

The Doxology of the Lords Prayer

*Canon Recognition Textual Transmission and the Churchs Confession of Gods
Kingdom Power and Glory*

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:13 in the traditional English form

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Chapter Overview

The doxology of the Lord's Prayer has an ancient and complex history. A shorter form appears in the Didache; major early Greek manuscripts omit it from Matthew; John Chrysostom expounds the fuller form; the Vulgate omits it; the later Byzantine tradition preserves it; and the printed Greek editions behind the classic English Bibles carry it into the King James Version.

The crucial distinction is between canon recognition and textual transmission. Eusebius, Athanasius, and Augustine help explain how the Church recognized the books of the New Testament. They did not thereby establish one uniform wording for every surviving copy. Textual variation continued within books whose canonical authority was settled.

The chapter therefore treats the traditional words with reverence and the historical evidence with precision. It argues neither that Erasmus invented the doxology nor that the earliest surviving evidence is irrelevant. The doxology is older than the Textus Receptus, thoroughly biblical in content, and historically transmitted through the Byzantine and English Protestant traditions.

Historical Sequence

Period	Development
First and early second centuries	A doxological ending with power and glory appears with the Lord's Prayer in the Didache.
Early centuries	Greek manuscripts, ancient versions, and Christian writers preserve more than one ending to Matthew 6:13.
Fourth and fifth centuries	Eusebius, Athanasius, and Augustine document canon recognition; Chrysostom witnesses to the fuller doxology; the Vulgate transmits the shorter reading.
Medieval period	The full doxology becomes dominant in the Byzantine Greek manuscript tradition.
Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries	Erasmus, Estienne, Beza, and the Elzevirs establish the printed Greek tradition later called the Textus Receptus.
English Reformation	Tyndale, Geneva, Bishops' Bible, and the King James Version transmit the familiar English wording.
Modern period	Critical editions prefer the shorter text while many churches continue to pray the traditional doxology.

The Question Behind Familiar Words

For many English-speaking Christians, the Lord's Prayer reaches its natural conclusion in the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." The sentence sounds inseparable from the prayer. It has been learned at home, repeated in worship, printed in influential English Bibles, and joined to Christian memory for centuries. Yet readers of many modern translations

encounter the words in a footnote, in brackets, or not at all. The difference raises an historical question that deserves a careful answer: how did this doxology become both ancient and familiar when some early witnesses to Matthew do not contain it?

The answer requires two histories rather than one. The first is the history of canon recognition: how the churches came to confess that Matthew and the other apostolic books belonged to the New Testament. The second is the history of textual transmission: how the wording of Matthew was copied, read, translated, and sometimes transmitted in more than one form. The early Church could recognize Matthew as Scripture while manuscripts of Matthew differed at a particular clause. Confusing these two questions makes the history appear simpler than it was and creates arguments the evidence cannot bear.

This chapter follows the historical trail preserved in the dialogue from which it grew. It begins with the biblical language of the doxology, turns to the Didache and the early manuscript evidence, considers representative Fathers and the Latin Vulgate, distinguishes canon from text, and then traces the familiar wording through the Byzantine tradition, the printed Greek New Testament, and the classic English Bibles. The central conclusion is modest but important. The Textus Receptus did not invent the doxology. It transmitted a form already deeply rooted in ancient Christian prayer and later Greek manuscript tradition. At the same time, the early absence of the clause from significant witnesses is genuine evidence and should be stated without caricature.

A Doxology Made from Biblical Language

The doxology is not an alien theological idea attached to an otherwise biblical prayer. Its vocabulary gathers themes that run through Scripture. The closest Old Testament parallel is David's blessing in 1 Chronicles 29:11: "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ... thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all." The verbal correspondence is not exact, but the conceptual pattern is unmistakable. Kingdom, power, and glory belong to God; prayer therefore ends in praise and submission rather than in anxiety. The petitions of Matthew 6 move from the Father's name and kingdom to daily bread, forgiveness, testing, and deliverance. The doxology answers those petitions by confessing why the Father can be trusted to hear them.

The same movement from petition to praise appears throughout the Psalms and in Jewish prayer. Biblical prayers often conclude by magnifying the God to whom the request has been made. First Chronicles 29 places praise at the center of a public prayer over Israel's gifts for the temple. Psalm 145 celebrates God's kingdom and power. Daniel 2 blesses the God to whom wisdom and might belong. Revelation repeatedly ascribes glory, dominion, and power to God. The doxology therefore speaks the language of Israel's Scriptures and of early Christian worship even before one decides its precise place in the earliest recoverable text of Matthew.

