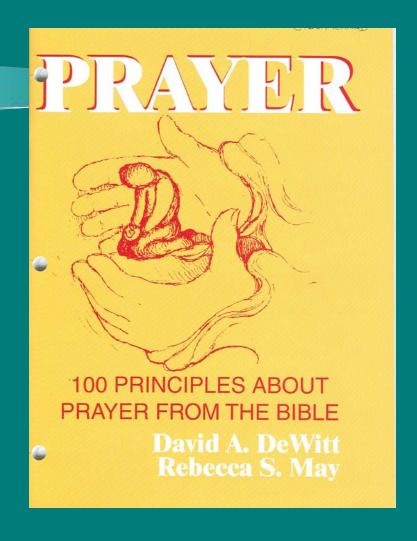
Relational Concepts School of Discipleship Presents



INTRODUCTION

Biblical prayer is communicating a message to God when He is not specifically manifested.

This is a study about biblical prayer - what the Bible teaches about prayer. It is NOT a study of prayer in general, nor a study of its history, nor how church councils use prayer nor what religious leaders have to say about prayer. It is a study of prayer as found in the pages of the inerrant verbally inspired Word of God - the Bible.

In the Bible....

- Prayer is communication, not conversation.
- Prayer is a message, not just a feeling.
- Prayer is when God is not bodily, verbally, or visually observable.

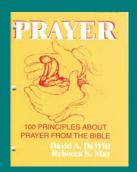
INTRODUCTION

Biblical prayer is communicating a message to God when He is not specifically manifested.

In this study the first 10 points are general observations about prayer as found throughout the Bible.

This will be followed by 30 more points of general observation about prayer as found throughout the Bible.

Your accompanying *PRAYER* study book contains an additional 60 observations from the Bible.



1. Prayer and the Omnipresence of God

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night,' Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You."

(Psalm 139:7-12)

Observation: Prayer is not "coming into the presence of God".

Interpretation: Since God is omnipresent, we are always in the presence of God.

2. The One Way Nature of Prayer

"Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?"

Psalm 10:1

Observation: Biblical prayer is not conversing with God.

Interpretation: David did not have conversations with God. His prayer was all one way. Only David was doing the talking. David often prayed when he felt "forsaken" by God because God did not answer him.

3. The Natural Expression of Prayer

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest."

(Psalm 22:1-2)

"About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?'"

(Matthew 27:46)

Observation: Biblical prayer is not a supernatural act of God.

Interpretation: To the one praying there was no experiential evidence that God was involved. That knowledge came only from an accurate theology of who God is and what He does. Prayers are a normal message, using regular, author intended meaning of regular words.

4. Biblical Prayer is Unique

"Micaiah said, 'Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?' And one said this while another said that. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.'" (1 Kings 22:19-22)

Observation: Biblical prayer is a function of spirituality.

Interpretation: Neither animals nor angels pray. Beings in heaven have direct conversations with God. Apparently, only humans on earth pray. Conversation is not prayer.

5. Prayer is Universal





Observation: All humans pray.

Interpretation: It is unlikely that there has ever been an adult human being who has not prayed. Studying prayer means learning what any human might do. Studying biblical prayer means learning what every human who believes in the God of the Bible should do.

6. Biblical Prayer is Earthly

"When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." (Revelation 5:8)

"Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand."

(Revelation 8:3-4)

Observation: There is no mention of prayer in heaven.

Interpretation: Prayers of believers on earth are brought to heaven, but there is no prayer in the Bible that begins in heaven.

7. Good Prayer

Observation: Biblical prayer is good, by definition, but prayer itself is not always good.

Interpretation: Prayer is not a virtue, for example when it is done to be noticed by other people, when prayer is offered to false gods, or when offered with unconfessed sin. So there is biblical prayer (good prayer), unbiblical prayer (bad prayer), and extrabiblical prayer (offered to the Holy Spirit, to saints, to the Virgin Mary), all of which are not mentioned in the Bible and, therefore, are not studied here.

8. Prayer Reveals Our Beliefs about God

Observation: Biblical prayer assumes many things about God.

Interpretation: Biblical prayer assumes:

God exists

He is involved in the affairs of the world

He is omnipresent

He is knowledgeable

He is personal

He is moral

He is spiritual

9. Prayer Reveals the Nature of Humans

Observation: Biblical prayer assumes many things about humans.

Interpretation: Biblical prayer assumes humans are:

Spiritual

Moral

Significant

Endowed with free will

Dependent

Needy

Faithful

Hopeful

10. The Example of Prayer

Observation: Biblical prayer is taught more by example than by command.

Interpretation: There is no recorded teaching about prayer from Adam, Noah, or Abraham.

