

July 1, 2001

The Prayer of Jabez  
1 Chronicles 4:9

Bettie has many friends in high places that is, places of importance in Christian service, e.g., the home school movement, among other things. I have been quite surprised as she has told me of the people she knows who have fallen for the idea in the best selling book, *The Prayer of Jabez*. And these are people who should know the word of God well enough that they should not be blow about by every breeze that comes along.

The *Jabez idea* is that there is a series of words that one can say that will cause God to come running to the aid of the one saying those words.

Several years ago, there was a TV series named, *I Dream of Genie*. It was a comedy about an astronaut who had been misplaced on an island where he found a bottle. He brought the bottle back home with him. He could rub the bottle, and out would come this beautiful genie, and grant him his desires. The series was about the many funny problems they would get into, and how she got them out of those problems.

The current craze about *The Prayer of Jabez* seems to lower the Sovereign God of the Universe to the level of that genie. If you will say the right words, rub the bottle just right, He will come to your aid. And the current craze again shows us that anything can be proved from the word of God if the context of the rest of the word of God is ignored.

We know nothing about Jabez except the few words that introduce his prayer:

*And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested. (1 Chron. 4:9.)*

*Jabez was more honourable...* In what way was he *more honourable than his brethren*? We are not told anything other than what is in this short verse. We do know that he was of the tribe of Judah, so was he exalted into a place of leadership? Maybe he fought and expelled the enemy more honourably than did the others?

I have 8 points as to why Jabez was probably *more honourable* than those around him. Just the first one will show that the modern attitude toward this passage is more occultic than it is Scriptural.

1) *more honourable* in that he realized that it was God who must enlarge his coast. Jabez lived during the time of expelling the enemies from the promised land. So in order for his costs to be enlarged, Jabez had to go to war and drive them out of his land.

People are desiring their *coasts be enlarged* that is, their ministries to be enlarged, or physical prosperity to be increased. And they seem to feel that Jabez found the secret words, the magic words that will cause God to yield to their desires.

I find it strange that many who say that the Old Testament promises of God's physical blessings are not for us today are the very ones who are claiming a supposed promise of physical blessings here from this magic prayer.

*Jabez* lived during the time of Israel's occupation of the promised land. God had commanded Israel to possess the land, and to enlarge his borders. The way Israel was to do that was by obeying God's word. (Deut. 7, below.)

Genesis 17:17-21, the Lord had promised Abraham that He would give to Abraham's decedents the land of Canaan, a land possessed by 10 nations greater than Israel. In Deuteronomy alone, the Lord tells Israel that the nations they must drive out of the land are *greater and mightier* than what they are: 4:8, 7:1 (lists 7 nations), 9:1, 11:23.

The Lord also tells Israel that if they do not drive out the pagan nations, those nations will become a *snare* to them, Exodus 23:33, 34:12, 7:16, Judges 2:3.

Israel was to possess the land that is, enlarge his borders. The nations were *greater and mightier* than was Israel, so Israel had to depend upon the Lord God to give the victory. The way they depended upon the Lord was by **DOING** what was required of them in Deuteronomy 7. (About every preacher worth his salt has compared the commands in Deut. 7 against the pagan nations to the Christian's war against sin every sin must be removed from one's life if he expects to have God's blessings. Those sins cannot be removed without the working of the Spirit of God, God's grace. And that Spirit can be easily grieved to where the sins keep their dominant hold, Eph. 4:30. Not only will remaining sins cost us God's blessings, they will also be a snare.)

Deuteronomy 7:

V. 2, nothing of those nations was to remain among Israel. (We are told to avoid the very appearance of evil.)

V. 3, there could be no intermarriage between Israel and any pagan nation. (The New Covenant clearly forbids close relationships with the unsaved.)

Vv. 5, 25, everything that represented the ungodly practices of the pagans was to be utterly destroyed. (We are commanded, Eph. 5:3, to not let sin even be named among us.)

V. 26, nothing representing the pagan culture was to be brought into the house. Everything representing the pagan culture must be considered under God's curse, and avoided it at all costs. Yet how many of those who ritually pray *The Prayer of Jabez* have their children in the pagan school system, as well uncontrolled TV in the home?