This distinction matters pastorally. Textual discussion asks whether the Evangelist's text originally ended at "deliver us from evil" or continued with the doxology. Theology asks whether the doxology truthfully confesses the God revealed in Scripture. The first question remains disputed among Christians and is answered differently by printed editions. The second has an easy answer: every phrase is at home in biblical worship. A church may discuss the textual history honestly without treating the words as doctrinally suspect.

The Didache and Early Christian Prayer

The earliest evidence outside the New Testament comes from the Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. Its date is debated, but it is commonly placed in the late first or early second century. In

chapter 8, the work instructs Christians not to pray as the hypocrites do, gives a form of the Lord's Prayer close to Matthew's, and concludes, "For yours is the power and the glory forever." It then directs believers to pray this way three times a day. The Didache lacks "the kingdom" in this doxology, but its power-and-glory ending shows that a doxological conclusion was joined to the Lord's Prayer at a very early stage of Christian worship.¹

The Didache cannot, by itself, prove the original wording of Matthew. Its author may preserve an independent liturgical form, may adapt Matthew, or may represent a stream of tradition shared with Matthew. The direction of influence remains debated. What the text does prove is narrower and secure: a form of the doxology existed in Christian prayer centuries before Erasmus and long before the expression *Textus Receptus* was coined. The history therefore cannot be reduced to a sixteenth-century editor adding words to the Gospel.

The Didache also helps explain how liturgical use and textual copying could interact. Christians did not encounter the Lord's Prayer only as silent readers. They memorized it, recited it, taught it to converts, and used it corporately. A doxology familiar from worship could accompany the prayer even where a manuscript of Matthew ended without it. Conversely, a doxology present in a manuscript could strengthen its liturgical use. This two-way traffic between book and worship is a plausible setting for the variant forms found in the surviving tradition, though the surviving evidence does not allow us to reconstruct every step.

The Manuscript Evidence at Matthew 6:13

The oldest surviving Greek witnesses normally given the greatest attention in modern critical editions omit the doxology. Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, both from the fourth century, end the prayer with the petition for deliverance. Important early versions and patristic witnesses also support the shorter form. Modern critical editions of the Greek New Testament therefore print the prayer without the doxology in the main text and record the longer forms in the apparatus.²

The longer form is nevertheless supported by a broad Greek tradition. It appears in the great majority of later Greek manuscripts, especially those commonly classified as Byzantine. The familiar wording is not the only expanded form. Some witnesses have "the power and the glory" without "the kingdom"; others include a Trinitarian expansion or show small verbal differences. This variety is important. It suggests that the history is not adequately described as two perfectly uniform Bibles, one Alexandrian and one Byzantine, standing opposite each other from the beginning. Rather, individual readings circulated, liturgical forms developed, and the later Byzantine tradition came to preserve the full wording with considerable stability.³

Terms such as Alexandrian and Byzantine remain useful as broad descriptions, but they must not be mistaken for labels ancient scribes placed on their books. Contemporary textual study often describes relationships among manuscripts with more precision than the older text-type model allowed. Early manuscripts can contain mixtures of readings, and a reading later characteristic of the Byzantine majority may be attested before the surviving standardized Byzantine manuscripts. The age of a manuscript and the age of a reading are related but not identical questions. A late copy can preserve an ancient reading; an early copy can contain a scribal error. Every variant must be evaluated in its own evidential setting.⁴

For Matthew 6:13, the external evidence gives modern critical editors strong reasons to prefer the shorter text. The immediate literary context gives them an additional argument: a scribe accustomed to a liturgical doxology could readily append it to a prayer, whereas deliberate removal may appear less likely. Defenders of the traditional reading answer that the doxology is widely transmitted, thoroughly Matthean in theme, and supported by early Christian usage. A responsible account should present both the evidence and the distinction between evidence and conclusion.

What the Fathers Do and Do Not Prove

Patristic quotations are valuable because they can show that a reading was known in a particular region before many surviving manuscripts were copied. They are also difficult evidence. Fathers often quoted from memory, adapted wording to an argument, combined parallel passages, or abbreviated a familiar text. Their biblical text must therefore be studied passage by passage rather than assigned wholesale to a later textual family.