There is nothing about prayer in the Ten Commandments or the Law.

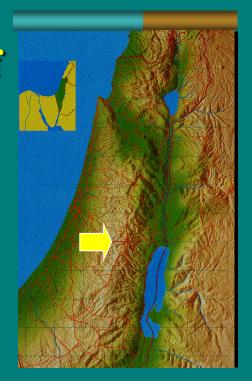
The prophets and kings prayed, but rarely taught about prayer.

Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, but most of His impact with respect to prayer was by example.

The same is true for the Apostles.



Now we will explore 30 more principles of biblical prayer in biblical times and place.





25. Praying When We Disagree with What Is Going On

Observation: 1 Samuel 8:5-6

"...and they said to him, 'Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.' But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the LORD."

Interpretation: The people wanted a king, and it displeased Samuel, so he prayed about it. Samuel was open to God's decision, even if it meant that the people were rejecting God as their only true leader.



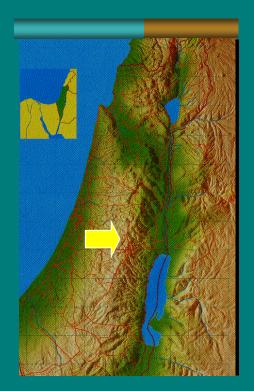


26. Prayer Over Sin

Observation: 1 Samuel 12:17-18

"'Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king.' So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel."

Interpretation: The people made Saul king over Samuel's objections. Saul was successful in his first military campaign, and the people rejoiced. But Samuel prayed for God to send rain on their harvest to show them their sin.





28. David's Request Denied

Observation: 2 Samuel 12:16-23

"David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground... Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died...So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped."

Interpretation: The baby Bathsheba conceived, through David's adultery with her became sick. David prayed, fasted, and lay all night on the ground. But God denied David's request for the child to live. David made himself content with God's will.



29. Hezekiah's Prayer Recognized God as the Creator

Observation: 2 Kings 19:14-19

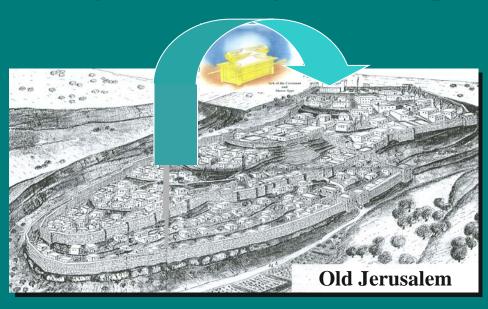
"Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, 'O LORD, the God of Israel, ... You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, .. Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God.' "

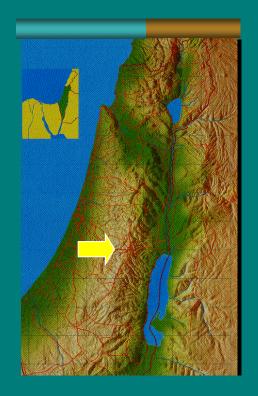
Interpretation: Hezekiah, king of Judah, did the right thing in the sight of the Lord. He took serious matters to God in prayer. Most biblical prayers, like his, begins with a theological statement about the person of God.





A Great Time in Israel's History Was When Solomon Moved the Ark from David's Old City to the Newly Built Temple.





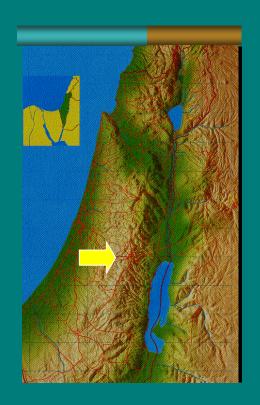
Then as Part of the Temple's Dedication, Solomon Gave a Speech and a Long Prayer.



31. Solomon's Long Prayer

Observation: 1 Kings 8:22-54

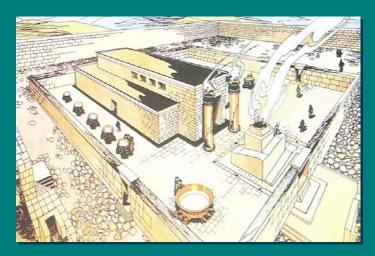
Interpretation: Probably the most glorious and formal public ceremony Jerusalem ever experienced was the movement of the Ark of the Covenant into the Temple Solomon built. Solomon's prayer at the close of the ceremony was longer than his sermon. In it he asked God to hear the prayers of both Israelites and foreigners who came to or faced Jerusalem and repented of their sin.



