

## **Our Father in Heaven**

**Intro:** I've often wondered how people reacted the first time they heard Jesus pray. Let me show you what I mean.

### **Some Great Prayers of the OT**

*From the beginning of time God's people have petitioned him; and in the OT there are numerous prayers offered up to God by His prophets and people. What is interesting about those prayers is the way they address God.*

#### **The prayers of David**

*Then David the king went in and sat before the Lord, and he said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me this far? (2 Samuel 7:18)*

*O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth, who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens! (Psalm 8:1)*

#### **The prayer of Solomon**

*And he said, "O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like Thee in heaven above or on earth beneath, who art keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Thy servants who walk before Thee with all their heart, (1 Kings 8:23)*

#### **The prayer of Daniel**

*And I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, (Daniel 9:4)*

#### **The Prayer of Nehemiah**

*And I said, "I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments (Nehemiah 1:5)*

*Each of these prayers presents an exalted view of God, his greatness, his power over the whole earth and his special relationship with Israel. The common thread running through these prayers is the acknowledgment of the Lordship of God, his right to rule and to be obeyed.*

### **The Distinctly Different Prayers of Jesus**

*It is against this backdrop that Jesus came into this world, growing up under the influences of the Law, the training of Joseph and Mary and the Jewish leaders of the synagogue and the temple (hearing the prayers of the Jews in the temple). But what intrigues me is the distinctly different way that Jesus prayed. The Gospels record sixteen different occasions in which the words of Jesus are recorded and we can see how Jesus consistently addressed God.*

*At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. (Matthew 11:25)*

*And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt." (Mark 14:36)*

*And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39)*

***In each of these cases, the Greek translations reflect Jesus' use of a common word in the Aramaic language for father—"abba".***

***This expression language scholars tell us is derived, as it is in almost all languages, from the tendency of little children to duplicate syllables. Thus in English a little child learns to say "mamma" and "da da" (daddy)***

***And so in the Aramaic language the most intimate and natural address of a child to his father would be "abba" just as in our language it might be "daddy".***

***I've wondered how people reacted when they heard Jesus pray in this way to God. It was not the customary way to address God in the history of the Jews. It was not the way first-century Jews commonly prayed. And one could imagine the gasps that came from the audience when they heard Jesus address God like that!***

**What is the significance of this new address of God?**

***It is an indirect claim to extraordinary intimacy with God.***

***Jesus very words reveal a closeness to God that superseded all who were before Him. As God's only begotten there was an intimacy between him and the heavenly father that "abba" is intended to suggest.***

***And so Jesus' address to God underscored the close bond of love that Jesus had as the Son of God.***

***But was this way of speaking reserved for Jesus alone? Not at all! What truths are made clearer by this new way of speaking? While holding God in the highest reverence as creator and Lord of all Jesus taught His disciples to acknowledge God in a new way.***

***"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. (Matthew 6:9)***

***And it is clear that the early church followed Jesus' example in addressing God in this intimate way.***

***For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)***

***And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6)***

***And to this day many of those who lead us in prayer begin their prayers as did Jesus, "our heavenly Father", "holy Father", "our righteous Father". And so it is clear that Jesus intended to bring to man's awareness of God to a new and more intimate level.***

**What lessons it teaches us?**

***The term “father” reminds us of the distinct position of privilege we have as the adopted sons of God.***

*He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, (Ephesians 1:5)*

***It reminds us of the great love that God has had for us in giving His own Son as a sacrifice for our sins.***

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. (1 John 3:1)*

***It reminds us of God’s desire to bless us with the greatest gifts when we pray.***

*“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13)*

***It reminds us that whatever difficulty we face in this life is tempered by His love to make us holier.***

*For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Hebrews 12:10-11)*

***It reminds us of the holy fear that we should have in living an obedient life!***

*And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; (1 Peter 1:17)*

***It reminds us of the need to look to His example of moral perfection.***

*“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48)*

***It reminds us of the wonderful inheritance we have in Him!***

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)*

**Conclusion: In the course of time, familiar expressions lose their power. There are surely no raised eye-brows or gasps when someone begins the prayer with “Father”. But this expression should never lose its power when we use it. He is not only the Lord of all; He is “our Father in heaven”.**