



Culture of Prayer Conference

Session 4: History of Night and Day Prayer

I. **The Tabernacle of David:**

As we saw in our last session, King David wasn't just the King of Israel; he was a man whose deepest desire was to live out a life of prayer in God's presence all his days. He longed for a version of the house of prayer in Jerusalem where he and others could encounter the Lord in a devotional way (Ps. 27:4). The greatest expression of his love for God was realized in a well-organized, multigenerational order of worship which he established as national policy soon after becoming king over all the tribes of Israel. We commonly refer to this as the Tabernacle of David.

A. Establishing a Worship Order:

The Tabernacle of Moses continued to stay in operation but around the year 1000 BC, Bible History shows us clearly that David established a second tabernacle on Mt. Zion during the early part of his rule. In this tent he placed the Ark of the Covenant and he positioned singers and musicians around it. Initially he appointed two hundred and eighty-eight prophetic singers to minister with music before the Lord, to make petition, give thanks and praise to the Lord day and night (1Ch. Chapters 15-17).

"They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it...He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to extol, thank, and praise the Lord, the God of Israel...They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and...blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God. That day David first appointed Asaph and his associates to give praise to the Lord in this manner...David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister there regularly, according to each day's requirements (1Ch. 16:1-7, 37)."

B. The Kings of Judah:

The Tabernacle was later replaced by the Temple built in Jerusalem and there the Davidic order of worship continued. Of the dozens of Kings that followed David, there were a handful of leaders in Israel's history that embraced the Tabernacle of David and instituted its practice during their reign. Those that embraced the Tabernacle of David represent some of the most remarkable seasons of revival in Israel's history. Whenever the Davidic model was in practice under a king, a whole generation of people were embracing and sustaining it. We would be best served as thinking of each of these expressions as different houses of prayer entirely because while they took place in the same city, the house of prayer is

about people not places and the people were all different in each new generation.

1. David in Approximately 1050 B.C. (1Ch. 15-16).
2. Solomon in Approximately 1010 B.C. (2Ch. 5-7, 8:14-15).
3. Abijah from 913-910 B.C. (2Ch. 13:10-15, 14:1-3).
4. Asa in 910 B.C. (2Ch. 15:12-17).
5. Jehoshaphat in 896 B.C. (2Ch. 20).
6. Jehoiada and Joash in approximately 835 B.C. (2Ch. 23-24).
7. Hezekiah in 726 B.C. (2Ch. 29-30).
8. Josiah in 622 B.C. (2Ki. 22-23, 2Ch. 35).

C. The Purpose for the Original Temple:

It's really important that we understand why the original temple was built in Jerusalem. It wasn't because God was insecure and needed a temple to keep up with all the false gods that had temples. In fact He held out for thousands of years, so why was there all of the sudden a temple built? David had begun a 24/7 worship and prayer ministry we refer to as the tabernacle of David, and he desperately wanted to build God a temple in order to house that night and day prayer ministry. David wasn't allowed to build it but his son Solomon was.

"Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built so that my Name might be there, but I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.' "My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the Lord, the God of Israel. But the Lord said to my father David, 'You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name (1Ki. 8:16-19)."

D. The Activity of the Temple:

So the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem therefore existed to house the night and day prayer ministry of his father King David. As soon as it was constructed by Solomon, the 24/7 HOP was moved into the temple and was given some upgrades; this was the purpose for its construction and it's what went on in the temple off and on until the exile. Every time we read "the temple" in the Bible we need to read 24/7 house of prayer, because that's why it was built.

"In keeping with the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their duties, and the Levites to lead the praise and...He also appointed the gatekeepers by divisions for the various gates, because this was what David the man of God had ordered (2Ch. 8:14)."

II. The Unthinkable Exile to Babylon:

Night and day prayer was supposed to be a lasting ordinance for Israel and therefore be the foundation for them as a nation. It was to be the plumb line of their spirituality and a continual expression of their love and commitment to the Lord. But they got very off course and as a result God brought them

into exile; that is, He deported nearly the entire population of Jews from the land and brought them hundreds of miles away to the city of Babylon.

“The Lord...sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they...despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and...God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple...set fire to God’s temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem...He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors (2Ch. 36:15-20).”

A. Returning from Captivity:

After 70 years of captivity, a group of exiles from Babylon were sent back to Jerusalem in order to reestablish the Tabernacle of David order of worship. As soon as they were established in Jerusalem, they restarted the ancient worship order that had fallen during the exile. Approximately 50,000 people returned to the land specifically commissioned by the Lord to go rebuild the house of prayer.

