texts concerned with the new Exodus.

There are at least three key passages from the Old Testament that utilize the terminology of God as "Father" precisely in the context of describing the eschatological events that will accompany the new Exodus. Although these texts are somewhat lengthy, it is important that they be cited here as fully as possible so that the context of their use of "father" terminology is clear. The first two are from the prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the third is from the closing chapters of the book of Tobit:

*Then [the Lord] remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant.
Where is he who brought up out of the sea the shepherds of his
flock?*

*Where is he who put in the midst of them his holy Spirit,
who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,
who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlast-
ing name, who led them through the depths? . . .*

*So you did lead your people, to make for yourself a glorious
name.*

*Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and glorious
habitation.*

Where are your zeal and your might?

*The yearning of your heart and your compassion are withheld
from me.*

*For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us
and Israel does not acknowledge us;*

*you, O Lord, are our Father,
our Redeemer from of old is your name.*

*O Lord, why do you make us err from your ways
and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?*

Return for the sake of your servants the tribes of your heritage.

(Isa. 63:10–17)¹¹

*In those days, says the Lord, they shall no more say, "The ark of the
covenant of the Lord." It shall not come to mind, or be remembered,
or missed; it shall not be made again. At that time Jerusalem
shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all the Gentiles shall
gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they*

11 Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Scripture used herein are from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSVCE), eds. Bernard Orchard and R.C. Fuller (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966).

shall no more follow their own evil heart. *In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage.*

“I thought how I would set you among my sons,
and give you a pleasant land,
a heritage most beautiful of all nations.
And I thought you would call me “My Father,”
and would not turn from following me.” (Jer. 3:16–19)

Blessed is God who lives for ever, and blessed is his kingdom . . .

Acknowledge him before the Gentiles, O sons of Israel;
for he has scattered us among them.

Makes his greatness known there, and exalt him in the presence
of all the living;

because he is our Lord and God, *he is our Father* for ever.

He will afflict us for our iniquities; and again he will show mercy,
and will gather us from all the nations among whom you have been
scattered.

If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul,
to do what is true before him, then he will turn to you
and will not hide his face from you. . . . (Tob. 13:1–6)

Although a great deal could be said about each one of these texts, for our purposes here, we must confine ourselves to making three basic observations. First, each bears strong *linguistic parallels* with the Lord’s Prayer. The most important in this regard is Isaiah, who actually addresses God as “our Father” (אֲבִי־נוֹ; πατήρ ἡμῶν) (Isa. 63:16; 64:8)¹²—the same expression we find in the Lord’s Prayer: “our Father” (πάτερ ἡμῶν) (Matt. 6:9).¹³ Similarly, Jeremiah declares that when God gathers Israel and the Gentiles to the restored Jerusalem, they will “call” God “my Father” (אֲבִי; πατέρα) (Jer. 3:19).¹⁴ This too parallels the shorter version of the Lord’s Prayer, which simply addresses God as “Father” (πάτερ) (Luke 11:2). Finally,

12 Unless otherwise noted, all Hebrew quotations of the Old Testament cited herein reflect the Masoretic Text (MT), while all Greek quotations reflect the Septuagint translation (LXX).

13 It is a curious fact of New Testament scholarship that commentators who spend an otherwise enormous amount of time on Jesus’ use of “Father” language almost never discuss this passage from Isaiah in which God is actually addressed as “our Father.” Although Isaiah 63–64 is mentioned in many lists of textual parallels, it is not actually discussed by otherwise meticulous commentators such as Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 548–49; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, 2 vols., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 2:1051–52; Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:600; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:902.

14 The Septuagint here reads: “And I said: You shall call me Father” (καὶ εἶπα Πατέρα καλέσετε με).

although Tobit does not directly address God, he does refer to him as “our Father” (πατήρ ἡμῶν) in a prayer regarding God’s “kingdom” (Tob. 13:2, 4). This, as we will see, is surely noteworthy, given the centrality of God as “father” and God’s “kingdom” in the Lord’s Prayer.

Second, each of these three texts is describing *the future ingathering of Israel and the Gentiles in a new Exodus*. This is very clear in Isaiah, in which the new Exodus is a major theme.¹⁵ In this context, the prophet calls upon God to look down “from heaven” and “return” the scattered “tribes” of Israel to the promised land, just as he had done in “the days of old, of Moses his servant” (Isa. 63:10, 17). It is important to note here that for Isaiah, this future Exodus will be tied to the establishment of a restored Temple, a gloriously new Jerusalem, and even a “new heaven and a new earth.”¹⁶ In other words, the future Exodus will not only be “new,” it will be *eschatological*.

This hope for a new Exodus is equally clear in Jeremiah, who more than once speaks of future “days” when people will no longer speak about the first Exodus, when God “brought up the people out of the land of Egypt.” Instead, they will speak about the new Exodus, when God will gather the scattered tribes of Israel “out of all the countries where he had driven them” (Jer. 16:14–16; 23:1–8). Jeremiah is describing this new Exodus when he says that people will no longer remember the Ark of the Covenant, the most visible sign of the Mosaic covenant and the Exodus from Egypt (Jer. 3:17). It is crucial to note here that in Jeremiah, the new Exodus will not only be eschatological, but specifically *messianic*. The future ingathering will be inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah, the “Branch” of David (Jer. 16:14–16; 23:1–8); it is a messianic Exodus.

Finally, although Tobit does not use any clear Exodus typology in the cited text, he is still describing the same basic series of eschatological events: the ingathering of the exiles, the conversion of the Gentiles and their pilgrimage to the new Jerusalem, and the building of a new temple (Tob. 13:5–10, 16–18; 14:5–7). To this extent, Tobit’s vision for the future is rooted in the same concept of the new Exodus found in the prophets.

Third and finally—and this is significant—in all three texts, *the use of divine “Father” language only occurs in the context of their hope for the new Exodus*. Apart

15 See, for example Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 51–59, drawing on Rikki E. Watts, “Consolation or Confrontation? Isaiah 40–55 and the Delay of the New Exodus,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (1990): 31–59; Dale A. Patrick, “Epiphanic Imagery in Second Isaiah’s Portrayal of a New Exodus,” *Hebrew Annual Review* 8 (1984): 125–41; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970); Bernhard W. Anderson, “Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenberg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper, 1962), 177–95. See also Gerhard von Rad, who speaks of “the message of the new Exodus” as “one of Deutero-Isaiah’s main topics.” *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 2:244–50, 261–2.

16 See, for example, Isaiah 52–54, 56, 65–66.

from these passages, neither Isaiah nor Tobit describes God as “father” anywhere else, despite the fact that both books contain numerous other prayers. Although such language does occur one other time in the book of Jeremiah,¹⁷ it does so, remarkably, in another passage about the new Exodus:

*The Lord has saved his people, the remnant of Israel.
“Behold, I will bring them from the north country,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth . . .
a great company, they shall return here.
With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will make them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born son.”*
(Jer. 31:7–9)

This is an extremely significant text, for it makes explicit the implicit connection between the fatherhood of God and the new Exodus. The reason God will one day bring his people home to the promised land is because he is Israel’s “father,” and Israel is his “first-born son.” The echoes of Exodus 4:22 here are unmistakable. Moreover, the context of this occurrence is important as well, for it takes place in the midst of Jeremiah’s famous extended prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the inauguration of a “new covenant” that will be greater than the covenant with Moses (Jer. 30:1–8, 18–21, 31:31–33).

Taken together, these parallels suggest that Jesus’ use of “father” language in the Lord’s Prayer was not incidental or the result of Old Testament custom. The occurrences are too infrequent for that. Rather, it was a deliberate act that drew on the typological eschatology of the Old Testament and was meant to indicate to his disciples that the time for the inauguration of the new Exodus had come at last. Just as God’s fatherly love for Israel had compelled him to deliver them from Egypt and bring them home in the first Exodus, so too, in the latter days, he will gather his children home to the promised land once more—although this time, he would bring the Gentiles with them. Seen in the light of this ancient hope, Jesus’ address to God as “Father” may signal that he is not merely teaching the disciples about the nature of their relationship with God. More broadly, he is teaching them to pray for the new Exodus and everything it entailed: the ingathering of the tribes of Israel, the conversion of the Gentiles, the building of a new Jerusalem, and—by no means least important—the coming of the Messiah. In short, the inaugura-

17 The only other instance of “father” language (Jer. 3:4) is not actually a separate instance but a preface to the first citation in Jer 3:19.

tion of the new Exodus would mean nothing less than the advent of the messianic kingdom of God.

If there is any doubt about the possibility of the opening address having such deep messianic significance, one final example of “father” language from the Old Testament, used in the context of a prayer, should lay it to rest. It comes from the lips of King David in the book of Chronicles, during the great assembly that was held when Solomon was anointed king over Israel:

Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; and David said: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel, *our Father* forever and ever. *Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all . . . And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.* (1 Chron. 29:10–13)

The number of parallels with the Lord's Prayer are striking. First and foremost, of course is the *direct address* of God as “our Father” (אֲבִי־נוֹן; πατήρ ἡμῶν) in the context of a prayer (1 Chron. 29:10), found elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Isaiah. Second, the focus of the prayer is on *the kingdom* of the Lord, a direct parallel to Jesus' prayer for the coming of God's kingdom. Lest this seem insignificant, scholars have pointed out that the expression, “the kingdom of God,” never occurs anywhere in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and that the “kingdom of the Lord”—the closest equivalent—only occurs *once*, in 1 Chronicles 28:5, immediately before our passage.¹⁸

Hence, when David prays to “Our Father” about his kingdom, the context directly ties this image to the kingdom of God as established in and through the anointed Son of David.¹⁹ This suggests a connection between *praying to God as “Our Father”* and *the establishment of the Davidic kingdom under the messianic king*.²⁰ Should there be any doubt about this connection, recall that more than once, the Davidic king is singled out as the “son” who will call God “my Father” (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:26–27).

Finally, this link between the prayer of David and that of Jesus was evidently not lost on the early Church. David's words provide the basic content of the doxol-

18 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:243.

19 See 1 Chron. 28:1–8, 28:10–25.

20 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:276, n. 32, cites Odo Camponovo, *Königtum, Königsherrschaft und Reich Gottes in den frühjüdischen Schriften*, *Orbis biblicus et Orientalis* 58 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 90–91, as seeing “a messianic conception connected with the idea of Yahweh's eschatological kingship” based on 1 Chron. 28:5.

ogy that was later attached to the Lord's Prayer: "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever."²¹ Although modern scholars frequently overlook this Davidic background to the Lord's Prayer, the earliest Christians apparently saw quite clearly that the eschatological "kingdom of God" was the fulfillment of the Davidic "kingdom of the Lord," to be restored in the new Exodus.

"Hallowed Be Thy Name"

These connections between the fatherhood of God and the new Exodus can be confirmed by turning to the first actual petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2). Although the traditional translation of this line comes across in English as a declarative statement, the Greek is very clearly an imperative request: "May your name be hallowed!"²² In this case, familiarity may breed a certain lack of awareness for just how peculiar this line of the prayer is. Why should Jesus instruct his disciples to pray that God's name be "hallowed" or "made holy"? Is not the divine name already holy?²³ What might it mean for God to "hallow" his own name?

Here again the answer can be found by recourse to the Old Testament background of Jesus' words. With regard to the first Exodus, few would doubt the prominence and importance of the revelation of God's "name" to Moses in the famous theophany at Mount Sinai (Exod. 3:13–22). With regard to the new Exodus, many commentators agree that the language of "hallowing" God's "name" is drawing on an eschatological prophecy from the book of Ezekiel, in which the Lord promises to one day vindicate the holiness of his name (Ezek. 36:23).²⁴ However, while Ezekiel 36 is widely recognized as a direct parallel to Jesus' words, commentators often ignore the larger context of the parallel, and the precise *event* that accompanies the hallowing of God's name—the ingathering of the scattered tribes of Israel:

Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but

21 This doxology is present in *Didache* 8:2 and some manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel. See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:615, n. 54; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 202–203.

22 Joseph Fitzmyer translates the line as "May your name be sanctified!" and comments that it "expresses a punctiliar mode of action suited for the eschatological nuance of this wish." Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:903.

