

Title: Matthew 6:1 – 8:4

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Session 9

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener examines Matthew 6:1 through 8:4, beginning with Jesus' instructions on performing deeds of righteousness in secret, including the model of the Lord's Prayer and fasting. It then details Jesus' radical teachings on overcoming materialism, anxiety, and judgmentalism, emphasizing a single-minded, generous devotion to God's kingdom. The lecture concludes with the transition into Jesus' miracle-working ministry, highlighting his divine authority over illness and social marginalization as demonstrated in the cleansing of a leper. Through these teachings and deeds, Jesus is presented as possessing authority that carries the full weight of and fulfills the Torah.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Lecture and Context (Matthew 6:1-18)

- **A. Righteousness in secret:** Charity, prayer, and fasting
- **B. The placement of the Lord's Prayer** in Matthew's topical arrangement

II. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

- **A. Contextual Parallels and Heritage**
 1. Parallels with the Jewish Kaddish prayer
 2. God as "Our Father": Expression of love, trust, and childhood dependence
 3. The unique and rare address of "Abba" denoting respect and intimacy
- **B. Structural Petitions**
 1. The three "You" petitions: Focus on God's larger agenda (Name, Kingdom, Will)
 2. Meaning of "hallowing God's name" and "kingdom coming" in Jewish ethics

3. The three "We" petitions: Focus on present community needs (Bread, Forgiveness, Testing)

- **C. Detailed Examination of the "We" Petitions**

1. "Daily bread": Trusting God for basic physical needs, evoking manna in the wilderness
2. "Forgiving debts": Historical context of peasant debt and ancient lending practices
3. "Lead us not into testing": Passing tests and resisting the evil one, not avoiding difficulty

- **D. Textual Criticism and the Doxology**

1. Missing doxology ("yours is the kingdom...") in the earliest manuscripts of Matthew
2. The nature of New Testament manuscript preservation and copying practices
3. Scribes inserting the liturgical doxology into the text

III. Fasting in Secret (Matthew 6:16-18)

- **A. Fasting as an expression of grief, repentance, or sacrificial devotion**
- **B. Jesus' challenge to avoid public self-abasement** and keep fasting secret

IV. Overcoming Materialism and Anxiety (Matthew 6:19-34)

- **A. Radical views on wealth and possessions**
 1. Judaism's view of wealth as positive but spiritually dangerous
 2. Storing up treasures in heaven through obedience and charity
- **B. The danger of spiritual blindness**
 1. The "single eye" (generous/healthy devotion) versus the "evil eye" (stingy/diseased)
 2. Serving one master: God versus Mammon
- **C. Do Not Worry: Lessons from Nature**
 1. Trusting God for basic needs of food and clothing

2. God's care for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field
3. Focus on God's faithfulness and seeking first the Kingdom

V. Social Relations and Spiritual Authority (Matthew 7:1-12)

- **A. Refraining from Judgment**

1. Human judgment assuming a divine prerogative
2. The grotesque image of the speck and the log (or beam) in the eye

- **B. Correcting with Discernment**

1. "Not casting pearls before swine": The futility of correcting those who refuse wisdom

- **C. Good Gifts Guaranteed (Matthew 7:7-11)**

1. Extraordinary promise of prayer for all believers
2. The "how much more" (Call of the Omer) argument: God as the ultimate good Father

- **D. The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)**

1. Ethical principles in Greek, Jewish, and Confucian literature
2. Summarizing the Law and the Prophets; the story of Shammai and Hillel

VI. Judgment and the Two Ways (Matthew 7:13-27)

- **A. The Narrow Gate:** Two ways in ancient and first-century Jewish thought

- **B. Testing False Prophets**

1. Recognizing prophets by their fruits (character and obedience) rather than spiritual gifts
2. Wolves in sheep's clothing: Dangerous deception within the community

- **C. The Day of Judgment**

1. Repudiating those who did miracles but lived in ungodliness
2. Jesus as the eschatological Judge

- **D. Building on the Rock (Matthew 7:24-27)**

1. Wise versus foolish builders
2. Jesus replacing the Torah with his own words as the foundational rock

- **E. Jesus' Authority recognized by the crowds (Matthew 7:28-29)**

1. Contrast with scribes who cited other authorities
2. Jesus speaking directly with divine authority

VII. Jesus' Miracles and Ministry of Restoration (Matthew 8:1-4)

- **A. Structured Miracles in Matthew 8-9**

1. Nine miracle stories grouped into three discipleship blocks
2. Miracles demonstrating Jesus' authority over sickness, nature, and spirits

- **B. Cleansing of the Leper (Matthew 8:1-4)**

1. The social marginalization and ritual impurity of leprosy
2. The leper's perfect trust and humility in Jesus' power and sovereignty
3. Jesus' compassionate touch: Embracing uncleanness to bestow cleanness
4. Honoring the Law of Moses (showing oneself to the priest) and avoiding self-honor