Origen is commonly associated with the shorter form of the Lord's Prayer, as are several Latin writers. Cyprian's treatise on the prayer expounds its petitions without the familiar doxology. Augustine likewise interprets the Matthean prayer as seven petitions and ends his exposition with deliverance from evil. These witnesses do not prove that no Christian in their time knew the doxology, but they show that forms without it were established in early interpretation.⁵

John Chrysostom provides a clear witness on the other side. In his nineteenth homily on Matthew, preached in the late fourth century, he expounds the words about kingdom, power, and glory as part of the prayer. He explains that Christ encourages the petitioner by reminding him of the Father's kingship and power. Chrysostom therefore shows that the fuller doxology was known and interpreted in Greek Christian preaching by the end of the fourth century.⁶

Athanasius and Eusebius require greater caution. Both knew Greek Scripture, and both are indispensable for the history of the canon. Neither should be described simply as using the later *Textus Receptus*, a printed text that did not exist until more than a millennium after their deaths. Nor should either be made a blanket witness for every reading associated with a modern category. Their citations can agree with different streams of transmission at different points. The sound method is to ask what a writer quotes at the passage under discussion and how securely the quotation can be identified.

Jerome and the Latin Vulgate

Jerome did not translate the New Testament from a single named Greek codex. At the request of Pope Damasus, he revised the existing Old Latin Gospels by comparing them with Greek manuscripts available to him. In his preface, Jerome complains that Latin copies differed from one another and explains that he revised the four Gospels against Greek exemplars while avoiding unnecessary changes. The result was a revision of an existing Latin tradition in light of Greek evidence, not a fresh translation based on one recoverable manuscript.⁷

At Matthew 6:13, the Vulgate tradition ends with *sed libera nos a malo*, "but deliver us from evil." It does not contain the familiar doxology as part of the verse. Thus the principal Latin Bible of medieval Western Christianity transmitted the shorter form even while the doxology continued in other liturgical settings. Its omission cannot be explained by saying that Jerome simply used Byzantine manuscripts, and its presence in traditional English Protestant prayer cannot be traced through the Vulgate at this point.

Augustine's comments illuminate the broader problem. He knew that Latin manuscripts differed and instructed readers to consult Greek copies when New Testament Latin texts produced uncertainty, giving particular weight to Greek texts used by churches noted for learning and careful study. That counsel acknowledges textual plurality within the received canon. It also warns against imagining that late-antique Christians possessed one universally standardized edition whose every word had been fixed by a canon council.⁸

Canon Recognition Is Not Textual Standardization

The history of the New Testament canon concerns the identity and authority of books. The history of the New Testament text concerns the wording transmitted within those books. The Church could answer yes to the question "Is Matthew an apostolic Gospel received as Scripture?" while manuscripts of Matthew differed in spelling, word order, short clauses, and occasionally larger passages. Recognition of a book did not require every copy to be letter-for-letter identical.

Eusebius offers a valuable early fourth-century snapshot. In *Ecclesiastical History* 3.25, he distinguishes acknowledged writings from disputed and rejected ones. He places the four Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Epistles, 1 John, and 1 Peter among the acknowledged books, while reporting debate about books such as James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John. Eusebius presents himself as reporting the reception of writings across the churches and in earlier authors, not as creating the canon by personal decree.⁹

Athanasius's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter, written in 367, gives the first surviving list that names exactly the twenty-seven books now found in the New Testament. He calls these the sources of salvation and distinguishes them from other books commended for reading. His importance lies in the clarity of the list. Yet the letter does not canonize one physical codex or one complete set of readings. Athanasius identifies books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, the Catholic Epistles, Paul's letters, and Revelation.¹⁰

Augustine later supplies substantially the same New Testament collection in *On Christian Teaching*, and the North African councils reflect this reception. Again, a list of canonical books is not a critical edition of their Greek wording. Augustine's own awareness of divergent Latin manuscripts makes the distinction explicit. Canon recognition settled the boundaries of the collection over time; textual comparison continued within that collection.¹¹

The distinction corrects two opposite mistakes. One mistake assumes that because the Church recognized Matthew, every Christian copy of Matthew must have contained the doxology. The other assumes that because manuscripts differ at Matthew 6:13, the canonical authority of Matthew is uncertain. Neither follows. The object of canonical recognition is the Gospel according to Matthew. The object of textual criticism at this verse is one ending within that Gospel.

