



May 12, 2002

### Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, your Son our Savior is with you in eternal glory. Give us faith to see that, true to his promise he is among us still, and will be with us to the end of time; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Or

God, our creator and redeemer, your Son Jesus prayed that his followers might be one. Make all Christians one with him as he is one with you, so that in peace and concord we may carry to the world the message of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Acts 1:6-14

{6} So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" {7} He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. {8} But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." {9} When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. {10} While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. {11} They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." {12} Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. {13} When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. {14} All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

*6: restore the kingdom to Israel:* On the tongue of an Israelite or a Christian Jew this means: "is now the time when you fulfill your promises to your chosen people." By the end of the second century the church had become predominantly Gentile and the question began to have different overtones. The hermeneutical process began to understand "Israel" not as a national identity, but a spiritual one, and further to characterize the now generally Gentile Christian church as the "new" Israel or "true" Israel.

*7. It is not for you to know....:* See Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36: "But of that day or that hour no one knows...but only the Father."

*8. you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you:* This is the "power from on high" Jesus promised in Luke 24:49. It will come upon the apostles at Pentecost, Acts 2.

*Judea:* The southern part of Palestine. The Kingdom of Solomon in the Old Testament.

*Samaria:* South of Galilee and north of Judea. In Acts 8:1 Luke tells us that "all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria."

*the ends of the earth:* See Isaiah 49:6, which is quoted in Acts 13:46 (see also Luke 2:32).

*9. a cloud took him out of their sight:* According to Luke 24:51 Jesus had already ascended to heaven. In Luke 9:34-35 Moses and Elijah disappeared into a cloud from which God's voice spoke. The cloud is a phenomenon of God's presence; Jesus is taken into God's presence.

*10. two men in white robes:* Luke 24:2, In Luke 24:23 the two men are identified as angels.

*11. why do you stand looking toward heaven?:* In Luke 24:5 the women are asked, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" The questions are Luke's way of keeping our attention focused

on what is happening; God is acting to accomplish his purposes.

*This Jesus...will come:* The time of the restoration of the kingdom is unknown, but Jesus' return is certain. Now is the time for the development of the church.

*12. a sabbath day's journey:* 2000 cubits; approximately half a mile (Exodus 16:29; Number 35:5).

*13. the room upstairs:* According to tradition this "upper room" was also the place of the Last Supper, which other traditions associated with the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). This may be the place where the apostles were all together on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).

*Peter...James:* The order of the names of the apostles is slightly different from that in Luke 6:14-16. Peter is the spokesman for the apostles. James was killed by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2). Except for John (Acts 3:1ff; 4:13ff; 18:14), the others are not mentioned again in Acts.

*14. certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus:* The women are mentioned in Luke 8:2-3 and 23:49. Mary is mentioned only here in Acts.

*his brothers:* Jesus' brothers did not believe in him prior to his resurrection (John 7:5; see also Mark 3:21, 31ff.). He appeared to James according to 1 Corinthians 15:6. This is the only reference to Jesus' brothers in Acts. James who is mentioned several times (Acts 12:17; 15:18; 21:18) is not described as Jesus' brother. Paul identifies James as "the Lord's brother," and an apostle in Galatians 1:19. Mark 6:3 gives the names of some of (?) Jesus' brothers.

## **Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35**

1 Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him. {2} As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God. {3} But let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy. {4} Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds -- his name is the LORD-- be exultant before him. {5} Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. {6} God gives the desolate a home to live in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in a parched land. {7} O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah {8} the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain at the presence of God, the God of Sinai, at the presence of God, the God of Israel. {9} Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad; you restored your heritage when it languished; {10} your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.... {32} Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord, Selah {33} O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens; listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice. {34} Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel; and whose power is in the skies. {35} Awesome is God in his sanctuary, the God of Israel; he gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

William F. Albright called Psalm 68 "A Catalogue of Early Lyric Poems," and understood it to be a collection of fragments from 30 different songs. [1] Others have interpreted it in historical or cultic terms. For use in the lectionary only selected verses are used which militates against a coherent interpretation. Images of Yahweh riding on the clouds and marching through the wilderness before his people make us aware of the majesty and power of the God of Israel. The references to the rain which Yahweh brought upon the land is a sign of his favor and of the prosperity of his people as they worship in the Temple. God's people rejoice in the majesty and benevolence of their God.