“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation...“The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord...Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem (Er. 1:1-5).”

B. Ezra the Priest:

In 536 B.C. (Er. 3:10-13), Ezra the priest came from Babylon. Upon arrival he put the singers and the Levites in their place and restored Davidic Worship to the community of the returning exiles. He put the worship order back into place as soon as the foundation of the new Temple had been laid. This created a spiritually charged environment for the building of the Temple.

“When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord: “He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid (Er. 3:10-11).”

C. Nehemiah Comes on the Scene:

In 446 B.C (Ne. 12:28-47), Nehemiah returned from Babylon and saw the shambles of what had previously been instituted by Ezra. Against much opposition, he built up the wall around Jerusalem for its protection and helped to stabilize the community of the returned exiles. He also rebuked

the community sharply for permitting the tabernacle worship to cease and then he reinstated the Davidic worship model and posted the full-time singers back in their place (Ne. 12:46-47, 13:4-5, 10-11).

“I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields. So I rebuked the officials and asked them, “Why is the house of God neglected?” Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts (Ne. 13:10-11).”

III. **The Monastic Movement’s Impact on the Church:**

For over a thousand years, monasticism held a key role in the development of theology and practice of Christianity as a whole. The early monastic tradition was defined by a number of practices; taking vows of poverty, chastity and strict obedience to one’s spiritual superior, but nothing marks the monastic movement like night and day prayer. From the time of the fourth and fifth century, the reality of occupational monks and nuns were an accepted part of society. The existence of monastic communities was the primary way that the Church survived the Dark Age and then continued on to impact culture in the Middle Ages. Monasticism was the cradle in which perpetual prayer (laus perennis) was birthed and became the backbone of the monastic communities.

A. 250 A.D. Cyprian of Carthage (Africa):

St. Cyprian of Carthage (200-253 AD), born Caecilius Cyprianus Thascius took refuge in the hills outside Carthage and there began to challenge his fellow African Christians to “be as vigilant at night as in the light of day,” calling them to “not cease (at night) also to pray and give thanks to God.” So they established the first night and day prayer watches of that period, though it is difficult to know how long these carried on or with what frequency. We do however know from the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria (AD 296-373) that such seasons of night-and-day prayer were common for the Church throughout the first three centuries of the Christian era.

B. 300-350 AD The Desert Fathers:

With Cyprian in recent history, some radical believers, who would later be known as the Desert Fathers, retreated into the Egyptian wilderness to devote themselves to unceasing prayer. It was from this unlikely environment of solitary prayer that the first missionaries were sent out to take the gospel to the pagan Celts of Northern Europe. Many of the Celtic converts of the Desert Fathers learned the way of life from their fathers in the faith and then also gave themselves to 24/7 prayer. This effectively brought continual prayer into Europe for the first time in that era.

C. 400 AD Alexander the Sleepless:

Around 400 AD Alexander Akimites established laus perennis (perpetual praise) in response to the Apostle Paul’s exhortation to pray without ceasing (1Th. 5:17). Driven from Constantinople by religious persecution 300-400 monks established a monastery at Gormon at the mouth of the Black Sea. This became the founding monastery of the Order of the

Acoemetae (literally, “the sleepless ones”). Alexander died here in 430, but the influence of the Acoemetae continued on. The monastery was divided into six choirs which rotated throughout the day, each new choir relieving the one before it to create uninterrupted prayer and worship twenty-four hours a day.