23 See 1 *Enoch* 9:4. See 1 *Enoch: A New Translation Based on the Hermencia Commentary*, ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and J.C. VanderKam (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

24 See, for example, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:296–97; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 476–77; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2:898. Wright does not discuss the echo of Ezekiel in his article, but he does admit that the first petition "evokes the prophecy of Ezekiel 36" in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 293, although it does not significantly inform his exegesis of the text. While Brown notes the parallel, he does not highlight it as the principle background of Jesus' words. See Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer," 291.

for the sake of *my holy name*, which you have profaned among the Gentiles to which you came. *And I will hallow my great name*, which has been profaned among the Gentiles, and which you have profaned among them; and the Gentiles will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord GOD, when I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. *For I will take you from the Gentiles, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.* (Ezek. 36:22-28)²⁵

This is a striking vision of the coming age of salvation: the people of Israel will be set free from exile among the Gentiles and be gathered “from all the countries” into a renewed and restored promised land, a paradise that will be “like the garden of Eden” (Ezek. 36:35). Although in this particular passage Ezekiel does not explicitly use Exodus typology, he has already described this “gathering” of Israel “out of the countries” by drawing on imagery from the first Exodus from Egypt (see Ezek. 20:11–38, esp. 33–38). Hence, the final ingathering will truly be a new Exodus. Moreover, just as the first Exodus included Israel’s passing through the waters of the Red Sea (Exod. 14), so too this future restoration will be accompanied by the cleansing of Israel from its sins by “clean water” (Ezek. 36:25). This new Exodus, and all the events that will accompany it, will take place *when God “hallows” his “name”* by saving his people.

There are several important connections between this passage and the Lord’s Prayer. First, the precise verbal parallels with Jesus’ words are very strong. In Ezekiel, God declares that he will “make holy” or “hallow” his “name” (וְקִדְשְׁתִּי וְשִׁמְיִי; ἁγιάσω τὸ ὄνομά μου) (Ezek. 36:23). In similar fashion, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray: “May your name be hallowed” (ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου) (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2). Although the language of people “hallowing” the name of God is found on a couple of occasions in the Old Testament,²⁶ in the Lord’s Prayer,

25 RSVCE, slightly altered.

26 See Lev. 22:32; Isa. 29:22–23. In both cases, the subject of the verb is not God but human beings. Among later Jewish literature, see *b. Yeb.* 79a which says that: “It is better that a single jot of the Torah be rooted out of its place so that the Name of heaven be sanctified in public.” Translated by Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, 22 vols (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005). See also, Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 547, who also cites 1 *Enoch*. 61:12 which, intriguingly, occurs in the midst of a vision of the revelation and enthronement of the Messiah.

we appear to have a divine passive, with the sense being, “May God hallow his name.” There is, to my knowledge, only one place in the Old Testament where such a concept occurs: Ezekiel 36. Hence, Jesus seems to be drawing on this particular prophecy and instructing his disciples to pray for its fulfillment.

In addition to these linguistic parallels, there are also strong thematic connections. It is surely no coincidence that Ezekiel’s prophecy not only contains a description of the new Exodus, but other elements that parallel the Lord’s Prayer: abundance of grain/bread for sustenance (Ezek. 26:29–30), forgiveness of sins (Ezek. 36:33), and “deliverance” from evil and idolatry (Ezek 26:29). In light of such connections, some scholars have even suggested that the entire Lord’s Prayer is based upon Ezekiel 36.²⁷ While I would argue that there are other texts that provide more direct parallels with the other petitions, the basic insight is correct. Jesus is teaching the disciples to pray for the whole series of events that will accompany Ezekiel’s new Exodus and encapsulating them in the initial plea for God to hallow his name.

Finally, and perhaps most intriguingly, the allusion to Ezekiel 36 may also support our earlier suggestion that the future Exodus envisioned by Jesus is not only eschatological but specifically messianic. For if the prophecy from Ezekiel is read in its wider context, one finds that the final ingathering of Israel is also tied to the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom:

Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph and the tribes of Israel associated with him [10 tribes of the northern kingdom]; and I will join with it the stick of Judah [2 tribes of the southern kingdom], and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. . . . Behold, I will take the people of Israel from Gentiles among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all . . . My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd . . . I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. (Ezek. 37:19–26)

We see here that the new Exodus is directly tied to three key eschatological events: the restoration of the twelve “tribes” of Israel, the coming of a future Davidic “king,” and the forging of an “everlasting covenant.” In other words, for Ezekiel, the new Exodus is directly tied to the advent of *the messianic kingdom*. This background gives us an indispensable clue as to the specific events Jesus may have had in mind when he instructed the disciples to pray for the hallowing of God’s

²⁷ See James Swetnam, “Hallowed be Thy Name,” *Biblica* 52 (1972), 556–63.

name. In light of its Old Testament background, the first petition of the Lord's Prayer is not a plea for some vague "divine action" in history, but a specific request for the *messianic new Exodus*, in which God would restore the twelve tribes of Israel and send the Messiah to establish his everlasting kingdom. This is perhaps why Jesus, in the very next line, turns to the coming of this kingdom.

"Thy Kingdom Come"

Perhaps no line from the Lord's Prayer has been more vigorously debated than the petition: "May your kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2). As many scholars would agree, the hope for the "coming" of God's "kingdom" is arguably the heart not only of the Lord's Prayer, but of Jesus' entire mission and message. But what might Jesus have meant by instructing his disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom?

A host of answers have been proposed, far too many to be discussed in this brief essay.²⁸ For our purposes here, I will simply attempt to interpret the petition by asking the same questions as above: namely, is there an Old Testament text behind Jesus' words? And, if so, does the context shed any possible light on their meaning?

The answer to these questions is a resounding, "Yes." An extremely important Old Testament prophecy appears to lie behind Jesus' words. Despite the erroneous claim of some scholars that Jesus' combination of noun "kingdom" and the verb "to come" cannot be found in the Old Testament, there is, in fact, one biblical text in which precisely such a conjunction takes place: Micah 4:8.²⁹ Admittedly, this is (to my knowledge) the *only* time the Old Testament ever speaks about the "coming" of a "kingdom," but this only heightens the importance of Micah's prophecy for interpreting Jesus' words. Because the passage is woefully under-discussed and because the surrounding context is so crucial, I cite it below as fully as possible:

*It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it, and many Gentiles shall come, and say:
"Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,*

28 The bibliography on the kingdom of God is enormous. For a sampling of some of the more significant discussions with reference to Jesus, see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 383–47; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:237–506; E. P. Sanders, "Jesus and the Kingdom: The Restoration of Israel and the New People of God," in *Jesus, the Gospels, and the Church*, ed. E. P. Sanders (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1987), 225–39. See also Bruce Chilton, "The Kingdom of God in Recent Scholarship," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *New Testament Tools and Studies* 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 255–80.