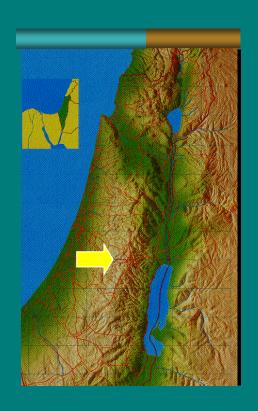


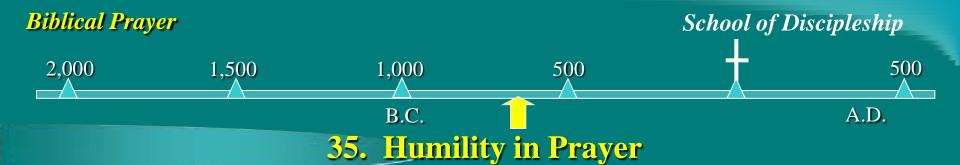
32. Prayer in the Temple

Observation: 2 Chronicles 6:12-42



Interpretation: When the Ark was in the Temple that Solomon had built, he prayed that, although God was in heaven and not contained in this building, that God would honor prayers made from this Temple or facing toward it.

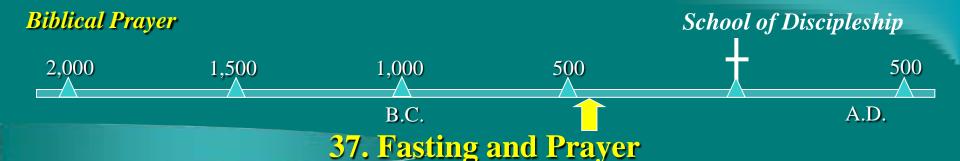




Observation: 2 Chronicles 33:12-13

"...When he (Manasseh) was in distress, he entreated the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God."

Interpretation: Manasseh was a bad king of Judah who reigned for a long time. He built altars to idols and refused to listen to God. But when he was captured and carried off by the Assyrians, he finally humbled himself. God listened and restored him when he humbled himself.



Observation: Nehemiah 1:4-11

"They said to me, 'The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.' When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." (vs. 3-4)

Interpretation: When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken and the Jews there were suffering, he was moved to weep and fast for days. This is the context of his prayer. He prayed night and day, confessing the sins of Israel and calling on God to keep His covenant. Only after this did he ask the king for help.



Observation: Job 1:1-5

"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil...When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually."

Interpretation: Job was a wealthy, righteous man who probably lived before Abraham. Part of his righteousness included getting up early to offer sacrifices as a form of prayer for the sins of his children.



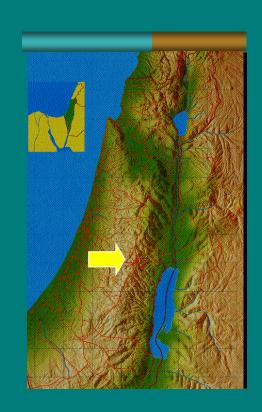
43. The Prayer Standard

Observation: Psalm 19:14

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer."

Interpretation:

David, after praising God for His creation and His Law, asks God to keep him from sin and to let his words and thoughts be acceptable to God.



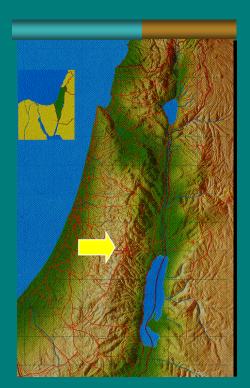


Observation: Psalm 23

"...He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." (vs. 3)

Interpretation:

David, expressed his trust in God as his leader and provider. We should express our trust in God as our Shepherd.





47. Prayers and Praises

Observation: Psalm 119:12, 66, 97, 105
"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes... Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments. ... O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day ... Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Interpretation:

In this, the longest prayer in the Bible, David cannot say enough about his admiration for the written Word of God. He tells God how he loves His Word and meditates on it daily.





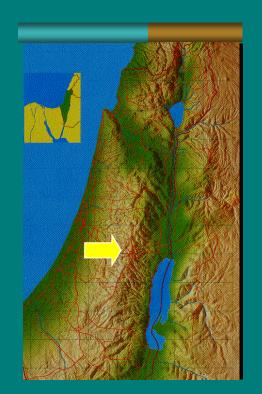
49. Solomon's Prayer Advice

Observation: Ecclesiastes 5:2

"Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few."

Interpretation:

While writing about vows, Solomon mentions prayer. Basically, he tells us to think through our prayers rather than flippantly making promises to God or asking things from God.





51. Changing God's Mind

Observation: Isaiah 38:1-5

"In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live." Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD... Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, 'Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life."