- D. 522 AD Perpetual Praise at St. Maurice in Switzerland:
Between 515 and 521, Sigismund, the King of Burgundy, provided a lavish endowment for a monastery to be established in Agaunum (present day Switzerland). It was built on the site of a historic atrocity where some 7,000 Egyptian Christians had been martyred in St. Maurice. There an abbot instituted *laus perennis* in 522 AD following the tradition of the Acoemetae. Choirs of monks sang in rotation day and night; this continued at St. Maurice until around 900 AD, impacting monasteries all over France and Switzerland.
- E. 530 AD The Order of Saint Benedict:
Benedict of Nursia (480-547), called Saint Benedict, began establishing monasteries in Europe around 530 AD. He wrote “The Rule of Saint Benedict,” which are volumes of monastic rules which made up a comprehensive way of life based on the principle of “pray and work.” This book was a true historical treasure of spiritual wisdom that served as foundation for the movement and sustained monasteries for decades and centuries. Daily life under the Benedictine Order revolved around 8 set prayer meetings, called canonical hours or offices, that could last as little as 1 hour each or could be extended longer.
- F. 558 AD Bangor Mor and the Perpetual Psalmody:
Bangor, a town near Belfast Ireland, began a far reaching monastic community sometime around 558 AD. A monk named Comgall instituted a rigid monastic rule of incessant prayer and fasting. People came by the thousands; by the time that Comgall died in 602 AD, the annals report that 3,000 monks looked to him for guidance. Bangor became famous for its choral psalmody. “It was this music which was carried to the continent by the Bangor Missionaries in the following century” (Hamilton, Rector of Bangor Abbey). Many monks went out from Bangor establishing *laus perennis* in other places.
- G. 559-615 AD Saint Columbanus Impact on Europe:
In 590 AD, a monk named Colombanus, one of Comgall’s fiery leaders, set out from Bangor with twelve other brothers, including a man named Gall who went on to plant monasteries throughout Switzerland. In Burgundy, Colombanus established a severe monastic rule at Luxeuil, which mirrored that of Bangor. From there he went to Bobbio in Italy and established a monastic house, which grew to become one of the largest and finest monasteries in Europe. Colombanus died in 615 AD, but by 700 AD, one hundred additional monasteries had been planted throughout France, Germany and Switzerland.
- H. 910 AD Cluny, France:

In 910 AD, William the Pious, the Duke of Aquitaine, founded a monastery at Cluny, France. With significant financial resources at his disposal, the abbey was able to commit to *laus perennis* (perpetual praise). This monastery became a mission's center and by the twelfth century it had planted 314 monasteries all over Europe. It became a première learning center, training for at least four Popes. In 1089 AD they began construction of an enormous abbey which was finished around 1132 AD. It was considered one of the wonders of the Middle Ages as it was the largest building in Europe until St. Peter's Basilica was built in Rome during the sixteenth century.

I. 1120 Clair Vaux, France:

A Catholic monk named Bernard (later named Bernard of Clair Vaux) gathered 700 monks in a valley called Clair Vaux ("Valley of Light"), and began a prayer meeting that continued 24 hours. History records Bernard as having operated in great power and doing miracles. His influence grew so great that he was later asked to be the Pope but he rejected the invitation so that he could maintain a lifestyle of devotion to prayer and fasting. Upon his refusal of the Papacy, he did something that no man in history has ever done; he single handedly picked the next Pope, his disciple Bernardo da Pisa.

IV. Expressions of the 1700 and 1800s:

There is no way to catalog all the expressions of night and day prayer that occurred historically at any one period of time but if we can get a glimpse at just a few of them from history then we can learn from and be encouraged by their perseverance in much more difficult times and environments than our own. From the 1700s the monastic movement was greatly reduced, in part because of the spread of Protestantism across Europe and beyond. Traditionally Protestantism has not made much room for night and day prayer because the focus was far more on the mission of spreading the Gospel to the unreached through preaching. Even so there have been some of the most beautiful marriages of mission and continual prayer birthed during these centuries.

A. 1722 Count Zinzendorf & the Moravians:

Count Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf was born in 1700 to a godly aristocratic family. His father died when he was very young and he became the would-be inheritor of their large estate. In 1722, Zinzendorf came into contact with a Moravian preacher, named Christian David, who spoke to him about a group of persecuted Christian refugees from Moravia. Zinzendorf soon offered them asylum on his land and they formed the community of Herrnhut, "The Watch of the Lord." Zinzendorf soon became their leader. In August of 1727 they experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that thrust them into the place of prayer. Within two weeks, twenty-four men and twenty-four women covenanted to pray in "hourly intercessions." This began a prayer meeting that went non-stop for the next 100 years. The Moravians went on to impact the world through prayer and missions.

B. 1703-1791 England John Wesley:

John Wesley had witnessed the Moravians firsthand and gave his life to the Lord through their witness and on 1st January 1739, he gathered some friends together to pray through the night. That night changed the course of British and American history as Wesley famously recorded in his Journal how: 'about three in the morning as we were continuing instant in prayer the power of God came mightily upon us in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell to the ground.' Out of this planned "one night" prayer meeting, a season of unceasing prayer ensued that touched both continents by sparking revival.

C. 1703-1758 Massachusetts Jonathan Edwards:

Jonathan Edwards went on to fuel the revival in America through his passionate preaching and his call to persevering prayer. In 1744, Edwards, recently inspired by the prayer movement he saw happening in Scotland, wrote a letter seeking to mobilize American Christians to commit themselves to a seven-year season of prayer. Below is one of his letters written to the Church in America.

