

Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup> 2016  
The Prayers of the Saints

1). *Re 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

a). The context for this verse we will remember is the Lord having been found worthy to take the 7 sealed scroll from His Father's right hand so as to begin the process of the redemption of the inheritance by opening the seals on the scroll. And all of this takes place following the events of the Judgment Seat where the Bride of Christ will have been revealed, those for whom the inheritance is to be redeemed. All then has to do with the bringing to fulfillment of God's plans and purposes for Man that had been set in place from 'in beginning' – Ge 1:26 ¶ *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion.....*

*Re 2:26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- 27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' --as I also have received from My Father;*

b). And we see that once 'the Lamb' has taken the scroll the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders fall down to worship the Lamb each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are said to be 'the prayers of the saints'.

c). And the thing that should strike us as we look at this is that the prayers of the saints are seen within a very specific context – the process of the redemption of the inheritance.

d). These same prayers, the prayers of the saints, appear again in –  
Re 8:1 ¶ *When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.*

On this occasion we see the prayers in connection with the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal on the 7 sealed scroll, that which marks the final phase of the redemption of the inheritance enacted through the trumpet and bowl judgments contained within the 7<sup>th</sup> seal.

e). And so we see the prayers of the saints firstly in connection with events that are a prelude to the redemption of the inheritance and then in connection with events that bring that redemption to its conclusion.

f). Which leaves us with the intriguing question, 'Are these prayers of the saints just any random prayer that has ever been offered by any Christian or are they something more focused?'

2). The first time we see the word translated 'prayer' used in the scripture is in Genesis Chapter 20 in connection with Abraham and Abimelech and Sarah –  
Ge 20:2 *Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 ¶ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." 4 But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? 5 "Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this." 6 And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 "Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and **he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.**"*

As we look at v7 we see that Abimelech is faced with a choice – to restore Sarah to Abraham or not. If he does that which God had told him in a dream to

do then Abraham will pray for him and he will live; if not Abimelech will 'surely die' and all who are his with him.

a). What I would like us to see here is that Abraham's prayer would be in line with the revealed will of God and has to do with the granting of 'life' to Abimelech if he would obey God's command. Neither Abimelech's action nor Abraham's response to that action can be separated from that which God had said.

b). Then the first time the word translated 'prayer' is found is in –  
2Sa 7:27 *"For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to **pray this prayer to You.** 28 "And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. 29 "Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You; for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever."*

We will remember that the context here is the promise to David concerning his house and his kingdom - 2Sa 7:12 *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

These are verses that prophetically look to the greater Son of David and His Millennial Kingdom and David's prayer is specifically in response to the prophetic promise seen in these verses.

c). The prayer itself is seen in v28-29, and as we look at what is said by David he is repeating back to God that which God had already promised. In other words his prayer is completely in line with the revealed word of God, just as we had seen with Abraham in Genesis Chapter 20.

d). And so from these first 2 examples we cannot help but see prayer in connection with 'life' and the coming Kingdom all in accordance with the revealed will of God.

3). If we then go to the Gospels we find the first use of the word translated 'pray' by the Lord Himself in - Mt 5:44 *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and **pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,***

a). This verse comes within what we call, 'the sermon on the mount' and is part of the instructions given with respect to how to live with the coming Kingdom in view.

b). God had descended onto Mount Sinai to give the Law to the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt, providing the instructions for how the nation was to live within the Theocracy to be established in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – paralleling this event God the Son sat down on a mountain to give instructions concerning the heavenly realm of the Kingdom which He was offering to another generation of Israel.

c). Once again then to 'pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you', must be seen within a Kingdom context.

4). When the offer of rulership over the earth from the heavens is taken from Israel because of the nation's rejection the Church is brought into being to receive this offer and is given a very clear instruction, also within the context of 'the sermon on the mount' - Mt 6:33 *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

a). It would not be surprising then if our prayers are to form an integral part of our seeking first the Kingdom and His righteousness.

b). And as we have seen from our examples this morning our prayers in connection with seeking the Kingdom would need to be in line with the revealed word of God concerning this, repeating back to the Lord that which He has already promised, just as David did.

c). Now we know from our study of the Book of Ruth that the structure of what we call the NT parallels the content of Ruth, and in this parallel we saw that the letters from Romans to Jude provide the detail for us on how to make the journey to spiritual maturity, how to work in the field and beat out the grain and how to prepare for the Judgment Seat and with this in mind we can go to the letters to see what they might teach us about prayer within this context – the prayers of the saints that we have seen in Revelation Chapters 5 and 8.

d). As we look at what we find in these NT scriptures there are 2 constant, interrelated themes, the first of which, praying for others, we can see in the following verses – Col 1:3 ¶ *We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ*

*Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.....9 ¶ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 ¶ giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

*2Co 13:7 ¶ Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.*

*Php 1:9 ¶ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

*2Th 1:11 ¶ Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Eph 1:15 ¶ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in*

*Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

e). And this on Paul's part is a continuous action - Ro 1:9 *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,*

Phm 1:4 *I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,*

2Ti 1:3 *I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,*

f). And the same is true for those who are with him - Col 4:12 *Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

g). And this is the second theme seen in these verses - Ro 15:30 ¶ *Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,*

Col 4:3 *meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

1Th 5:25 *Brethren, pray for us.*

Heb 13:18 ¶ *Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.*

h). And in conjunction with these there is the admonishment – 1Pe 3:7 *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of*

*life, that your prayers may not be hindered.....12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers;*

*1Pe 4:7 ¶ But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*

*1Th 5:17 pray without ceasing,*

*Eph 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

*Col 4:2¶ Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;*

i). These verses are not exhaustive, but it does become pretty clear that prayer within the context of the NT letters has the coming Kingdom of Christ as its focus. This being the case it would seem most likely that it is prayer after this fashion that would make up ‘the prayers of the saints’ in the golden bowls in Revelation.

j). And I don’t think it would be too difficult if we look at the imagery again from Revelation Chapter 8 - Re 8:4 *And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.*

So we can see the prayers ascending before God in this verse, as God working in conjunction with those prayers, or perhaps in response to them, just as He did with Abraham in Genesis Chapter 20 and David in 2 Samuel Chapter 7.

k). Nor would it be difficult to draw the conclusion that it is the coming Kingdom of Christ and the participation of the faithful in that Kingdom that needs to be the central focus of our prayers, just as the Lord taught us –  
*Mt 6:9 ¶ "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