Vv. 9-12, God fighting on the side of His people against the nations that were to be dispossessed was dependent upon His people obeying His commandments, statutes and judgments in other words, obeying the total word of God.

I know there are those depending on *The Prayer of Jabez* to deliver into their hands the material possessions they so desperately want who do not even believe that the commandments apply to us who are under grace, not law. But God gives the same promise in the New Testament:

*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. 23 ¶ And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 Jn. 3:22.)*

Christ clearly stated that answered prayer is conditioned upon salvation, keeping His commandments and doing those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Where is the call in Jabez's prayer for confession of sin and holy living as is called for in the Lord's Prayer?

From what I understand, even the unsaved are snatching up the book, *The Prayer of Jabez*. (My wife and I were at Wal-Mart 6/20, and prominently displayed was an advertisement for *The Prayer of Jabez*. There is money in these kinds of things.)

V. 10, the Spirit tells us that those who fail to do v. 9 (*love God and keep his commandments*) **HATE GOD**. Therefore, if those who hate God (reject or fail to keep His commandments) receive material blessing, where do those blessings come from? (Cf., Ex. 20:5.)

Deuteronomy 13 tells us that God at times allows false prophets and their false messages to prosper. He does so to give His people a choice will they obey His word or will they obey their emotions? Will His people get caught up in the winds of the times, or will they remain true to His word?

V. 16, any people of those nations that were commanded to be removed who are **LEFT BEHIND** will be a

*snare* to the people of God. They will draw God's people away from the Lord.

These nations that were to be driven out have continually been compared to sins in the lives of God's people sins that are to be driven out at all costs. A good name for a series of books would be *Left Behind*, and those books should deal with sins we hang on to after we are saved, and the devastation those sins cause in our lives.

V. 19, the righteous are bold as a lion. (Pr. 28:1.)

V. 20, the promise is given to God's faithful people. He alone must drive out the strong and mighty nations, so His people can enlarge their borders. And He will only enlarge the borders of those who are faithfully observing to do all He has commanded, v. 9.

There are illustrations of Deuteronomy 7 in action: **First**, Joshua 14:6-14, Caleb had God's blessings and his borders enlarged because he *holly followed the Lord God of Israel*, not because he found the magic words to pray. The way Caleb had his borders enlarged was by obeying God, and driving out the Canaanites. **Second**, on the other hand, many of God's people became lazy and content with what they had. They felt they could keep sin under control. They did not obey Deuteronomy 7, and the result was that their borders were not enlarged. They had to live short of what was promised to them by the word of God. (Judges 1:9-35) If God does not bless our labour, we labour in vain. (Ps. 127:1.)

We are told that Jabez was *more honourable* because he had more dedication to the cause of Christ; he worked harder; he fought more battles; he shed more blood; he got up earlier and stayed up later *than did his brethren*. He put in long, hard hours; he knew nothing of a 40 week and retirement. Jabez's borders were enlarged above his brethren's borders because he was more dedicated to the task at hand than they were.

IT WAS NOT JABEZ'S PRAYER THAT GOD HONOURED IT WAS HIS HARD WORK AND DEDICATION to God's instructions laid down in Deuteronomy chapter 7.

And thus any man can be *honourable* if he will apply himself to the word of God.

WELL, HOW ABOUT ALL THE REPORTS OF GOD ANSWERING THAT PRAYER?

How many of those reports are self-fulfilling ?

Did not Job say, *For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.* (3:25.)

Jabez was an honorable and a godly man. And God in His sovereign providence saw fit to bless Jabez above his brethren. Implied in God's blessing upon Jabez is that it was not because of anything special in this prayer nor because God was under any obligation to Jabez. God blessed him because Jabez was a godly, hard working man, and God was pleased to bless him.

In this one short verse, we see that Jabez sets an example for all of us to follow. But following his example requires hatred for sin, diligent, faithful and hard work for the Lord and holy living.

God enlarged Jabez's borders, but why did God do that? Was it because Jabez stumbled onto the right words in a prayer, or was it because Jabez obeyed the law-word of God (Deut. 7), lived a holy life, went to battle, and depended on God to drive out the enemy?

Continued to Jabez, II, July 8, 2001