

Series: Rightly Dividing the Subject of Prayer
"I Prayed in Faith: Why Didn't God Answer?"

Introduction:

1. Many Christians are hurt and confused because they prayed about something and God didn't answer their plea (restore my marriage, heal my loved one, meet this financial need, don't allow my child to make this mistake, etc.).

- They prayed in faith with all of their heart, but it didn't happen. I've been there and you probably have, too.

2. Many preachers present the subject of prayer in an almost spooky, superstitious way. Prayer is like their lucky stone that they can rub and get whatever they ask for. Inevitably, they always use the prayer promises in the gospels as their proof texts. **Matthew 16:19, 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13-14**

3. If people get what they asked for, they declare, "See! It works, prayer works." But if not, they begin to doubt God's promises and doubt God's faithfulness. They lament, "This prayer stuff just doesn't work like the Bible says."

4. As a young Christian, I struggled with this. I would pray in faith, believing with all of my heart, yet the answer never came. I heard explanations, but they didn't satisfy me:

- **Example:** It must be in accordance with His will (**1 John 5:14-15**), then these prayer promises in the gospels will work for you.
- 1 John wasn't written until over 50 years **after** these prayer promises were made. If this was the disclaimer (so to speak), why didn't Jesus tell them then?

5. Finally, as I began to understand the importance of right division (**2 Timothy 2:15**), I realized that I had been taking verses out of their context and claiming their fulfillment.

- **Illustration:** Imagine me taking a letter that was written to Pastor Tommy and claiming promises made to him.
- The entire Bible is written **for us**, but it isn't all written **to us** (this is evidenced in the fact that we worship on Sunday, eat meats that were forbidden, etc.).

6. In this Bible study, we will examine these prayer promises in their context. We will see that they were valid prayer promises, made to a specific group. We will see who they were made to, why they were made, and even see their literal fulfillment in Scripture.

First, these prayer promises were made to the twelve apostles.

1. Let's examine them one by one.

- **Matthew 16:19** - Jesus is speaking to Peter (one of the twelve) - He grants unto him the power to bind and loose things and promises that God in heaven will respond. A key is a badge of authority and power - this is given to Peter and the rest of the twelve (as we will see).
- **Matthew 18:18-19** - This is spoken to all of the twelve
- **Matthew 21:21-22** - This is spoken to the twelve. Notice the phrase "all things." The order is clear - A) ask B) believe C) receive
- **Mark 11:22-24** - This is spoken to the twelve. Say it, believe it, and you'll have it (verse 23) - desire, pray, believe, and receive (verse 24)
- **John 14:13-14** - This is spoken to the twelve. This is clear - ask in My name and I will do it.

2. Mark this carefully: These promises were never made in public to just anybody. They were made specifically to the twelve disciples of Jesus (the apostles). This authority was granted to them in light of the position they were to hold in Israel's kingdom. **Matthew 19:28**

Second, these prayer promises were made in the time context of Israel's kingdom.

1. During the time these promises were made, Jesus and His disciples were ministering to Israel only. **Matthew 10:5-6**
2. The gospel message they were to preach was Israel's kingdom at hand (near). **Matthew 4:17, 9:35, 10:7**
3. The twelve were looking for Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom church, built on the declaration of Christ, as Messiah. **Luke 22:28-30**
4. The twelve had no understanding of the present Body of Christ that you and I live in.
 - The **kingdom** church was to be built upon the declaration of Christ as Messiah.
 - The church, **the body of Christ**, is built upon the declaration of Christ crucified, buried, risen again and exalted in the heavenly places. **Ephesians 1:20-23**
 - The twelve didn't even have a comprehension of this most basic truth. **Luke 18:31-34**
5. This is the time context of these promises. They were made in a time when Israel's kingdom was being prepared for and they were made in view of this coming kingdom (refer to chart).
6. These promises were not made to the church, the body of Christ, nor were they reinforced in any of Paul's epistles to the church. They were made to the men who would be the pillars of Israel's future kingdom on the earth.

Third, these promises were fulfilled to the twelve apostles in Acts 1-7.

1. So what did Jesus mean by these promises? Were they legitimate? Most definitely - for the people, purpose, and time period in which they were given.
 - This is important. You cannot just lift promises out of their context.
 - Specific promises and commands are given to specific people at different times. You must look at Scripture in context.
2. What about these prayer promises made to the twelve? We see them fulfilled to the letter in Acts 1-7.
3. In Acts 1:6, Jesus is risen and the twelve are still looking for the establishment of Israel's kingdom (they hadn't been told anything different).
4. Jesus, once again, promises the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit comes in **Acts 2:4**. At this point, the twelve are supernaturally endowed with and led by God's Spirit.
5. Once again, they preach strictly to Israel (**Acts 2:36**), and their subject is repentance in view of the coming kingdom. **Acts 3:18-21**
6. Of course, Israel refused to repent nationally. Instead, they imprisoned, beat, and persecuted the twelve and even murdered Stephen.
7. But, here in the early part of Acts (while the kingdom is being offered to Israel), the apostles get a little foretaste of the power and authority they will have in Christ's kingdom (**Acts 2:43**). The apostles make no mistakes or blunders. When they prayed it or said it, it happened.
 - **Acts 3:4-8** - a literal fulfillment of **Mark 11:23** and **John 14:13-14**

- **Acts 4:24-33** - a fulfillment of **Matthew 18:18-19**
- **Acts 5:9-10** - a fulfillment of **Matthew 16:19**
- **Acts 5:15-16** - a fulfillment of **Mark 11:24** and **John 14:12-13**

8. We see all of these prayer promises fulfilled literally (no mistakes, no misfires, and no blunders). They could bind, loose, say it, claim it, and it happened. Why would God grant such power to men?

- Because they were supernaturally endowed with God's Spirit under God's kingdom program for Israel (a foretaste of **Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 36:24-29**).
- God was using the signs, wonders, and miraculous power of the apostles to call Israel to repentance (**1 Corinthians 1:22; Acts 2:43; 4:29-30, 5:11-12**).
- After Israel rejected God's call to repentance, God raised up the apostle Paul and revealed to Him that Israel's kingdom program would be temporarily suspended. He revealed to him the dispensation of grace and the mystery of the body of Christ (refer to chart). **Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:1-9; Colossians 1:25-27**

9. But, what about today? Do men possess these same powers? Can they pray in faith, speak a word of faith, and have it happen instantly? Can they see people healed instantaneously (every person)?

- I see no evidence of it. Some may claim these prayer promises and claim to have these apostolic powers, but "the proof is in the pudding." They don't have it.
- There is no need for it. The apostles have all died and Israel's program has been temporarily suspended. When Israel's program resumes in the tribulation, we see this miraculous power demonstrated again. **Revelation 11:3-6**

In Conclusion:

1. Does the body of Christ today have any prayer promises? We, in fact, have some glorious prayer promises that were given to us by Christ, through the apostle Paul.
2. They are not of the "name it and claim it" variety because we are not living under God's prophetic kingdom program for the nation of Israel.
3. We are part of the one body, the Body of Christ living in the mystery program as revealed to the apostle Paul.

Next week we will examine our glorious prayer promises.

Rapture of the church

Christ's return to earth

