

## January 8

**Scriptures:** Read 1 Chronicles 3 & 4

**Key Verse:** “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.” (1 Chronicles 4:10)

### Overview

The genealogy continues in 1 Chronicles 3 to establish the ancestry of the royal family of David from the tribe of Judah. David’s sons, born of his different wives, are listed. Six were born while he reigned over the tribe of Judah in Hebron, but sadly, three of them had violent deaths while still young men: Amnon raped his half sister Tamar, so her full brother Absalom killed him; Absalom was killed in his revolt against his father by Joab, the commander of David’s army, and Adonijah was killed by Solomon for treason.

David had other sons born to him during his thirty-three year reign in Jerusalem. Among them was his successor Solomon, by his wife Bathsheba. He was the wealthiest and wisest king who brought the golden age to Jerusalem, but during the reign of Solomon’s son and successor, Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). From this point on, only the kings of Judah from the one Davidic dynasty are listed; the kings of Israel to the north, which were from many different dynasties, all did evil and were idolatrous. Many of the kings of Judah, however, were godly, like David. They brought great revival and led in political and spiritual reformation. Among them were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

The last king on the throne in Jerusalem from the line of David was Zedekiah, who was blinded and led into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25). God, however, did not forget David’s line nor the other captives of Judah while they were scattered, for their names were recorded in His Holy Word. God’s watchful and loving eye remained on His people, even during their exile — a period of punishment. Nor did He forget His promise to David concerning a lasting dynasty (2 Samuel 7:16), for the true and ultimate King and Son of David, the Messiah Jesus, was yet to come. The Jews had a natural interest in keeping records of the royal family, for although the Persians who ruled over them did not allow them a king, the family of David provided them with civil leaders. Among these was Zerubbabel, the governor of the early restoration. All the while, they were awaiting the Messiah from the house of David. Sadly, however, many Jews at the time of Jesus did not recognize Him as the long-awaited One.

1 Chronicles 4 gives an extensive supplementary genealogy of the clans of Judah and the tribe of Simeon which became swallowed up in the larger tribe of Judah (Joshua 19:1-9). The Simeonites had been judged by God to become scattered because of the cruel massacre of the people of Shechem by the head of their tribe (Genesis 34:24-30; 49:5-7).

In the midst of this long and somewhat monotonous list of names comes an interruption of two refreshing and interesting historical verses about a man named Jabez (4:9-10, key verse). He was

an important man (a city was named after him, 2:55), and he was spoken of very highly: “more honourable than his brothers”. He was not only esteemed by his fellow man, but by God as well, for God answered his prayer and inspired the writer of His Holy Word to tell about him. It is yet another example of God’s promise that those who honour Him, He will honour.

Jabez’s prayer shows evidence that he was a man of faith. Although his name meant, “he gives pain” (likely a reference to the sorrowful circumstances surrounding his birth rather than the actual pain of childbirth), Jabez was able with God’s strength to overcome the meaning of his name and not cause pain but be a blessing to others. Jabez was a wise, insightful, and meek man. He first desired the more important spiritual blessings (cf. Ephesians 1:3). Secondary to this was his ambition to succeed. He took this to God in prayer, for he knew he needed His help so that his territory would be enlarged to the glory of God. He understood his need, a need shared by all mankind, for God to keep him from evil that he would not fall into temptation.

Often it is those like Jabez, with much ambition and power, that easily get off track. They lose sight of the truly important things in life, become materialistic, and fall into sin. We read, however, that God answered Jabez’s prayer so that he was able to put into perfect balance both meekness and ambition (cf. Matthew 5:5).

In the Old Testament, land was a gift of God to His people. A large amount of land under one’s control was considered a blessing from God, for all the land really belonged to Him (as it still does), and He allowed those to whom He entrusted it to benefit from it. Today, our prayer for an enlarged territory is better seen in the spiritual sense rather than the material sense, that God would increase the ministry or outreach for the expansion of His kingdom and that our hearts would be enlarged to receive a greater portion of Himself.

Jabez discovered the key: there is power and effectiveness in prayer (cf. James 5:16). It opens the heart of God and paralyzes the hand of Satan. God answered all Jabez’s requests, including that He would bless him and His hand be with him. God’s almighty hand and His presence can also be felt among His people today to lead, protect, and strengthen. He is certainly all-sufficient for us! A prayer of divine blessing is very important. Our Lord Jesus blessed those children who were brought to Him. How interesting it would be to know the history of these children. Surely heaven will testify that they had a glorious future and grew to become great and godly people.

## **Prayer**

Lord, today we pray the prayer of Jabez for our own lives (please read the key verse as a prayer).