Two Historical Tracks

The evidence becomes clearer when arranged in two parallel tracks. The canon track runs from the circulation and use of apostolic writings, through widespread recognition of the four Gospels and other books, to the careful classifications of Eusebius, the twenty-seven-book list of Athanasius, and the mature lists of Augustine and the North African churches. This track answers which writings the Church received as Scripture.

The textual track runs from the copying of those writings in different regions, through the appearance of variant readings, the evidence of early versions and patristic quotations, the growing dominance of the Byzantine form in the Greek-speaking medieval Church, and the production of printed Greek editions in the sixteenth century. This track asks what wording particular manuscripts, versions, writers, and editions transmitted.

The two tracks continually touch. A book had to be copied because it was read, and it was read because communities valued it. Canonical status encouraged wide transmission; wide transmission produced many copies; many copies provide both preservation and variation. Patristic authors help with both histories because they name books and quote their contents. Still, evidence that a Father recognized Matthew does not identify his reading at Matthew 6:13. Evidence that a Father quotes the doxology does not tell us his complete canon. Each claim requires the appropriate evidence.

The Growth of the Byzantine Tradition

By the medieval period, the Byzantine form of the Greek New Testament had become numerically dominant among surviving manuscripts. This dominance reflects the continuing manuscript culture of the Greek-speaking Church and the historical survival of its copies. The Byzantine tradition is generally more uniform than the diverse early evidence, though it is not perfectly identical from manuscript to manuscript.¹²

It is misleading to say that Byzantine readings began only in the medieval period. Individual readings found in the Byzantine text can appear in early papyri, versions, or Fathers. What becomes especially visible later is a recognizable and broadly standardized textual tradition. At Matthew 6:13, that tradition contains the full doxology: kingdom, power, glory, and the concluding amen. Its wide preservation explains how the clause stood ready to enter the first printed Greek New Testaments.

It is equally misleading to identify the Byzantine Majority Text with the Textus Receptus without qualification. The Textus Receptus belongs broadly within the Byzantine stream, but it is a sequence of printed editions based on a small number of manuscripts and shaped by editorial decisions. Majority Text editions seek to represent readings supported by the numerical majority of Greek manuscripts. The two agree often, including at Matthew 6:13, but they are not interchangeable names for one edition.¹³

Erasmus and the Printed Greek New Testament

Desiderius Erasmus published his first Greek New Testament at Basel in 1516. He worked rapidly from a small group of Greek manuscripts available there, most of them late and broadly Byzantine in character. His publication paired the Greek text with his own revised Latin translation and extensive annotations. Later editions by Erasmus, followed by Robert Estienne, Theodore Beza, and the Elzevir printers, formed the printed-text tradition later called the Textus Receptus. The famous label itself comes from the Elzevir preface of 1633, not from Erasmus.¹⁴

At Matthew 6:13, Erasmus's Greek text includes the full doxology. Here he was transmitting the form present in his Greek manuscript tradition. The familiar clause was not a back-translation from the Latin Vulgate, which omits it at this verse. Nor was it an editorial novelty comparable to places where Erasmus faced defective Greek evidence. The full form belonged to the medieval Greek tradition from which he worked.

The printed text achieved enormous influence because printing stabilized and multiplied an edition in a way manuscript copying could not. Estienne's and Beza's revisions circulated among scholars and translators. What had been one stream within the manuscript tradition became the standard printed Greek text for much of Protestant Europe. The text's later authority did not erase its editorial history, but it explains why the doxology became a normal part of Matthew 6:13 in early Protestant vernacular Bibles.

From Tyndale to the King James Bible

William Tyndale's New Testament of 1526 drew on the new world of printed Greek scholarship, including Erasmus, and rendered Matthew 6:13 with the doxology. The Geneva Bible and the Bishops' Bible followed the same broad Greek textual tradition. When the King James translators began their work in 1604, they inherited both these English predecessors and printed Greek editions associated especially with Erasmus, Estienne, and Beza.¹⁵

The Authorized Version gave the doxology its most durable English form: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Its cadence entered public worship, family prayer,

literature, and memory. The line's familiarity therefore comes through two reinforcing channels. It stood in the biblical text of the most influential English translation, and it belonged to the liturgical recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

This is the point at which the historical trail in English becomes straightforward. The Byzantine manuscript tradition transmitted the full Greek form. The printed Greek tradition received it. Reformation-era English translations rendered it. The King James Bible gave it a stable and memorable English expression. Yet the trail must not be mistaken for an origin story. The Didache and Chrysostom show that Christian use of a doxological ending long predates the Reformation.