"God is stirring up a considerable number of his ministers and people to unite in extraordinary prayer, for the revival of religion and the advancement of his kingdom...Let me beseech all who sincerely love the interest of real Christianity...to unite, in this affair, with one heart and voice: and let us go speedily to pray before the Lord...We ought not only to go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek his mercy, but also to go constantly. We should unite in our practice these two things, which our Saviour unites in his precept, PRAYING and NOT FAINTING...If we should continue some years, and nothing remarkable in providence should appear as though God heard and answered," we are, says Edwards, to persevere regardless "willing that God should answer prayer, and fulfill his own glorious promises, in his own time...It is now proposed that this extraordinary united prayer should continue for seven years, from November 1746."

V. **The Movement Spreads Globally in the 1900's:**

As a result of so much prayer prior to the start of the 20th century, there followed many new, localized, prayer revivals all over the world. The renowned revival historian J. Edwin Orr describes the end of the 19th century as "*springs of little prayer meetings which seemed to arise spontaneously all over the world, combining into streams of expectation which became a river of blessing.*" One remarkable result of these many streams of prayer was that the first decade of the 20th century witnessed the most remarkable global outpouring of the Holy Spirit since the New Testament Pentecost. With revival being a significant goal of night and day prayer, it seems right to make mention of the following events: Revival movements shook Wales, North America, Korea, China, Scandinavia, India, Indonesia and many other parts of the world. More than five million people in these nations turned to Jesus between 1900-1902 alone. The Welsh awakening of 1904 triggered a domino effect around the world. Between 1905-1906 the Christian population in India grew by 70%, while in Japan the Church doubled and in

Indonesia it tripled. Perpetual prayer expressions continued to grow and multiply across the world.

- A. 1874 Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration Clyde Missouri:
While both this and the next example began in the late 1800's, I have included them in this section because they are both still currently going. In August 1874 five sisters journeyed from Maria Rickenbach, Switzerland, to the United States, at the request of the Benedictine Fathers at Conception, Missouri. Thirty-year-old Mother Anselma Felber was chosen as their superior and they began unbroken night and day prayer soon after establishing the monastery in Clyde, MO. Since then, 3 additional perpetual assemblies have been founded by the sisters (Tucson AZ, Sand Springs OK, Dayton WY).
- B. 1878 The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Wisconsin:
In contemporary America, a little-known order of nuns in La Crosse, Wisconsin are responsible for the longest-running prayer meeting in the history of this continent. They have been praying around the clock, without pause since 1878. For over 135 years the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration have had at least two sisters on duty in rotating shifts to fulfill the hundreds of prayer requests they receive each week. One of the sisters there, Sister Malinda Gerke, asks "Can you imagine what this world would be like if there was no-one praying 24 hours a day?" It continues to this day.
- C. 1903-1906 Los Angeles Azusa Street:
For three years day-and-night prayer continued unbroken in a back street of Los Angeles at 312 Azusa Street. Out of this little prayer meeting, modern Pentecostalism was born in an explosion of controversy. According to one cynical report written in the Los Angeles Times, a bizarre new religious sect had people "breathing strange utterances...and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve-racking attitude of prayer and supplication."

"Meeting night and day continuously for three years, Azusa Street was an all-inclusive fellowship...By the power of the Spirit, a revolutionary new type of Christian community was born." -Richard Foster
- D. 1915 Pink Sisters of Adoration Philadelphia:
For the last 100 years the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, also known as the Pink Sisters, have kept a literal 24/7-prayer watch going at their convent located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These sisters operate their schedule in accordance with the 8 canonical hours of prayer as laid out in the Rule of Saint Benedict. Additionally, they take shifts individually each day to fill the rest of the 24-hour schedule to ensure that there are always some of the sisters praying in their chapel day and night.
- E. 1962 Christian Revival Prayer Houses Cathe, Nagaland India:
In 1962 the Christian Revival House of Prayer was established and a 24-hour prayer watch was established. Sixty homes were built to house those who would devote their lives to prayer and serve to keep night and

day prayer a reality in northern India, and the neighboring towns supply the food and other necessities required by those who are sustaining the prayer watch. This house of prayer has inspired another 100+ prayer watches.

- F. 1980's Pastor David Yonggi Cho's South Korea Prayer Mountains:
South Korea is well known for the Prayer Mountains where Pastor David Yonggi Cho established his prayer ministry in 1973. Cho pastors the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea and has a deep commitment to continuous prayer. The Prayer Mountain was soon attracting over a million visitors per year, as people would spend retreats in the prayer cells provided on the mountain. Various denominations have established additional venues in these mountains where people can go to pray night-and-day and there is a continual stream of visitors coming to pray.