29 See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:294.

to the house of the God of Jacob;
 that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths.”
 For out of Zion shall go forth the Law,
 and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem . . .
*In that day, says the Lord, I will assemble the lame
 and gather those who have been driven away,
 and those whom I have afflicted;
 and the lame I will make the remnant;
 and those who were cast off, a strong nation;
 and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion
 from this time forth forever more.*
 And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion,
 to you it shall come, the former dominion shall come,
 and the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem. (Mic. 4:1–8)

Several aspects of this striking text provide important background for Jesus’ words. First, it contains the sole occurrence in the Old Testament of a parallel to Jesus’ prayer for the “coming” (ἐρχομαί) of the “kingdom” (βασιλεία) of God (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2). Although this might be easy to overlook in the English translation, the final line of the passage very clearly connects the verb “come” (בוא; εἰσερχομαί) to the nouns “dominion” and “kingdom” (ממלכת; βασιλεία) (Mic. 4:8). In the context of just having proclaimed that “the Lord will reign” in Mount Zion (Mic. 4:7), this is very clearly an image of *the coming of the kingdom of the Lord*—that is, the kingdom of God.

Micah also links the coming of the kingdom to several other eschatological events that we have seen before: the advent of “the latter days” or end-times, the building of a new Temple, and the conversion and pilgrimage of the Gentiles to a new Jerusalem. These are important, because they show that the “coming” of the “kingdom” of God cannot be reduced to a single event, but is, so to speak, the *sum total* of several eschatological events that would signal the fulfillment of the promises of God.³⁰ Finally, Micah describes the “coming” of the “kingdom” primarily in terms of the ingathering of the scattered tribes of Israel, whom the Lord had “driven away” into exile (Mic. 4:6–7). In this particular text, Micah does not make the Exodus typology clear, but later in the book, he explicitly describes this “coming” of the scattered children of Jerusalem as a new Exodus that will

30 See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 393–96. I owe this formulation to the massive (but now forgotten) work of the German Franciscan Hilarin Felder: “The dominion of God over the world, or the kingdom of God in the world, was in general *the sum total of all hopes for the future*. The whole Old Testament is filled with the idea, which Jesus summarized in the words: ‘Thy kingdom come.’” Hilarin Felder, *Christ and the Critic*, 2 vols., trans. John L. Stoddard (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924), 153 (emphasis added).

surpass the wonders that took place “when [Israel] came out of the land of Egypt” (see Mic. 7:12-16).

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of this passage for understanding the Lord's Prayer. It not only shows that, once again, Jesus is drawing on Old Testament imagery to depict the coming of the kingdom of God. More importantly, it reveals that, in a certain sense, *the expectation of the coming of the kingdom of God and the hope for the new Exodus are one and the same*. They are two ways of speaking about the same eschatological event or series of events. The image of the “kingdom” emphasizes the Davidic dimensions of the dominion of God: the reign of the Messiah, the new Temple, and the establishment of a universal messianic kingdom.³¹ The other image of the return of the exiled tribes to the promised land emphasizes the Mosaic dimensions of salvation. God will save his people in the latter days in much the same way he saved them in the Exodus: he will forgive their sins, release them from slavery, and then lead them home to the promised land. Both the Mosaic and the Davidic dimensions of salvation are important for understanding the shape of the messianic kingdom, for they both have typological as well as eschatological significance.

In short, Jesus' hope for the coming of the kingdom needs to be understood from within the context of *the typological eschatology of the Old Testament*. When this is done, we find that the coming of the kingdom of God is nothing less than the concrete and definitive fulfillment of all of God's promises to Israel, and, through Israel, to the whole world. It is the fulfillment of the promise to gather the scattered children of God together and bring them home to a new Zion, a new Temple, and a new Jerusalem, so that “all peoples” might walk in his ways, learn his “law,” and worship in his “house,” in an everlasting era of peace (Mic. 4:1-8). When seen in this light, the kingdom's “coming” will not only be an eschatological event, it will be a *liturgical* and *ecclesial* event as well—in the proper sense of the latter word³²—as was the Exodus from Egypt and, for that matter, the establishment of the kingdom of David.

Once all this is clear, we can easily explain Jesus' otherwise awkward language of the “coming” of a “kingdom”—language which continues to puzzle scholars.³³ How can a “kingdom” be said to “come”? The answer is: quite easily, if “the kingdom” in question refers primarily to a *people*—namely, the scattered children of God. This is especially true if the people in question are in exile, as the tribes of Israel had been for centuries, spread among the Gentile nations. In this light, the coming of

31 This is not to exclude “kingdom” imagery from the Exodus; it is, of course, quite prominent (Exod. 19:5-6). But note the importance of the Davidic “Zion” imagery in Micah 4:8.

32 The Greek version of the Pentateuch more than once refers to the gathering of the twelve tribes of Israel to “worship” the Lord at Mount Sinai as the great “day of the *ekklesia*” or “day of the assembly” (Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16). The Hebrew term behind the Greek is the word for “assembly” (עֲדָתָא).

33 For scholarly perplexity on this point, see, for example, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:298.

God's kingdom for which Jesus instructs his disciples to pray means nothing less than the ingathering of Israel and the Gentiles in a new Exodus.

"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"

Perhaps the most obvious sign of the presence of a new Exodus typology in the Lord's Prayer can be found in the third common petition: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11), or "Give us each day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). Again, while this line may be extremely familiar, it too is perhaps more curious than it appears at first glance. Why, in the midst of this great eschatological prayer for the coming of God's kingdom, does Jesus suddenly switch focus to a seemingly mundane request for daily food? Is not this the same Jesus who has commanded his disciples elsewhere: "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat and what you shall drink" (Matt. 6:25; Luke 12:22)?³⁴ And why does he emphasize receiving this "daily" bread "each day"? Why the seeming redundancy?

The answer to these questions can be found once again by examining the Old Testament and ancient Jewish background of the petition. With regard to the Old Testament, there are few more memorable images of the Exodus from Egypt than that of the miraculous *manna from heaven*, which was given each day to the people of Israel during their journey through the wilderness toward the promised land. With the Lord's Prayer in mind, compare the following passages:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, *I will rain bread from heaven* for you; and the people shall go out and gather *a day's* portion *every day*, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth *day*, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather *daily* . . ." In the evenings quail came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is *the bread which the Lord has given you to eat* . . ." Now the house of Israel called its name manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. (Exod. 16:4–5, 13–15, 31)

[God] commanded the skies above,
and opened the doors of heaven;
and *he rained down upon them manna to eat,*

34 I owe this point to Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. M. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1931), 240.

and gave them the grain of heaven.
 Man ate the bread of the angels; he sent them food in
 abundance . . .
 And they ate and were well filled,
 for he gave them what they craved. (Ps. 78:23–25, 29)

In these two key descriptions of the Old Testament manna, we see several parallels with the Lord's Prayer. Just as during the Exodus, God would "give" (δίδομι) the "bread" (ἄρτος) to the people of Israel each "day" (ἡμέρα), so too Jesus commands his disciples to pray that God "give" (δίδου / δὸς) them "bread" (τὸν ἄρτον) "today" (σήμερον) or "each day" (τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν) (Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3).

As other scholars have pointed out, this emphasis on the daily nature of the bread of the Lord's Prayer is surely evocative of the manna of the Exodus.³⁵ This is important, because the manna of the first Exodus was *no ordinary bread*; it was miraculous "bread from heaven," given as food for the people on the way to the promised land. Seen in this light, Jesus is not merely instructing the disciples to pray for the mundane bread of daily existence. Rather, he is teaching them to pray for *the new manna of the new Exodus*. As God had provided sustenance for his people during the first Exodus, when Israel "ate the bread of angels" (Ps. 78:23–25, 29), so too would God feed the people of his kingdom during the eschatological Exodus.

Should there be any doubt about this connection between the "bread" of the Lord's Prayer and the new manna, we need only turn to ancient Jewish eschatology to confirm the suggestion. Many ancient Jews expected that *when the Messiah finally came, he would cause the manna to come down from heaven again*. One of the most explicit descriptions of this comes to us from the first-century Jewish writing known as *2 Baruch*. In a vision of the messianic age, the text states:

And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts is accomplished, *the Messiah* will begin to be revealed. . . . And those who are hungry will enjoy themselves and they will, moreover, see marvels every day. . . . *And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time.* (2 *Baruch* 29:3–8)³⁶

35 "In the LXX account [of the manna] ἡμέρα appears repeatedly (vv. 1, 4, 5, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30), and δίδομι is used (vv. 8, 15, 29; LXX Ps. 77:24; John 6:32). Further, Luke's redactional 'daily' (τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν) appears in LXX Exod 16, 5." Dale Allison, "Q's New Exodus and the Historical Jesus," 399.

36 The text can be found in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City:

Other later Jewish texts also bear witness to the same expectation:³⁷

As the first redeemer [Moses] caused manna to descend, as it is stated, "Because I shall cause to rain bread from heaven for you" [Exod. 16:4], so will the latter redeemer [the Messiah] cause manna to descend.³⁸

You will not find it [manna] in this age, but you shall find it in the age to come.³⁹

It [the manna] has been prepared for the righteous in the age to come. Everyone who believes is worthy and eats of it.⁴⁰

In light of these striking texts, we see yet again that for many ancient Jews, the long-awaited new Exodus would not only be eschatological, but *messianic*. It, and the new manna that would accompany it, were directly tied to the coming of the Messiah. As C. H. Dodd puts it, these Jewish texts clearly depict the righteous eating the manna during "the period of the temporary messianic kingdom on earth."⁴¹

It is fascinating to note that there was a related Jewish tradition which held that the new manna would return not just at any time, but *at Passover*.⁴² It does not take much to connect these ancient Jewish expectations with Jesus' own actions during Passover at the Last Supper, when he gave the disciples the "bread" of the

Doubleday, 1983), 1:630–31.

37 These examples are taken from Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, The Anchor Bible 29–29A (New York: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 1:265–66, and C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1953), 83–84, n. 2, 335. See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:682, for more Jewish parallels. For an exhaustive study, see Bruce J. Malina, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition: The Manna Tradition in the Palestinian Targums and its Relationship to the New Testament*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

38 *Midrash Rabbah* on Eccl. 1:9.

39 *Mekilta* on Exod. 16:25.

40 *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Beshallah* 21:66.

41 Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 335.

42 "Besides the general eschatological expectation of the manna, it seems that the manna was particularly associated with Passover time . . . Midrash Mekilta on Exodus 16:1 says that manna fell for the first time on the fifteenth day of the second month, a date associated with the celebration of Passover by those who missed the regular date (Num. 9:11). Joshua 5:10–12 says that manna fell for the last time on Passover eve. The expectation grew that the Messiah would come on Passover, and that the manna would begin to fall again on Passover." Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1:265, citing B. Gärtner, *John 6 and the Jewish Passover*, *Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 17 (Lund: Gleerup, 1959), 19.

coming “kingdom” of God and declared it to be his “body.”⁴³ Although it would take us too far afield to delve any further into these connections, it is worth noting in passing that if Jesus and the twelve saw the bread of the Last Supper as the new manna of the new Exodus, it follows that *they would not have viewed it as mere ordinary bread*, but as miraculous bread from heaven.⁴⁴

In any case, by instructing his disciples to say each day, “Give us this day our daily bread,” Jesus is teaching them to ask God for the miraculous food that the Messiah himself would give them during their journey to the new promised land. To use an ancient Jewish expression, he is teaching them to pray for “the Bread of the Age to Come.”⁴⁵ As Wright concludes:

Manna was not needed in Egypt. Nor would it be needed in the promised land. It is the food of inaugurated eschatology, the food that is needed because the kingdom has already broken in and because it is not yet consummated. The daily provision of manna signals that the Exodus has begun, but also that we are not yet living in the land.⁴⁶

It should go without saying that if this was the meaning Jesus intended for this petition, then he saw himself as the Jewish Messiah who would once again rain down the new manna from heaven, the “food of inaugurated eschatology.”

“Forgive Us Our Debts As We Forgive Our Debtors”

We now turn to the fourth common petition, in which Jesus instructs the disciples to pray to God for the forgiveness of “debts” (so Matthew) or “sins” (so Luke) based on one’s willingness to forgive “debtors” or “those indebted to us” (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4). Although a prayer for the forgiveness of sins is certainly nothing remarkable, it is curious that Jesus utilizes the language of “debt” (ὀφειλη) and “debtor” (ὀφειλέτης) (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4). Whence the economic terminology in an eschatological prayer?

On one level, a linguistic answer to the question is possible. As many scholars have pointed out, in the Old Testament and ancient Judaism, the language and imagery of “debt” was sometimes used as a metaphor for “sin.”⁴⁷ Although not

43 See Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–22; 1 Cor. 11:23–25.

44 I am currently exploring these connections in a monograph tentatively entitled, “Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist.”

45 According to *Genesis Rabbah* 82:8, Rabbi Joshua interpreted Proverbs 28:19, “He that tills his land shall have plenty of bread,” to mean that “He who serves God to the day of his death will be satisfied with the bread of the age to come” (לחמו של-עולם הבא). Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 83–84, n. 2. Rabbi H. Freedman translates this as “bread of the future world.” See his *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*, vol. 2 (London: Soncino, 1983), 758.

46 Wright, “The Lord’s Prayer,” 143.

47 See Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:611, citing 11QTargumJob 34:4; Luke 7:41–43; Col.

exactly common, this usage is not unique to the Lord's Prayer. On a deeper level, however, the answer may yet again be rooted in Jesus' typological eschatology. The choice of "debt" imagery may be meant to evoke the most obvious image of the "forgiveness of debts" from the Old Testament: *the year of the Jubilee*, when every Israelite would be set free from debt-slavery and allowed to return to their own land. This year of economic redemption and deliverance, which took place every fifty years, signaled the joy of being forgiven one's debts and being set free from bondage (see Lev. 25:1-55).⁴⁸

Two aspects of the Jubilee year need to be emphasized as background to Jesus' words. First, the Jubilee did not only mean freedom from debt, as important as that was. It also meant a *return to one's land*: the Jubilee was to be "a redemption of the land," when every man shall "return to his property" (Lev. 25:24, 28). This element of return is sometimes overshadowed by the release from slavery, but it is actually quite significant. For in Leviticus, the practices of the Jubilee year were not merely an act of kindness on the part of Israelites; they were directly rooted in the redemption of Israel from Egypt in *the Exodus*.

Three times in the course of his instructions regarding the Jubilee year, God emphasizes this connection by declaring: "I am the Lord your God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God" (Lev. 25:38, 42, 55). As Wright points out, "The Jubilee provisions . . . look back to the fact that Israel had been enslaved in Egypt and that God had rescued and delivered her. They were part of the Exodus theology."⁴⁹ Just as the Lord had set Israel free from slavery in Egypt and returned them to their land, the promised land, so too, during the Jubilee year, the people of Israel were to remember their salvation by freeing those enslaved and forgiving those in debt.⁵⁰

Second, the Jubilee was not only something that had happened in the past; it was also a future event that was directly tied to the inauguration of the new Exodus. The basis for this connection is found in the prophet Isaiah, who describes the Servant of the Lord as one who is "anointed" (מָשִׁיחַ) to proclaim a great *eschatological* Jubilee that would precede the restoration of Israel to the promised land:

2:13-14; m. 'Abot 3:17. See 1 Macc 15:8 for the use of "forgive" with the terminology of "debt."

48 See also Lev. 27:16-25; Num. 36:4; Ezek. 46:16-18; Isa. 49:8-9; 61:1-2; Jer. 34:8-22; Neh. 5:1-13; 11QMelchizedek 2:1-9. For a full treatment of the Jubilee in both the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism, see John S. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation*, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006).

49 Wright, "The Lord's Prayer," 143.

50 The same principle is at work in the seven-year sabbatical debt-release. In this case the connection with the Exodus is even more explicit: "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. . . . You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this day" (Deut. 15:1, 15).

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the afflicted;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. . .
They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities...
Therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
theirs shall be everlasting joy. (Isa. 61:1–2, 4, 7)⁵¹*

While modern Old Testament scholars continue to debate the precise identity of this “anointed” one, there is no doubt that he inaugurates the Jubilee year, “the year of the Lord’s favor” (שְׁנַת רִצּוֹן) (Isa. 61:2). This Jubilee is not merely tied to release of various individuals, but to the central hope of Isaiah: the return of the entire people of Israel to the promised land in a new Exodus. Perhaps most intriguing, the most ancient Jewish interpretation of this passage, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, not only connects Isaiah 61 with a new Exodus, but with the coming of *the Messiah*, who is depicted as a new Melchizedek:

And as for what he said: “In [this] year of Jubilee, [you shall return, each one, to his respective property” (Lev. 25:13), concerning it he said: “[Th]is is [the manner of the release:] every creditor shall release what he lent [to his neighbour. He shall not coerce his neighbour or his brother, for it has been proclaimed] a release for G[od]” (Deut. 15:2). [Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives. . .they are the inherita[nce of Melchize]dek, who will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] in the first week of the Jubilee. . .in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Melchizedek. . .for it is the time for “the year of favor” (Isa. 61:2). . .(11QMelchizedek 2:1–9)⁵²

In this fascinating text, we find several key eschatological events that help to shed light on the future Jubilee. The “the last days” will see the coming of the Messiah,

51 RSVCE, slightly altered.

52 The translation here is taken from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 2:1207. Brackets represent portions of the text which are damaged or missing.

the “anointed one” (משיח), who is depicted as an eschatological Melchizedek, the famous priest-king from the time of Abraham (Gen. 14:18; 11QMelch. 2:18). This messianic priest-king will inaugurate an *eschatological* Jubilee; it will take place in “the last days” in order to set “the captives” free. In addition—and this is important—the “liberty” of this eschatological Jubilee will not be merely economic, but *spiritual*: it will be proclaimed “to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities (עוונותיהם).”

Hence, the messianic Jubilee is oriented toward “atonement” for *sin*, and freedom from the power of “Belial,” the chief of the evil spirits (11QMelch. 2:7,11–13). This “release” will not only mean the forgiveness of sins, but a return to the promised land. Indeed, it is the Messiah himself who “will make them return” to the land, thereby inaugurating a new Exodus (11QMelch. 2:5–6). All of this will take place during “the year of favor,” the very Jubilee that Isaiah himself had tied to the coming of one who would be “anointed” by the Spirit of the Lord (Isa. 61:2).⁵³