Why Many Modern Bibles Treat the Words Differently

From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onward, editors gained wider access to early Greek manuscripts, ancient versions, and patristic evidence. Printed critical editions increasingly departed from the Textus Receptus where editors judged earlier evidence to preserve a more ancient reading. Codex Vaticanus had long been known in the Vatican Library, though access and reliable publication developed gradually. Codex Sinaiticus came to broad scholarly attention through Constantin von Tischendorf's nineteenth-century work. Their importance lay not merely in being rediscovered but in supplying early, extensive witnesses to a form of the text different at many points from the later printed standard.¹⁶

At Matthew 6:13, modern critical editions generally judge the shorter form to be earlier. Translations based on those editions therefore omit the doxology from the main text, enclose it in brackets, or place it in a note. Translation policy also matters. Some editions preserve familiar liturgical wording more visibly; others aim to reproduce the editors' judgment about the earliest attainable Greek text.

The difference should not be described as modern translators deleting a doctrine. Kingdom, power, glory, and divine sovereignty remain explicit throughout Scripture. Nor should the traditional reading be dismissed as a late fabrication. The doxology has ancient Christian roots, clear patristic attestation, and overwhelming support in the later Greek manuscript tradition. The disagreement concerns its relationship to the earliest form of Matthew, not whether Christians may confess its theology.

The Meaning of Kingdom Power and Glory

Historical study should return the reader to the words themselves. "Thine is the kingdom" confesses that the reign sought in the petition "Thy kingdom come" already belongs to the Father. Christians ask for God's rule to be manifested because God is King. The line resists the illusion that history finally belongs to empires, parties, markets, or private wills. Prayer places the petitioner under a sovereignty that precedes every human claim.

"Thine is the power" grounds every petition in God's ability to act. Daily bread, forgiveness, moral preservation, and deliverance are not entrusted to a distant spectator. The Father has power to sustain, pardon, guide, and rescue. Chrysostom saw this pastoral force when he said that the conclusion gives the petitioner confidence by directing attention to the Father's kingdom and power. The doxology does not flatter God after asking favors; it teaches the believer what kind of God has been addressed.

"Thine is the glory" returns the answer to prayer to its proper end. The petitions are personal, but they are not self-enclosed. Bread sustains servants of God. Forgiveness restores fellowship. Deliverance preserves a people for holy obedience. The goal is the Father's name hallowed and the Father's glory acknowledged. "Forever" extends the confession beyond a present crisis, and "Amen" gives the worshiper's assent: this is true, and let it be so.

The doxology also binds the prayer together. It echoes the first petitions about God's name and kingdom, and it answers the final petition for deliverance with the confession of divine power. The prayer begins with the Father in heaven and ends, in its traditional form, with the eternal glory of that Father. Its movement trains desire: God's honor first, human need within God's fatherly care, and praise at the end.

A Historically Responsible Confession

Christians need not choose between historical honesty and reverent use. Historical honesty acknowledges that important early Greek manuscripts and the Vulgate omit the doxology, that the Didache preserves a shorter form, that patristic witnesses differ, and that the fuller form dominates the later Byzantine tradition. Reverent use recognizes that the doxology is ancient, biblical in language, doctrinally sound, and deeply embedded in Christian prayer.

Those who receive the Byzantine or Textus Receptus form as the correct text of Matthew can state their judgment while representing opposing evidence accurately. Those who follow the modern critical text can still value the doxology as an ancient liturgical conclusion and a faithful summary of biblical praise. The documentary question should be argued from manuscripts, versions, and citations rather than from insinuations about the faith of other Christians.

The most useful wording for a general chapter or teaching series may therefore be direct, followed by a concise qualification: "The Lord's Prayer concludes in the traditional English and Byzantine form, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.' The clause has an ancient but complex transmission history." That sentence neither hides the textual issue nor allows it to consume the theological subject.

The Church's recognition of Matthew and the Church's transmission of Matthew are inseparable histories, but they are not identical histories. The first tells us why Christians received the Gospel as Scripture. The second explains why faithful copies and translations sometimes differ at its ending. Holding the two together gives the doxology its proper setting: older than the printed Textus Receptus, widely preserved through the Byzantine tradition, memorably carried into English by the Reformation Bibles, and still worthy of being prayed as a true confession of the Father to whom the whole prayer is addressed.

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