

LESSON #7 – A CHRISTIAN CALLS TO GOD LIKE JABEZ

A CHRISTIAN'S CALL – In the last verses, of the last chapter, of the last book of the Bible, (Revelation 22: 18-19) the Lord tells us two things: don't add anything to His book and don't take anything away from it. Easy to say, hard, it appears, to do. In our age, we have seen one set of scholars dissect, and reject, much of God's word. We have also seen some "pop" theologians twist God's Word into saying things He never intended. Today we look at the prayer of Jabez who called to God.

THE PRAYER – Dear Lord, this day we ask that You would bless us and enlarge our territories! Let Your hand be with us, and keep us from harm so that we will be free from pain. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION – Before the Savior was born, Alexander the Great had a man in his kingdom who asked for financial assistance. The Emperor told him to go to the Treasury and get whatever he needed. The man did so, asking for a sum so large the treasurer contacted Alexander for confirmation. The ruler said, "Honor the request and give him what is needed." He explained, "This man has paid me a great honor. By ... his request, he has shown his idea of my wealth and my generosity, and ... something more gratifying: He takes me at my word!" That, I think is the way the Lord would like us to feel about Him ... coming to Him for help....trusting His bounty, His generosity, and His Word."

SATAN'S SUMMONS – Satan, on the other hand, would like us to believe something just a little bit different. Rather than having us consider God our Father, the devil would like us to think of the Lord as our Divine Servant, always at our beck and call. The devil encourages us to believe God is ready to deliver on any demand that we give to Him via a properly prepared prayer.

THOUGHT: That is, I'm afraid, the feeling millions of people have about the prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4: 9-10) that is paraphrased above. During a relatively uneventful time in Israel's history, Jabez offered up a simple prayer and found favor with God. Today, because of a best selling book, the prayer of Jabez has been transformed. Millions of people believe that the prayer of Jabez is a mystical key which, if prayed regularly, will harness the miraculous power of God for their own personal use.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 1 - Let's take a look at that prayer and answer some questions:

TEXT	QUESTION	ANSWER
1 Chronicles 4: 9	What kind of person was Jabez?	A man more honorable than his brothers.
Matthew 11:11	Was he the greatest man who ever lived?	John the Baptist gets that honor.
1 Chronicles 4: 9-10	What four things does Jabez ask for?	1. Bless him 2. Enlarge his territory 3. Let God's hand be with him. 4. Keep him from harm and subsequent pain.
1 Chronicles 4: 10	What did God do?	God granted his request.
1 Chronicles 4: 11	What happened then?	Jabez disappears from history (not mentioned again).

FIRST APPLICATION: Reading this prayer most of us wouldn't think the honorable Jabez did, or said, anything special. Jabez, like countless others, asked for God's blessings and received it. Scripture records nothing magical or mystical about the man or his prayer. Nevertheless, in our country there is a movement that says Christians can, if they can come up with the right formula, control the Lord. The 'name it-claim it' formula says if:

You have enough faith	FAITH
And you add the right words	+ RIGHT WORDS
And do the right thing	+ CERTAIN ACTIONS=
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Equals	A GOD WHO HAS TO REWARD YOU

Those rewards that God is obligated to give may be good health, or business success, or brilliant children, or relief from the heartbreak of psoriasis, or just about anything else you can name. It is absolutely guaranteed. Of course, repeating the prayer of Jabez is only the most recent of spiritual good luck charms that have been trotted out over the centuries. Not so many years ago TV evangelists touted 'prayer towers' to manipulate God into a quick answer. Before that, there were prayer shawls or handkerchiefs which could

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manipulate a blessing from God - for a small 'love offering'. In Luther's day, it was thought that a visit to Elector Frederick's relic collection could make God a little less mad at you, and shorten your time in purgatory. Five hundred years earlier, the crusaders felt they had God in their pocket as they went into battle following the "true" spear that had pierced Jesus' side.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 2 - CHRIST'S CALL - Scripture records a time when people felt they could bend the Lord to their purposes. They used something far more impressive than a prayer tower and more formidable than a prayer shawl to bend God to their purposes. Please, read these verses and remember the story:

TEXT

WHAT HAPPENED?

Joshua 3: 6,14-16	The priests carried the Ark, and the Jordan was stopped.
Joshua 6: 12-16	The Ark of the Covenant led them, and they conquered Jericho.
1 Samuel 4: 3	They had been defeated, so they brought up the Ark.
	Why did they do that? They wanted the ark to save them.
1 Samuel 4: 10-11	They fought and lost the ark.
1 Samuel 6: 1-2	The Philistines sent it back after seven months.
1 Samuel 6: 19-20	What happened when the ark returned? Some Israelites peeked in and died.

These passages remind us that God isn't controlled by humankind. He is not ready to put our hands at the helm of history. His will, not ours needs to be done. Not the Ark of the Covenant, the prayer of Jabez, or anything else, can change, or blackmail Him into changing that fact. This wonderful truth is further borne out by other passages. Look and answer:

TEXT	WHAT IS GOD TO DO	WHAT IS HUMANKIND TO DO	WHO IS IN CONTROL
Exodus 19:5	Be obeyed.	Keep God's covenant.	The Lord.
Deut. 4: 1	Give His decrees.	Obey those decrees.	God.
1 Kings 2: 2-3	Give us observances.	Be strong and follow God.	The Lord.
Hebrews 10: 36	Fulfil His promises.	Do His will.	God.

As the Lord says, (Isaiah 55: 8-9) "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Thank God that He, and not we, is in control. Our vision is too near-sighted; our hearts too selfish to be in control. Look at the story and answer the questions:

THOUGHT & ILLUSTRATION - About a century ago, a carriage was being driven along the road. A mother sat on the front seat and a maid, caring for a spoiled baby, was in the back. Suddenly, the child began screaming. His scream was familiar. It said, "I want what I want - and I want it now." Without turning around, the mother instructed the nurse, "Let him have what he wants." The nurse did as she was told. Baby was crying for a wasp on the window. Which lead to a new kind of scream. The mother asked, "What is the matter now?" The maid replied, "He got what he wanted."

Did you ever want something that you shouldn't have? YES / NO
 How long ago was that? 1 day 1 week 1 month 1 year ago.
 Have you learned your lesson? YES / NO
 What lesson was that? We rejoice that God remains in control. As Christians, we rejoice that He doesn't always give us what we want.

THE WAY OF PRAYER – Dear Lord, we give thanks that You can't be bribed by the prophets of Baal who cut themselves; nor by magic spells, or prayers that are endlessly repeated. We give thanks that you are the Father, and we are the children. We give thanks that Your will has been, is, and will be done. In Jesus' Name. Amen.