THE QUESTION

Did the early church pray to Jesus, or only to God the Father?

Asked by a THF member on May 3, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 23 early Christian passages and 55 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-church-pray-to-jesus-or-only-to-god-the-father

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Yes. Early Christians mainly prayed to God the Father through Jesus, whom they called their High Priest, but they also praised and called on Jesus Himself. None of these passages forbids prayer to Jesus. Origen even says Christians will pray to the Word Himself, and church liturgies give praise to the Lord Jesus Christ directly.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
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POINT 1 OF 7

Jesus taught them to pray to the Father

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Didache, a very early church manual, tells believers to pray the Lord's Prayer, which begins by speaking to the Father in heaven. Cyprian adds that when we use these words, the Father hears the words of His own Son. So the basic pattern of Christian prayer was taught by Jesus Himself and points to the Father.

1 “Do not pray like the hypocrites. Instead, as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, pray like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 8 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “Let the Father recognize the words of His Son when we pray. And let Him who dwells within our breast also dwell in our voice.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 17, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

The usual path was to God through Jesus

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen describes Christians as people who pray to God through Jesus. The church prayers in the Apostolic Constitutions use the same pattern again and again: the people ask God to accept their gifts and prayers through the work of His Christ. Jesus is not pushed aside here. He is the One through whom every prayer goes up.

3 “Next, Celsus forgets that he is speaking to Christians, who pray to God alone through Jesus.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 37 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 12, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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4 “Let us continue to pray to God through His Christ. Let us ask Him, concerning the gift that is offered to the Lord God, that the good God will accept it through the mediation of His Christ on His heavenly altar, as a sweet-smelling fragrance.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Source 18, page 7** Read it in the library ›
Apostolic Constitutions (c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 7

Jesus is the High Priest who carries prayers

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen says Christians pray to the Most High God and also to the Only-begotten Son, asking Him as High Priest to bring their prayers to the Father. Irenaeus likewise says the Church offers its worship through Jesus Christ. Both writers picture Jesus as active in prayer, not as someone who must be left out of it.

5 “Our duty is to pray to the Most High God alone, and to the Only-begotten, the First-born of the whole creation, and to ask Him, as our High Priest, to present the prayers that rise from us to Him, to His God and our God, to His Father and the Father of those who direct their lives according to His word.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 26 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 14, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

6 “Therefore, since the name of the Son belongs to the Father, and since the Church makes offerings through Jesus Christ to the omnipotent God, He rightly says on both these grounds, “And in every place, incense is offered to My name, and a pure sacrifice.””

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Origen says Christians also pray to Jesus

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Right after saying that prayer goes up to God through the High Priest, Origen adds that Christians will also pray to the Word Himself. The Word is his name for the Son of God. He only warns that people must understand the right use of prayer. This is the clearest statement in these passages that direct

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prayer to Christ was allowed.

7 “For every prayer, supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving must be sent up to the Supreme God through the High Priest, who is above all the angels, the living Word and God.”

later in the same passage

“And we shall also pray to the Word Himself, and make intercessions, and offer thanksgivings and supplications to Him, if we are able to distinguish between the proper use and abuse of prayer.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 4 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 11, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

Calling the Father also invokes the Son

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian explains the opening words of the Lord's Prayer. He says that when we call God our Father, the Son is called on as well, because Jesus said He and the Father are one. For Tertullian, praying to the Father and honoring the Son are not two rival choices.

8 “Again, in the Father the Son is also invoked. For He says, "I and the Father are One,"”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prayer* 2 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 7, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Church worship spoke praise straight to Jesus

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Some of the old church liturgies, the set prayers used in worship, speak directly to Jesus. One gives praise and adoration to the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another names Jesus as the one holy Lord, while still giving glory to God the Father. Worship to Christ and to the Father stand side by side.

9 “Praise be to Your holy name, Lord Jesus Christ, and adoration to Your majesty, always and forever. Amen.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Liturgy of Adaeus and Maris* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 9, page 6** Read it in the library ›

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10 “Only one is holy: the one Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, to whom be glory for all eternity.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Early Liturgies,** *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (c. 200–400 AD) **Source 10, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

They worshiped one God, Father and Son

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

A critic accused Christians of worshiping a servant of God alongside God. Origen answers that Christians worship one God, the Father and the Son. He compares the Son to the truth that always existed. As he reads it, honoring the Son was never a second god set beside the Father, so it did not break the rule of one God.