The upshot of this Old Testament and Jewish background is simple: by teaching his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of their “debts,” Jesus is not merely instructing them to pray for absolution of one’s individual sins—although he is certainly doing that. He is also situating that forgiveness within the broader covenantal context of the eschatological Jubilee and the new Exodus. As the Dead Sea Scrolls show, at least some Jews living at the time of Jesus would have understood this new Exodus in terms of a spiritual Jubilee—a deliverance from the debt of sin—that would be inaugurated by *the Messiah himself*. Along these lines, we cannot fail to note that this Isaianic vision of the Jubilee is the very same passage that Jesus himself reads at his inaugural sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30). In this famous sermon, Jesus declares that the messianic Jubilee—and hence, the new Exodus it would inaugurate—is now at hand, and that Isaiah’s prophecy has been “fulfilled” (Luke 4:21). In effect, Jesus is identifying himself as the long-awaited Messiah who would inaugurate the eschatological Jubilee, the year of release from iniquity.⁵⁴ And in the Lord’s Prayer, he is calling on his disciples to live out this redemption by daring to ask God to forgive them their “debts” as they forgive their “debtors.”⁵⁵

53 I have also altered the translation of “year of grace” (שנת הרצון) in 11QMelch. 2:9 to “year of favor” to reflect more clearly that the author is alluding to the “year of favor” (שנת רצון) in Isa. 61:2. Despite the explicit use of “messiah” terminology in this document, it receives little or no treatment in otherwise thorough studies of the Messiah in early Judaism, such as Gerbern S. Oegema, *The Anointed and His People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 27 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998). Compare, however, Timothy H. Lim, “11 QMelch, Luke 4 and the Dying Messiah,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43 (1992): 90–92.

54 David E. Aune, “A Note on Jesus’ Messianic Consciousness and 11Q Melchizedek,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 45 (1973), 161–65.

55 It is worth noting here that N. T. Wright has argued quite vigorously that throughout the Old Testament, the very notion of “forgiveness of sins” is not only tied to the redemption of the

“Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

The fifth and final common petition in the Lord's Prayer which points us to the presence of an Exodus typology is also the last line of Luke's shorter version: “Lead us not into temptation,” or *peirasmos* (πειρασμός) (Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4). Of all the petitions in this prayer, this one is by far the most difficult to understand.

This is particularly true of the traditional English translation, which at first blush seems to imply that God somehow “leads” human beings into “temptation” to *sin*, and that humans should ask him not to do so. Both common sense and the New Testament itself make clear that this cannot be the proper interpretation. The letter of James says that God “tempts (πειράζει) no one” (James 1:13–14). And most commentators agree that temptation to sin is not what Jesus means in the Lord's Prayer.⁵⁶ But, given that this is true, what does Jesus mean?⁵⁷

The key to understanding the petition lies in grasping the dual meaning of the Greek word *peirasmos*, traditionally translated as “temptation.” Although this word can mean “temptation” to sin, it is also quite frequently used to refer to “testing” or “trial.” When this latter definition is taken into account, Jesus' instruction makes much more sense: he is teaching the disciples to pray that they be spared future “testing” or “trials” in which they would have to undergo tribulation, suffering, and maybe even death.

Given the eschatological orientation of the Lord's Prayer as a whole, it is likely that the time of “trial” envisioned by Jesus refers to the period of eschatological tribulation that was expected to precede the coming of the kingdom of God.⁵⁸ Indeed, over the course of the last century, this eschatological interpretation of the time of “testing” has become widely accepted and even worked its way into recent English translations of the Bible.⁵⁹ In this light, Jesus is teaching the disciples to pray to be delivered, not just from daily trials, but from the great tribulation that was to precede the coming of the Messiah and the dawn of the kingdom of God.⁶⁰

The significance of this interpretation for our study is that the Greek word for “trial” not only has ties to ancient Jewish eschatology, but to the Exodus from

individual Israelite in the eyes of God (see Sir. 28:1–7) but to the *corporate* forgiveness of Israel's sins which led them into exile among the Gentile nations (Sir. 47:24; 48:15). He argues that, for the Old Testament, “Forgiveness of sins is another way of saying ‘return from exile.’” Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 268 (emphasis eliminated).

56 See, for example, Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 1:613.

57 See Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 146–53, where I treat this issue in greater detail than herein and provide bibliography on the subject.

58 Among others, see Wright, “The Lord's Prayer,” 144.

59 “Do not subject us to the final test” (NAB); “Do not bring us to the time of trial” (NRSV); “Do not bring us to the test” (NEB).

60 Compare Revelation 3:10: “Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial (πειρασμού) that is coming on the whole world to test (πειράσαι) the inhabitants of the earth.”

Egypt. Although this connection is regularly overlooked by commentators on the Lord's Prayer, the terminology of "trial" or "testing" (πειρασμός) is used at least three times in the Pentateuch to refer to *the period of plagues and tribulation that preceded the first Exodus*. The third of these is the most significant, since it not only ties the time of "trial" or "testing" both to the Passover and to a future time of tribulation in which Israel will be delivered from Exile:

Just remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, *the great trials* that your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out. (Deut. 7:19)

Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, *the great trials* that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. (Deut. 29:3)

And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the Gentiles where the Lord will drive you. . . . But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice, for the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them. For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: . . . [H]as any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (Deut. 4:27–34)

Taken together, these texts suggest that the biblical notion of "trials" or "testings" (תִּסְוָה; πειρασμούς) could be easily connected with the plagues of the Exodus—the greatest of which was, of course, the death of the first-born son in the Passover (see Exod. 12). Moreover, these "trials" could also serve as a prototype for a future time of "tribulation" that would take place "in the latter days" when God would restore Israel by gathering them in from "among the Gentiles" (see

Deut. 30:1–8). In other words, there would one day come a new Exodus, in which God would once again redeem his people through a time of *peirasmos* accompanied by signs and wonders: that is, through a period of suffering and death that would inaugurate the age of salvation.

This Old Testament background is crucial for grasping the typological and eschatological nature of the Lord's Prayer. If it is really a prayer for the new Exodus that would take place "in the latter days" (Deut. 4:30), then the "time of trial" or "testing" of which Jesus speaks can be none other than the time of tribulation that would precede the restoration of Israel and the coming of the messianic kingdom.⁶¹ In fact, in typological terms, one could even suggest that *there could be no new Exodus without a new Passover*—a *paschal* time of trial that would precede the redemption of Israel and the Gentiles. If this is true, then in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is urging his disciples to pray that the new Exodus may take place, but that, if at all possible, it might come without the tribulation of the new Passover: the eschatological trial in which the first-born son would be put to death for the sins of Israel and Egypt (see Exodus 12).