Interpretation:

From the view of sovereignty, God does not change, because then He would not be God. But from our viewpoint, He appears to change His mind. God clearly told Hezekiah that he would die yet changed that decree due to the prayer of the king.





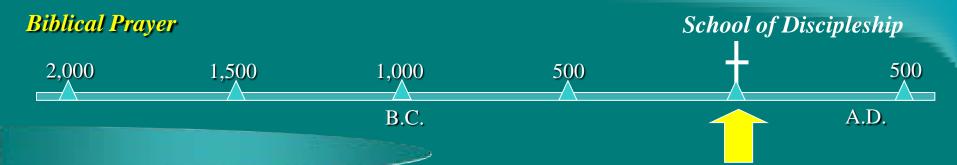
52. The Law and Prayer

Observation: Daniel 6:10

"Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously."

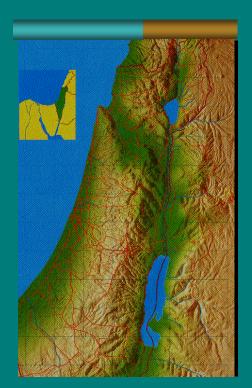
Interpretation:

Daniel intentionally broke the Medo-Persian law that forbid prayers to anyone except king Darius for a period of 30 days. Daniel could have complied with the law and waited 30 days or prayed privately. Instead, he continued his custom of public prayer three times daily, facing Jerusalem.



Our study of biblical prayer now takes us from the Old Testament into the New Testament







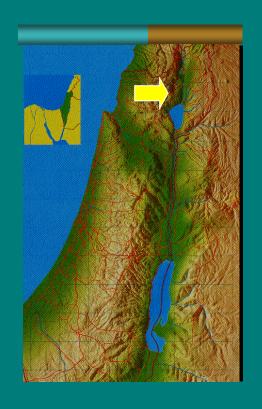
54. Private Prayer

Observation: Matthew 6:1

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."

Interpretation:

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned against doing good things with the motive that others will see you doing them. Then He illustrated this with giving to the poor, prayer, and later, fasting. The point is, if you desire rewards from people, you'll have none from God.





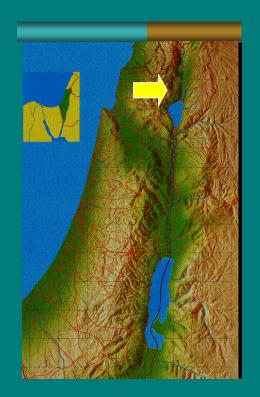
55. Proper Prayer

Observation: Matthew 6:7

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."

Interpretation:

Jesus probably was referring to the religious practices of chanting prayers or repeating traditional prayers that are usually done with lots of words but no thoughts.





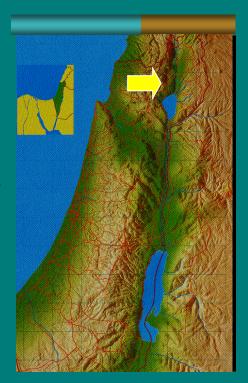
56. Asking Forgiveness

Observation: Matthew 6:12, 14, 15

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

Interpretation:

The Greek words here are very strong. Forgive us our debts only as we forgive our debtors. Before we pray, we must search our heart attitudes to see if there is someone we have not forgiven for a wrong done against us.





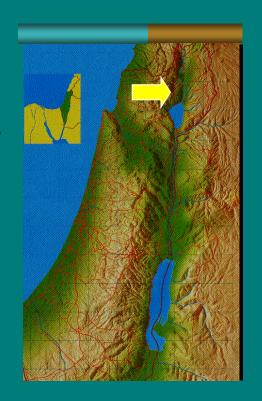
57. Ask and You Shall Receive

Observation: Matthew 7:7, 8

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."

Interpretation:

Jesus made the point that our heavenly Father wants to give us what we desire when our desires are good. Desires are indicated by what we seek for, as well as what we ask for.





58. Prayer For Support

Observation: Matthew 9:37, 38

"Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"

Interpretation:

As Jesus went from village to village, (mainly in the Jezreel Valley), He was moved by compassion because people were *distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd*. So He asked the disciples to pray for more people to minister to these sheep. But notice that these people had lots of religion, plenty of priests, Pharisees, scribes, elders, etc.





60. Giving Thanks before We Eat

Observation: Matthew 26: 26, 27

"While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you;'"

Interpretation:

Jesus celebrated the Passover in an Upper Room in Jerusalem with His 12 disciples. Before eating and before drinking, Jesus prayed, giving thanks. He did the same thing before feeding the 5,000 (John 6:11) and before feeding the 4,000 (Mark 8:6). This seems to be a regular practice of Jesus.





