

Day 265 - FRIDAY: October 20th

1 Chronicles 4:1-23

1 Chronicles 4:1-23 NKJV

The sons of Judah were Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. And Reaiah the son of Shobal begot Jahath, and Jahath begot Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites. These were the sons of the father of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazeleponi; and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer was the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah the father of Bethlehem. And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. The sons of Helah were Zereth, Zohar, and Ethnan; and Koz begot Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum. Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested. Chelub the brother of Shuhah begot Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. And Eshton begot Beth-Rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-Nahash. These were the men of Rechah. The sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel were Hathath, and Meonothai who begot Ophrah. Seraiah begot Joab the father of Ge Harashim, for they were craftsmen. The sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh were Iru, Elah, and Naam. The son of Elah was Kenaz. The sons of Jehallelel were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel. The sons of Ezrah were Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. And Mered's wife bore

Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. (His wife Jehudijah bore Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Sochoh, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.) And these were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took. The sons of Hodiah's wife, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and of Eshtemoa the Maachathite. And the sons of Shimon were Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-Hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi were Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth. The sons of Shelah the son of Judah were Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of the linen workers of the house of Ashbea; also Jokim, the men of Chozeba, and Joash; Saraph, who ruled in Moab, and Jashubi-Lehem. Now the records are ancient. These were the potters and those who dwell at Netaim and Gederah; there they dwelt with the king for his work.

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading program states: “Chapter 4 gives more details about the family of Judah. "Sons" in verse 1 refers to descendants, for of those listed here only Perez was Judah's actual son (1 Chronicles 2:3-4). The outline of the genealogies of Judah is as follows: Shelah, son of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:3; 1 Chronicles 4:21-23); Perez, son of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:4-8; 1 Chronicles 4:1-20); and Hezron, son of Perez and ancestor of David (2:9-3:24).

But there is more in 1 Chronicles 4 than just genealogy. In the midst of the nine-chapter-long list of names, a very short but remarkable story appears out of the blue about a man named Jabez (verses 9-10). It's as if a camera were scanning a crowd of faces and all of a sudden stopped and focused on a single individual.

We know almost nothing about Jabez, but you may well have heard of a popular book about his prayer published in 2000 by author Bruce Wilkinson titled *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed*

Life. A number of other books and articles on the subject have followed so that the prayer has become a phenomenon among a number of people—with some unfortunately treating it as some sort of magic formula to get blessings from God. Some of late are focusing on this passage more than any other part of the Bible, and some perhaps almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible! That is of course not at all what God wants. For one thing, Christians are to approach God through the name of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we know from Christ's teachings on prayer that God doesn't want or hear rote prayers (Matthew 6:7), but rather He wants believers to talk to Him in prayer the way a son or daughter would talk to a father. So merely memorizing and reciting the prayer of Jabez is not a key to divine blessing. That being said, despite the wrong approach some have taken we can in any event draw some valuable and helpful lessons from this brief but fascinating story.

The name Jabez means "pain" or "sorrow"—his mother having named him this because she bore him "in pain," that is, "in Jabez." What would have motivated a mother to give her newborn child such a name? It must have been something more than the common physical pain of childbirth. More likely, her life must have been such that she perceived the addition of this child would bring great hardship or difficulty. Perhaps she was in financial straits. As the account says that Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, it may be that she already had sons who had caused problems and feared Jabez would do the same.

Whatever the case, Jabez probably did not have an easy life. Can you imagine growing up with a name like Pain or Sorrow? The teasing from peers would have been relentless. Worse, in Middle Eastern society of that day a name was thought to be a meaningful determiner of destiny. His life was "marked out," so to speak, by his name. He would have been expected to be a perpetual source of pain. And this is not to mention the difficult family situation of growing up with a mother who

would give such a name to her child and the dreary circumstances that would have provoked it.

All that being said, Jabez responded to his situation with more honor than the rest of his family. There is only one way out of a nowhere life—and Jabez realized it. So what did he do? Let's notice the prayer of Jabez.

1. He called on the God of Israel. Before we can even begin to deal with whatever difficult situation we find ourselves in, it is vital that we recognize that there is only One who can ultimately help us—the God of Israel. Jabez was part of the covenant nation of Israel and called on the nation's God—the only true God. Perhaps he knew the story of Jacob wrestling with God, not letting go until God blessed him and thereby receiving the name Israel, "Prevailer With God." We should recognize that Jabez probably did not just call on God on one afternoon. His prayer was likely a regular one to God—pleading with Him to deliver him from his life's circumstances. And it was probably uttered in various sincere ways, not recited as some kind of mantra.

2. He prayed earnestly for God to truly bless him. He said, "Oh, that You would....," expressing a great desire. And he did not just ask to be blessed, but to be blessed indeed—that is, really and truly blessed. While this might have included physical substance, this is not stated. It probably included spiritual well being. Most likely, he was asking God to bless Him in every way possible, trusting that God would do it. Some would perceive this as selfish, but we shouldn't jump to that conclusion. As God says that Jabez was honorable it is likely that he was a service-oriented person, seeking the means and opportunity to better serve God and others. Moreover, God says we are to pray to Him for those things we need and desire. The point is that, in praying to Him, we recognize God as the One who is able to fill our wants and needs—and we trust Him to do so.

3. He prayed for God to increase his boundaries. His plea to God to "enlarge my territory" makes it look like Jabez's desire was for land and wealth. But the word can be translated territory, boundary, border or coast. It was more likely a request for God to increase the boundaries of his life—to extend his limits beyond those in which he had been confined. Of course, it may have concerned his physical means. Perhaps it involved the recovery of a squandered family inheritance. We can all ask God to increase our affluence, grow our business or extend our influence—if our goal is to serve Him and others. We should all want to be more and do more for God and to have the physical means to do more for others. Only He can give us the means to accomplish this.

4. He prayed for God's help and direction. In asking for God's hand to be with him, Jabez recognized that he could not go it alone. He had asked for great blessings and an extension of boundaries. Humanly, he would not even be able to handle this. That's why he needed God's guidance and power to enable him to meet the demands of the blessings and boundaries for which he was asking. He realized his total dependence on God.

5. He prayed to be kept from evil. The Hebrew word translated "evil" has a broader meaning than malicious acts we commit or that are committed against us. A more appropriate translation in this context would be "afflictions" or "adversities"—any bad circumstances in life that adversely affect us and our loved ones. We should always be mindful of the need for God's protection and not take it for granted. This is quite like Jesus' instruction that we pray, "Deliver us from evil." We are asking God to protect us from those evil forces and circumstances that would harm us—especially the evil one, Satan the devil, this society over which he reigns, and our own corrupt natures which he has influenced.

6. He prayed to not be a source of harm to others. This man who had grown up with a reputation for having caused pain to his mother and a name from her seemingly destining him to be a source of pain wanted no more of it. He wanted to escape. More importantly, he simply did not want to hurt others. This was an attitude of loving one's neighbor. As Romans 13:10 says, "Love does no harm to a neighbor..." Indeed, the verse goes on to say that fulfilling God's law is love—as His law forbids harming others. We see here that Jabez had an attitude of living by God's law and covenant. It was this more than His nationality that gave him the right to call on the covenant God of his nation.

So we see it isn't a matter of saying certain words in prayer, but rather of having the right heart or character. When we seek the right heart, living the way we understand God wants us to live, the "right" words will come when we talk with Him in prayer. God blesses the person with the right heart, not the one who utters a "magic prayer."

Jabez prayed his heartfelt, desperate prayer for great blessing and a changed, hope-filled life...and something remarkable happened: "So God granted him what he requested" (1 Chronicles 4:10). This should fill us all with hope and faith. As the late U.S. President Ronald Reagan once stated, "There is nothing impossible for man, if he will only join himself in prayer to God!"

Interestingly, the name Jabez appears in only one other place in Scripture—two chapters earlier in 2:55 as the name of a place where the scribes dwelt. It could be that the Jabez of chapter 4 acquired this land as part of the answer to his prayer and then used it in God's service.

Verse 11 of chapter 4 recommences with the genealogies so matter-of-factly that many do not even notice the remarkable two verses prior."

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I don't have anything additional to add.