## **1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11**

{12} Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. {13} But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. {14} If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.... {5:6} Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. {7} Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. {8} Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. {9} Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. {10} And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ,

will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. {11} To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

12. *the fiery ordeal*: "The reference to the events as a...("burning") probably owes less to the punishment inflicted on Christians in Rome by Nero than it does to the biblical metaphor of a purifying and proving fire...a metaphor already employed by our author in 1:7." [2]

13. *rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings*: This is the proper response of Christians when they suffer for their faith.

14. *If you are reviled for the name of Christ*: Peter's audience were Gentiles who faced rejection and persecution from all sides. Christian Jews insisted that they become Jews if they were going to be Christians, while Gentiles accused them of apostasy and treason for rejecting the gods of the Empire. What they suffered are equated with Christ's sufferings.

[4:15-5:5: These verses encourage the faithful who suffer to depend on God, exhort the elders to take care of the flock entrusted to them, and the younger members of the community to be subject to the elders and humble toward each other. Omitting these verses removes the basis for the exhortation.]

5:6-11: "...these verses address the behavior appropriate for Christians in relation to the world outside the Christian community." [3]

5:8. *your adversary the devil*: "adversary," "designates an 'opponent' or 'plaintiff' in a lawsuit (Prov 18:17 lxx; Matt 5:25/Luke 12:58; Luke 18:3) or, secondarily, an 'adversary' generally." [4] "the devil," "Used without an article [there is no article, "the," in the Greek] and therefore virtually as a proper name, *diabolos* (from which the English cognate "Devil" derives) literally means 'slanderer.' In the lxx, *diabolos* renders...the Hebrew noun *satan* (18x) referring to a celestial agent who tests loyalties for the king, with the sense of 'tester,' 'adversary,' 'opponent,' or 'accuser' of humans. This is the "father of lies" (John 8:44), who seeks to subvert a Christian by leading them astray and also by lying to others about Christians.

*Like a roaring lion... prowls around looking for someone to devour*: This is the only place in the Bible that the devil is identified as a lion, a carnivore seeking its prey. In Luke 22:31 a different, but similar metaphor is used ("Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat.") to describe the danger the Christian faces.

10-11: These verses are the conclusion to the letter proper. They describe the consequences of resisting temptation and accepting the suffering of persecution. "Just as God through Christ was responsible for the new life enjoyed in the present by the readers (1:3)...so at the letter's end the readers are reminded that their future is equally in God's hands, who will prove as reliable in the future in providing for the Christians as he has been in the past. It is that knowledge that provides strength to endure whatever hardships a hostile culture may visit on the Christians." [5]

## John 17:1-11

{1} After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, {2} since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. {3} And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. {4} I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. {5} So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. {6} "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. {7} Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; {8} for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. {9} I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. {10} All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. {11} And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

1. *Father*: In this Gospel "Father" is used of God 115 times; "God" is used 73 times and "Lord," once.

*the hour has come*: The "hour" is referred to in 2:4; 4:23, 52, 53; 5:25, 28; 7:8 ("my *time* is not fully come), 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:2, 4, 21, 25, 32; 17:1 and 19:27. The "hour" is the time of "Jesus transition from this world to the glory he had with the Father before the world was made." [6]

*glorify*: The Father is asked to vindicate the son, "Vindicate the Son so the Son may honor the Father." The honor of both the Father and the Son is at issue. Jesus sees the crucifixion as his glorification, and the resurrection as his glorification of the Father.

3. *this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God*: This definition of eternal life has a gnostic sound, but God is designated in the second person, not the third, making the knowledge personal, not abstract.

*Jesus Christ whom you have sent*: Jesus Christ functions as a proper name indicating later ecclesiastical usage. See also John 1:17

4. *I glorified you on earth by finishing the work*: Jesus' earthly work is a part of his glorification of the Father which will be consummated with his death.

5. *the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed*: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God...we have seen his glory..." (John 1:1ff).

6. *I have made your name known to those whom you gave me*: This is a part of Jesus' glorification of the Father.

*name*: Identity, reputation, remembrance, authority, power, protection.

7-8: An expression of John's understanding of Jesus' identity.

9-11: In a new section of the prayer Jesus prays for the community, those whom the Father has given him, but not for the world which has not accepted him.

11. *I am no longer in the world*: Jesus anticipates his death, and prays that the Father will protect his followers.

*Holy Father*: Jesus prays that the Father who is holy will sanctify the believers and make them holy. "This is John's equivalent of the Old Testament 'Ye shall be holy for I am holy' (Lev. 11:44)." [7]

*so that they may be one, as we are one*: Jesus is praying for the community of believers, not for individuals. This unity is expressed by their love for each other (John 13:34; 15:12).