62. Discontinued Prayer

Observation: Matthew 26: 44-46

"And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Interpretation:

After praying three times about not going to the cross, Jesus knowing He would have to die, stopped praying, took His disciples, and went out to meet His killers.





69. Prayer and the World

Observation: John 17:15, 17, 20

"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one... Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth... I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;"

Interpretation:

After the Last Supper and before Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane near Jerusalem, He prayed what is usually called the "High Priestly Prayer". In that prayer He asked that His disciples and their converts be kept from evil but not from the world itself.



70. Prayer for Unity

Observation: John 17:21

"...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Interpretation:

During the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus asked for the unity of the 12 with each other and the Trinity, so that the world would know the truth about Christ.





71. Prayer for the Glory of God

Observation: John 17:24

"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

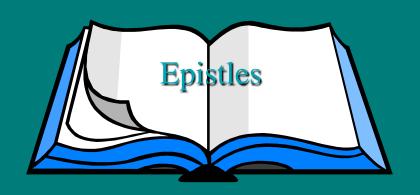
Interpretation:

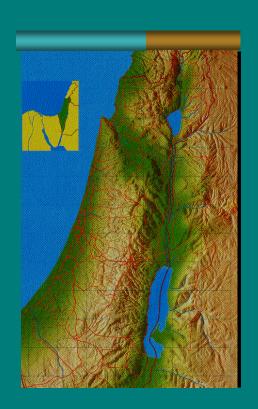
Jesus also asked God to glorify Himself and for His disciples to be with Him in heaven in order to see His glory, which was given Him by God the Father.

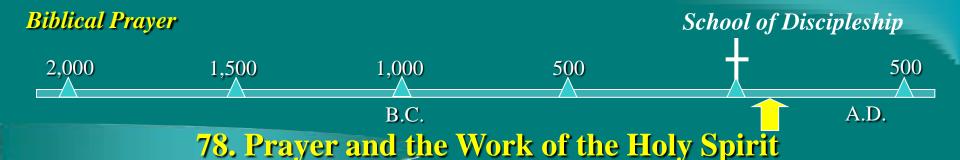




Our study of biblical prayer now takes us to the New Testament Epistles





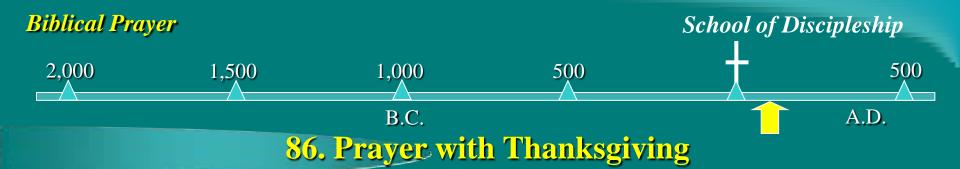


Observation: Romans 8:26-30

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (vs. 28)

Interpretation:

God is sovereign over our prayers. The context here is predestination. Paul said God even causes our weak, unintelligent, misdirected prayers to be brought before God by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the predetermined plan of God is what He ends up hearing. Other passages point out human impact and free will, but this one stresses God's sovereignty.

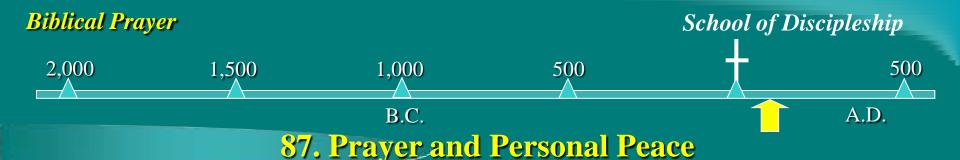


Observation: Philippians 4:6

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Interpretation:

Paul says that when we make requests of God, it should be with thankfulness.



Observation: Philippians 4:7

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Interpretation:

Paul told the Philippians to pray instead of worrying and to expect a peace of mind that would guard their hearts (feelings) and their minds (understanding).



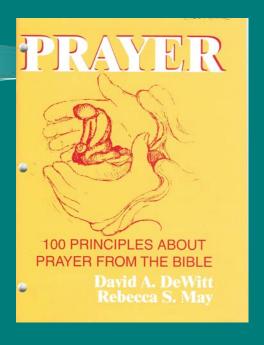
93. Prayer, Faith, and Doubt

Observation: James 1:5-8

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Interpretation:

James told his readers to pray for wisdom, but then he said they must do it in faith, defined as not doubting, because when they doubt, they have no direction in mind when they pray - like the surf of the sea.



This concludes "Biblical Prayer"