Should there be any doubt about this connection between the future "trial" and an eschatological Passover, we need only turn to the words of Jesus on the night of the Last Supper to confirm it. For it was on this night—during Passover—that Jesus himself uttered a prayer and a command in the Garden of Gethsemane which strikingly parallels the Lord's Prayer and gives us a contextual clue to the meaning of the *peirasmos*. Compare the words of the Lord's Prayer with Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane and his words to the disciples (Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42):

The Lord's Prayer

"Father"

(πάτερ)

Jesus in Gethsemane

"Abba, Father"

(ἀββα ὁ πατήρ)

"Your will be done"

(γεηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου)

"Your will be done"

(γεηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου)

"Lead us not into temptation"

(εἰς πειρασμόν)

"Pray that you not enter
into temptation"

(εἰς πειρασμόν)

In light of such parallels, when Jesus warns the disciples in Gethsemane about entering into *peirasmos* on this Passover night, immediately following the paschal Last Supper, after his prayer for God to take from him the paschal cup

61 This is Wright's position. See "The Lord's Prayer," 146.

and deliver him from the paschal hour of suffering and death, the implications should be clear.

The *peirasmos* that is spoken of by Jesus in Mark 14:38 is not merely the coming period of eschatological tribulation, it is also an *eschatological Passover*, which is intrinsically linked to the prophetic sign Jesus has just enacted in the Last Supper. Hence, the “cup” of which he speaks in Gethsemane and the Upper Room are one and the same: the cup of *peirasmos* and the cup of the paschal tribulation which will bring about the redemption of Israel and, therefore, a new Exodus.⁶² In other words, it is the *passion and death of Jesus himself*—as the new Passover lamb—that will inaugurate the new Exodus. As is clear in Jesus’ words to James and John in Mark 10:38, he holds out the possibility that Peter, James, and John might also have to drink of this cup of suffering. They too may well be caught up in the Passover tribulation that Jesus is about to undergo if they do not keep awake and earnestly pray to be delivered from it. Having uttered his own prayer of acceptance, however, Jesus recognizes that his fate is sealed. He will suffer the trial immediately, and says as much when, after praying a third time, he declares: “It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is given over into the hands of sinners” (Mark 14:41).⁶³

In short, when the Old Testament background of the line “Lead us not into temptation” is adequately taken into account and is compared with Jesus’ words elsewhere, the Lord’s Prayer also shows itself to be a prayer for divine mercy, a plea for God to spare his people the sufferings of the great *peirasmos* that would precede the coming of the messianic kingdom and the paschal trial that would accompany the new Exodus.

Typological Eschatology in The Lord’s Prayer

Many years ago, Raymond Brown published a now-famous article in which he argued very convincingly that the Lord’s Prayer should be interpreted as an “eschatological prayer”: that is, as a prayer focused on the last days, the destruction of evil, and the definitive establishment of the kingdom of God.⁶⁴ This is certainly correct, but, as New Testament scholarship has amply demonstrated, “eschatology”

62 Paschal language may even be present in the Markan summary of Jesus’ initial petition regarding the hour: he prayed “the hour might pass (παρέλθῃ) from him” (Mark 14:35). Surely it is no coincidence that this very language of παρέρχομαι is used in the Old Testament to describe the “passing” of the destroying angel in the final trial of Passover night, the death of the firstborn son: “For the Lord will pass over (παρελεύσεται) to strike the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on both doorposts, the Lord will pass over (παρελεύσεται) the door, and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you down (Exod. 12:23 LXX [Author’s trans.]).”

63 For a more detailed discussion of the connections between the eschatological Passover, the great tribulation, and Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, see Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile*, 478–504.

64 Brown, “The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer,” 275–76.

is a broad concept that can be understood in vastly different ways, sometimes diametrically opposed to one another.⁶⁵

In this essay, I have tried to show that while the Lord's Prayer is most certainly an eschatological prayer, it is also much more than that. It is also a typological prayer, a messianic prayer, and a Davidic prayer. That is, it is rooted in the eschatology of the Old Testament, which held that God would act in the future in ways that would parallel how he had acted in the past.⁶⁶

This is an important conclusion, for it suggests a possible solution to the long-standing debate over the nature of Jesus' own eschatology. Scholars continue to battle over whether to describe Jesus' outlook as "apocalyptic eschatology," "restoration eschatology," "ethical eschatology," or no eschatology at all. Although we have not been able to take up the issue in detail, a close analysis of the language and imagery of the Lord's Prayer suggests that Jesus' view of the future might be best described as a *typological eschatology* that was deeply rooted in the salvation history and covenantal theology of the Old Testament. As such, his vision of the kingdom of God was primarily and fundamentally shaped by the prophetic hopes for the new Exodus, the coming of the Messiah, and the restoration of the Davidic "kingdom of the Lord."

When seen in this light, the Lord's Prayer is not just a prayer to the Creator to save his people in the last days. It is a prayer to the God of the Exodus to see the plight of his suffering children and release them from slavery to sin and death. It is a plea for the Father to hallow his name by giving his children a new heart and a new spirit and bring them home to a land that will be more glorious than Eden of old. It is a prayer for the coming of the messianic kingdom, when both Israel and the Gentiles will pilgrimage together to a new Temple and a glorious new Jerusalem. It is a prayer for the new manna—the new "bread from heaven"—that the Messiah himself will give to the new Israel during the messianic age. It is a prayer for the great eschatological Jubilee, when the Messiah would free his people, not just from their debt, but from the even heavier burden of their iniquity. Finally, it is a prayer for divine mercy, for God to spare his people the eschatological *peirasmos*, the "final Passover" of suffering and death that will precede the ultimate entry of the new Israel into "the glory of the kingdom."⁶⁷

65 Compare, for example, the work of N. T. Wright in *Jesus and the Victory of God* and Dale C. Allison, Jr. in his work *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998). Both of these scholars affirm that Jesus was "eschatological" in outlook, but they draw very different conclusions about what this meant for his vision of the future.

66 As the Lord says in Isaiah: "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:9–10).

67 For a fascinating description of the eschatological tribulation as an eschatological Passover, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 677: "The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom

In short, the Lord's Prayer is nothing less than a prayer for the fulfillment of *all* God's covenant promises to Israel and the world, as contained in the Old Testament and inaugurated by the new Exodus of Jesus' own passion, death, and resurrection. It is in this light, the light of the Old Testament, that the words of St. Augustine ring true:

Run through all the words of the holy prayers [in Scripture], and I do not think that you will find anything in them that is not contained and included in the Lord's Prayer.⁶⁸

only through this *final Passover*, when she will follow her Lord in his death and Resurrection" (emphasis added).

68 St. Augustine, *Letter 130*, 12, 22, cited in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2762.