## Reflection

Good Friday has come and gone. The season of Easter is nearly at an end. Last Thursday we celebrated the Ascension of our Lord. The first lesson provides an historical link to the Ascension. The story is continued from verse 15 next year on this Sunday. The apostles are told that when the Spirit comes upon them they will receive the power they have already been promised (Luke 24:49). This anticipates the coming of the Spirit and the power that is given the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 2), which is celebrated next Sunday.

In the Psalm we rejoice with Israel that God has overcome his enemies and vindicated his honor. The second lesson reminds us that though Jesus is victorious we are only pilgrims here; we must be prepared to suffer as Jesus did. It would be "tempting" to make the Devil responsible for human sin, but the biblical picture is that Satan has power only to tempt and test the faithful and determine their faithfulness (even Jesus is tested to prove that he is trustworthy). In Paul's theology the Law causes us to sin, but that does not mean that the Law is sinful (Romans 7:6-14). Each of us is responsible for his/her obedience or disobedience. In Christ we have ample spiritual resources to defeat any Tempter of Adversary.

The Gospel proclaims our hope and our certainty. Jesus has glorified the father; the Father has glorified the Son. We know that Jesus has come from the Father. We are "embedded" in Christ as Christ is in the Father. We belong to God and he will protect us so that we may be one. We will face temptations, and suffer when we resist, but though we suffer, God will protect us and establish us. The sufferings we face are only temporary, the glory we will receive is eternal.

## Hymns [8]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

157 E--A Hymn of Glory

88 D--Oh, Love, How

159 I--Up Through Endless

814s I--Catch the Vision!

756v I--Lord, You Give (748s)

424 P--Lord of Glory,

145 G--Thine Is the

158, 300, 326, 391

## Prayers of the People [9]

P or A: Sisters and brothers, let us devote ourselves to prayer, asking for the gifts, guidance and grace of God for ourselves and those in particular need, saying, "God with us," and responding "Hear our prayer."

A: Enable your church to journey forth in the light of Jesus' resurrection, disciplining ourselves to keep alert and resist evil. Make our leaders and pastors examples of this discipline and give them joy in their service. We pray especially for our synod's bishop \_\_\_\_\_, and our church's bishop Telmor. God with us, Hear our prayer.

A: Make us bold as members of our communities to see clearly and to speak for the weak and the powerless because we belong to the crucified and risen Christ. And when we are reviled for the sake of Christ let your Spirit call to our minds that we are blessed. God with us, Hear our prayer.

A: Establish sound government and honest elected leaders among us for the good of your people and the peace of your church. Bless the Government and Parliament of Canada, the legislative assembly of this province and our local government. God with us, Hear our prayer.

A: Extend your healing touch and compassionate embrace to the sick, especially we remember \_\_\_\_\_, Strengthen any who have become weak in faith and steady those whose journey through this earthly life is coming to a close. God with us, Hear our prayer.

A: We thank you for the prayerful expectation that marked the days until Pentecost for the chosen eleven, the faithful women, the brothers of Jesus and Mary his mother. Keep us in the same spirit and hope now and always. God with us, Hear our prayer.

P: Awaken our hearts so that we may receive and become answers to prayer. May we work as Christ for the day when all the church is one as he and the Father are one. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### Or [10]

*Presider or deacon*

In our joys and our sufferings let us give glory to God. And let us offer prayers for all persons in the world, to keep them in God's name.

*Deacon or other leader*

For this holy gathering and all who enter our circle of faith.

For the newly baptized illumined by the light of Christ.

For our leaders, and all the holy people of God in every place.

For the leaders of the nations and peace in the world.

For this city and the community around us.

For all in any pain and all who sorrow.

For the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Lifting our voices with the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, who does infinitely more for us than we can ask or imagine. Hear our prayers for all your creation and gather us in the embrace of your abundant and life-giving Spirit. Glory to you for ever and ever.

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## Notes

- [1] William F. Albright, “A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Poems—Ps 68” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 23, I(1950/51) 1-39.
- [2] Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, pp. 305 f..
- [3] *Ibid.*, p. 336.
- [4] John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 853.
- [5] Achtemeier, *Ibid.*, p. 346.
- [6] Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 150.
- [7] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. London: S.P.C.K., 1962, p. 423.
- [8] <http://www.worship.ca/text/rcla0102.txt>
- [9] [http://www.worship.ca/text/inter\\_a2.txt](http://www.worship.ca/text/inter_a2.txt)
- [10] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>