11 “Therefore we worship one God, the Father and the Son, as we have explained; and our argument against the worship of other gods still remains valid.”

later in the same passage

“Therefore we worship the Father of truth, and the Son, who is the truth.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Against Celsus* 12 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 15, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- None of these passages says Christians must never pray to Jesus, but none gives a full rule for when to address the Father and when to address the Son.
- Most of the set church prayers here are spoken to the Father through Christ, so direct prayer to Jesus appears less often in these texts.
- These passages do not explain how every early writer fit both kinds of prayer together.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 23 early Christian passages and 55 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–23, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 24–27, in Bible order), then 51 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *23 passages from 9 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 8 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** "pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 2–3*

2 *Against Heresies: Book IV* (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** "therefore, the name of the Son belongs to the Father, and since in the omnipotent God the Church makes offerings through Jesus Christ, He says well on both these grounds… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Against Heresies: Book II* (1885 English) "directing her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit, and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · source 4*

4 *Exhortation to the Heathen* 12 (on point 3) "Jesus, who is eternal, the one great High Priest of the one God and of His Father… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 5–7*

5 *Against Praxeas* 13 (on point 5) "that if the Father and the Son are alike to be invoked, I shall call the Father God, and invoke Jesus Christ as Lord… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Against Marcion* 26 (on point 1) "what He actually taught was prayer to Him whom the disciple had already known… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *On Prayer* 2 (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** "in the Father the Son is invoked… [continues online] **read ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · sources 8–10*

8 *Divine Liturgy of St. Mark* 1 (1885 English) "God, Sovereign Lord, the Father of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, we pray and beseech You to grant that our king may enjoy peace, and be just… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Liturgy of Adaeus and Maris* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** "be to Your holy name, O Lord Jesus Christ, and adoration to Your majesty, always and forever. Amen… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** "only is holy, one Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, to whom be glory to all eternity… [continues online] **read ›**

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Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 11–15*

11 *Against Celsus* 4 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "every prayer, and supplication, and intercession, and thanksgiving, is to be sent up to the Supreme God through the High Priest, who is above all the angels, the living Word… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Against Celsus* 37 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** "the next place, Celsus forgets that he is addressing Christians, who pray to God alone through Jesus… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Against Celsus* 11 (1885 English; on point 2) "being persuaded that the sun himself, and moon, and stars pray to the Supreme God through His only-begotten Son, we judge it improper to pray to those beings who… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Against Celsus* 26 **Quote 5, page 3** "Our duty is to pray to the Most High God alone, and to the Only-begotten, the First-born of the whole creation, and to ask Him, as our High… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Against Celsus* 12 (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 5** "they pay excessive reverence to one who has but lately appeared among men, and they think it no offense against God if they worship also His servant… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 16–17*

16 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 2) "first of all, to pray and to entreat the Lord Himself, and then through Him, to make satisfaction to God the Father… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** "is a loving and friendly prayer to beseech God with His own word, to come up to His ears in the prayer of Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 18–22*

18 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** "Let us still further beseech God through His Christ, and let us beseech Him on account of the gift which is offered to the Lord God, that the good God… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) "us rise up, and let us pray earnestly, and dedicate ourselves and one another to the living God, through His Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) "up, and bow your heads to God through His Christ, and receive the blessings." Let the bishop then add this prayer… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) "But let him pray thus after the foregoing prayer, and say: O God Almighty, the Father of Your Christ, Your only begotten Son, give me a body undefiled, a heart… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) "us earnestly beseech God through His Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 23*

23 *Writings* (1885 English; on point 4) "the Latin conqueror shall then say, I am Christ, whom you always pray to… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *4 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

24 **Matthew 6:5** When you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. **read ›**

25 **John 8:58** Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am." **read ›**

26 **John 10:30** I and the Father are one." **read ›**

27 **John 14:11** Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. **read ›**

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ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *51 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Isaiah 53:1 · 58:6

Matthew 6:11 · 6:13 · 19:17 · 19:29 · 21:9 · 23:9 · 27:18

Mark 10:18

Luke 2:14 · 8:21 · 11:1 · 11:2 · 11:3 · 11:4 · 11:5 · 11:8 · 11:9 · 11:11 · 11:14 · 11:18 · 11:19 · 11:20 · 11:21 · 11:27 · 15:7

John 1:1 · 1:5 · 1:12 · 5:43 · 17:6 · 17:22

Acts 3:1 · 4:32 · 10:9

Romans 1:7 · 9:5 · 16:20

1 Corinthians 7:29

2 Corinthians 7:1

Galatians 1:19 · 4:19

Philippians 4:3

Colossians 2:13

1 Timothy 2:1 · 2:2 · 2:4

Hebrews 1:3 · 1:14

1 John 1:5

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did the early church pray to Jesus, or only to God the Father?” on May 3, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY