

# The Prayer of Jabez

## A Critical Analysis of the Fundamentals

By Charles Marshall

Do you want to know "**the key** to a life of extraordinary favour with God?", is a question to which every believer in Jesus the Messiah would want the answer. Not **an** answer, but **the** answer: no doubt, no confusion, no speculation, and no uncertainty – "**THE KEY**!! What a promise of insight of knowledge revealed, what an opportunity to become a favoured son or daughter of the Most High. All will be given to you through a knowledge of "**the key**". Throughout the scriptures great men and women of God have diligently searched for **the key** to favour with God – and here it is so simple it seems almost too good to be true – but we are assured that it is **the key**, as "many believers who are applying its truths are seeing miracles happen on a regular basis."

Preface to the book "The Prayer of Jabez". (All Page References Are To The Book: ***The Prayer Of Jabez***)

Dear Reader,

I want to teach you how to pray a daring prayer that God always answers. It is brief – only one sentence with four parts – and tucked away in the Bible, but I believe it contains **the key** to a life of extraordinary favour with God. (Italics added)

This petition has radically changed **what I expect** from God and **what I experience** every day by His power. In fact, thousands of believers who are applying its truths are seeing miracles happen on a regular basis. Will you join me for a personal exploration of Jabez? (Italics added)

I hope you will!

Bruce H. Wilkinson

Let us consider the prodigy of the genealogies (Jabez as described by the author) in relation to the scripture records of the experiences of "the great men of faith" in Hebrews 11, not that they simply "think differently than the rest of us (pg 19):

Abel: "offered a more excellent sacrifice"

Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him – Jesus said, 'seek and ye shall find';

Noah: "moved with Godly fear . . . became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith";

Abraham: "by faith Abraham obeyed when he was *called*" (italics added); "dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him in the same promise";

Sarah: received a seed (by faith);

And the faith of the patriarchs:

Abraham: "when he was tested offered up Isaac";

Isaac: "blessed Jacob and Esau";

Jacob: 'blessed the sons of Joseph";

Moses: "was born and hidden . . . and refused to be called a son of pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God";

By Faith: He kept the Passover;

Passed through the Red Sea;

And so on . . .

And none knew or prayed the "prayer of Jabez" of increase!

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But in the book "great men of faith think differently than the rest of us", (page 19); they ask God according to the prayer of Jabez, and "He always answers this prayer" (introduction). On page 17 even the author recognises that ours is a "self-serving day" -- never a truer word spoken-- yet we are encouraged that "with a *handful of core commitments* on your part you can proceed from this day forward with confidence and expectation that your heavenly Father **will** bring it to pass for you". No ifs, buts or maybes, He has no option – you prayed **the key**. Remember that "if Jabez had worked on Wall Street he might have prayed: 'Lord, increase the value of my investment portfolios'", (page 31).

"Follow the plan for 30 days" (pages 86 & 87) In the new age philosophy it is 21 days – so more in this case is better:

And the plan (key) is:

1. Pray the Jabez prayer every morning, and keep a record of your daily prayer by marking off a calendar or a chart you make especially for the purpose. (New age rule number one – keep a record of your **commitment** to the Affirmed truth.)
2. Write out the prayer and tape it in your Bible (the one in your Bible is obviously not personal or sufficient enough), in your day-timer, on your bathroom mirror, or some other place where you'll be reminded of your new vision (**Visualise it**— this is the next new age requirement; the more vivid, the more absolute is the outcome. Now it is a vision, no longer merely a prayer any more, nor a request from you to a gracious God — no, now it is **your vision**);
3. Reread this little book once each week during the next month, asking God to show you important insights you may have missed. (Create a **habit** – condition yourself; reread it so that you will be completely conditioned to this new gospel – the Jabez gospel of increase);
4. Tell one other person of your commitment to your new prayer **habit**, and ask him or her to check up on you. (Create an **external measure and motivator** – sow more to the flesh so that you will have to meet this external standard for performance).
5. Begin to keep a record of the changes in your life, especially the divine appointments and new opportunities you can relate directly to the Jabez prayer. (And be careful not to test these in relation to God's Word: if it's happening it's good and it must be from Him – even though we are cautioned against following after signs and wonders in the last days: "for false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the very elect", Matthew 24: 24.). In some of the prosperity circles in the church, your relationship and condition of favour with God is measured by the stuff you have -- cars and the like. What an abomination of the Truths revealed: and again people are talking about "the miracles of having things and how much they have in order to do God's work with".
6. Start praying the Jabez prayer for your family, friends, and the local church. (After all, this is **the key** and they certainly do not need any other form of prayer – least of all those directed by the Spirit of God). And this all will take you into **the** promises of God, and the stored up blessings that you simply didn't have the courage to ask for and receive (page 27).

I shudder to think how people who are oppressed and facing starvation in such countries as Zimbabwe feel about all this stuff. A friend in Harare says, "People feel that in many ways God has given them over to the machinations of a demon possessed maniac, and all that they can do is believe in Romans 8: 28". Maybe we should ask them to pray that God enlarge their territory and influence. They have nothing anyway, so lets get them to pray like Jabez (not Jesus) and look out for the "miracle of Jabez" (page 89). I wonder if God would be offended if we included things like food instead of grass rather than territory, and love instead of hatred, and life instead of death by beatings and, Oh yes, less disease and famine and all those mundane things not found on Wall Street. Or if those Jews in the concentration camps had found **the key**, I wonder what God would have done for them? You see He always answers this prayer – with abundance and blessings.

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We are told all of this on page 87, as we are exhorted to **commit to the system**. Knowing is not enough; "It is only what **you believe** will happen and therefore **do** next that **will release** God's power **for you** and bring about a life change"! Remembering that our God is not a force (as in the new age), but a personal God, Who answers the **prayers** of the saints. Would He therefore recommend only this one prayer to all believers, to receive His infinite mercy and favour? I think not!

I know there will be a severe set of reactions to this perceived "attack" on so "noble" a cause and so learned a man, but I am "convicted", that we are to ask in "Jesus' " name. Nowhere in this book are we encouraged, instructed or is it even suggested that we pray in "the Name above all names". I believe that it is a sin to stand by and not to challenge such teachings as may lead people to take their eyes off Jesus, and in my view this is exactly what the teaching on the Jabez prayer does. Instead of our focus being directed to Jesus 'the author and finisher of our faith', our focus is on the Jabez prayer and the faith we have in the actions we take to ensure we move the hand of God, and faith in the prayer itself.

Faith here has been placed in a "little prayer hidden in the genealogies in Chronicles". Is it not profound that Paul said that we must "command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless *genealogies* (italics added)? These promote controversy rather than God's work – which is by faith" (1Tim 1: 3-4). The real question is: faith in what and in whom? Is our faith then to be in the Jabez prayer and Bruce Wilkinson; **or** is our faith to be in the Finished Work and in The Lord Jesus Christ? I suggest "many believers" have been seduced by one of the fastest selling books on the New York Best Sellers list – maybe this is going too far but some do consider New York to be the very centre of an alternative religion, one founded on the "love of money, position and power". Isn't the analogy to Wall Street a profound coincidence? Was it not Satan who took Jesus up on high and offered to him all the territories he could see "if only" . . . !

It seems to me that we have found "teachers who say what itchy ears want to hear", ears itchy to find a new and more "accommodating biblical message" where the "Self" is very important and God will simply respond in "30 days" to the repeated "mantra" founded on the prayer of Jabez. A new prosperity ritual, based on the prayer of a "more righteous man" has seduced many into forsaking the prayers given and prayed by the Lord Jesus Christ, to put their faith in this self-aggrandising prayer. The basis of the message is: "let me have more in a life where no sacrifice is needed". As long as **I am** repeating a prayer, of whom the real beneficiaries are Jabez (in what God did for him) and the author (in the millions made from the books, workshops and the follow on books for teenagers and the like), I can expect to move the hand of God to "increase my portfolio".

First Jesus and then Paul and all the authors of the Scriptures taught one message to both male and female, young and old. There is a real difference in our time as we need an application for women – modern people must recognise that prayers and applications are not the same for all the saints, this is the new age psychological revelation of the yin/yang dynamic – for in the household of faith women and men apply and benefit from scripture differently, as do young and old. I wonder how this idea applies to Aquila and Priscilla, and why Paul did not write the same message to them from these differing perspectives?

What was applicable and appropriate for an Old Testament character, I would suggest, is given as encouragement to us; not so that we may follow it as a 30 day or 30 year mantra or "touch stone", by which we can come at best to induce or at worse manipulate God into special favour and to "increase our territory". I find it extremely interesting that neither Jesus nor one of the New Testament authors (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) refers to the "prayer of Jabez" as a way to approach the **Throne of Grace**.

It seems to me that this is a way to approach from a perspective that 'the pray-er' is more honourable than his or her brethren. Yet we are exhorted not to "think more highly" of ourselves. I believe Paul said, "**imitate me as I imitate Christ**", but now we are taught: **imitate me as I**

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**have imitated Jabez.** As I have spoken to people about this the one thing that they have consistently said is, "Look what good has come from this: -people blessed and millions poured into the work of God."

This then is the new standard; money that people spend on doing God's work is the measure of 'extraordinary favour with God'. I see nowhere in the 'teachings' that are being conducted, that the Spirit of God has pre-eminence or even that He is mentioned in relation to *the prayer* and certainly not in the "little book". "In 1998" says the author, "World Teach was birthed from the womb of the Jabez prayer", which is the "*miracle of Jabez*" (pg. 89). No mention of Jesus, the Holy Spirit or Almighty God – and we know that counterfeit signs and wonders will accompany the drawing near of the end of the age.

It is the teaching of such "new age *luminaries*" as Lou Tice of the Pacific Institute (we are co-creators with God and we are the I AM), Anthony Robbins (Unlimited Power) and Deepak Chopra (we are the god form and we are creators), that you can control and manipulate the universe (or from this perspective: read "God"). And it comes through the constant repetition of a 'mantra' or "affirmation" or "statement of fact" or "positive request of the universe", or "Conception" and is brought into being by vision.

In this version we use God's Word to manipulate God into "bless **me** and enlarge **my** territory! Let Your hand be with **me**, and keep **me** from harm so that **I** will be free from pain". We must remember that the context for the prayer is one of the clans of (or the family of) Judah and that "Jabez was more **honourable** than his brothers". (NIV) And in the NKJ "Oh, that You may **bless me indeed**, and enlarge **my** territory (border), that Your hand would be with **me**, and that You would keep **me** from evil, that **I** may not cause pain!"

Solomon says in Proverbs 2: 1 - 6 "My son, **if** you receive my Words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; yes, **if** you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, **If** you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasure; Then you will understand the **fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God**'. In this Scripture we see the relationship between wisdom, knowledge, understanding, discernment and the ways of God. There is a price to pay, Yieldedness to God required, and there is a condition to the "hidden treasure" – three "**ifs**" (*italics added*).

The significance of Jesus' words in Matthew 6: 31-34, is apparent to those who diligently seek, for He says: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' "For after all these things the Gentiles (unbelievers) seek. For our heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day are its own troubles".

"Should a wise man answer with empty knowledge, And fill himself with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk, Or by speeches with which he can do no good? Yes, you cast off fear, And restrain prayer before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, And you choose the tongue of the crafty; Your own mouth condemns you and not I; Yes, your own lips testify against you," (Job 15: 2 – 6).

The east is today a source of much 'wisdom'; people are following after all these 'gurus, masters and teachers'. At no other time has the west been so enamoured with the east - Buddhism and the like. The way we think determines the way we behave: "For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he...", (Proverbs 23: 7). It is reasonably clear from Scripture, specifically studying Psalm 119 that the heart is what God seeks. David wrote: "Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!" (Psalm 119: 11). Why? Because the Word is like a double edged sword, separating even between soul and spirit, and is our only offensive weapon in the armour of God. The tongue proclaims what is in the heart, and in James 3, we see the "world of iniquity is in the tongue" the

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"fountain of the heart". And who is the most "crafty" of all, certainly "the father of lies". We are reminded, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind (lit. most secret parts)" (Jeremiah 17: 9 & 10a). So with what will we fill our hearts? "The Prayer of Jabez is now at the centre of our call to prayer (and also our minds by vision, therefore to fill our hearts), a call to be self seeking and serving. Is this not what happened to Eve and Adam in the garden? They embraced a 'different gospel', one that was self-serving and self-centred.

And what was the first revelation of this newfound knowledge: "and they knew that they were naked (flesh)". The nature of their spirit man, was cut off from the Spirit of God. God's covering, protection, love, righteousness, and clothing had been removed from them. It is for this reason that we know 'no sin can enter into the presence of God', and for this a sacrifice was needed. So through our obedience we can be clothed in Christ, for Paul says to us, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, For as many of you as were baptised into Christ, have put on Christ", (Galatians 3: 26 & 27).

This knowledge of becoming more Christ-like in character, and becoming even as Christ the Living Word of God, is dependent on our knowledge of the Word. He is our "High Priest" and we all are to be like him: priests. "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts," (Malachi 2:7). "He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren, Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified," (Romans 8: 29 & 30). This predestined, means that God **purposed** for us to be "conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ".

The more like Jesus we become, the more He will give us 'wisdom, knowledge, understanding and discernment' to be sent into all the world. Do our lips keep knowledge, so that people seek God's instruction from us, as messengers of the LORD of Hosts? I am reminded of the testimony of St Francis of Assisi, who said, "Go and proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and only if absolutely necessary use words." The eyes are the windows of the soul (heart) and I am sure that pure love poured out of this man's eyes. Will we be willing to be that much like Christ that our hearts are so full of love and compassion, through the Word of Grace, that our eyes proclaim it to the world? Not conformed to the likeness of Jabez, but to the likeness of our high priest, the first born of many brethren – Jesus the Christ!

God is warning His church today, that judgement will start in the household of faith. I wonder how many of us will be left standing, when confronted by this truth: "I the **LORD** search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve" (Jeremiah 17: 10). The revelation concerning Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5: 3, 4 & .9, was a profound 'word of knowledge', which led to instant judgement. Scripture records that "great fear came upon those who heard these things", and we are reminded that "**the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge**". Is this little prayer, for the church today, rooted in reverential awe and fear of the Lord? I think not!

We should reverence the LORD, His Name(s), His Messiah and His Spirit, so that we do not grieve Him. God said, "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully", (Psalm 24: 3 & 4). Is this newfound revelation becoming an idol in the hearts of many, who diligently pray this on a daily basis keeping daily records and through it seeking the blessings from the Lord of Hosts?

People in the world, are the *now generation*, looking for immediate gratification in all the wrong places. The promise in the book is: "Do it for 30 days and then see . . .!" As the author himself acknowledges when he says that we live in a "self-serving day".

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An instant gratification people are an impatient, immoral people, lacking in wisdom, knowledge and understanding of the ways of the Lord. Character in the scriptures was developed in people over a lifetime, and when they were ready they received the promises of God. He is, after all, more concerned with our character than comfort (and Jabez was *more honourable* than his brethren).

And this is the Word of God, "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us", (Romans 5: 3 – 5).

And towards the end of his life Paul penned this as an exhortation: "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them all rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death", (Philippians 3: 8 – 10).

And in all things give thanks for the love that was found in Him, that we might know the power of His resurrection. What an infinitely more powerful revelation than any knowledge, insight or enlightenment that any 'guru, ascended master, yogi or the like' have used to teach the world about becoming gods or merely extending their territories. We are to be like Christ Jesus, not only in form but also in substance.

Christ the knowledge of God revealed to the world. Christ the Light of God to the world. Christ the Power of God unto salvation, the Living Word. Christ the revelation of the knowledge of the grace and mercy of God towards us. Whose Names are: Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, LORD of Lords, KING of Kings, Saviour, and Friend. Is there any knowledge worthy of this in the world?

Is there any knowledge more demanding of our time than to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," (2 Tim 2: 15)? Is there any knowledge other than this, able to reveal "the sons and daughters of God"? Is there any knowledge like unto this that will bring the reward of being the heir of the Almighty (EL SHADDAI), Who is God more than enough, all sufficiency in Grace, Mercy and Blessings? Who can compare to Him?

We, who are of the family of faith, should never be ashamed of the knowledge of the power of the gospel unto salvation, or be seduced by a teacher, book or leader into taking our eyes off Jesus, and focusing on self. In Galatians 2: 20 Paul says: " I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." It is the only knowledge worthy of honour, power and glory. May the LORD Who is Jehovah Shalom (Peace), Jehovah Rope (Health), Jehovah Tsidkenu (Your Righteousness), Jehovah Nissi (Banner), and Jehovah Jireh (Changeless in His desire to meet our needs) Bless and keep you, as you seek His face and grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

May God by His infinite Grace and Mercy use this article to His Glory? And May "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Amen and Amen!!!