

A Christ Awakening and the Movement of Prayer



By David Bryant

For about twenty-five years as I've been traveling in the prayer movement worldwide, I've been asked many questions. One of the questions asked most often is, "What is the most formative moment in your life for giving you a heart for prayer?" That is an easy one to answer.

It goes back to 1970 when I was pastoring a little church adjacent to Kent State University in Ohio. I stood on the campus the day the National Guards shot into the students, killing four, maiming about eighteen others. A real revolution began on that campus that transformed events on the other side of the globe and in a sense transformed the course of history.

Our church had a strong ministry to students on the campus so we were caught up in what was happening right from the start. We finally reached that point as a church where we couldn't do anything else but pray. But none of us knew how to pray, including the pastor of that church who had never had a course on prayer in his life and probably had not prayed more than

five or ten minutes at a time up until then as far as I could remember.

A group of elders in that church decided with me that we would meet together for six weeks, four nights a week, for two hours a night to seek the Lord in the midst of a revolution. That first night the question was in our mind: how are we going to fill the time for six weeks, four nights a week, two hours a night with prayer that makes any difference, or even with any kind of prayer at all?

Finally someone suggested we pray through the book of Ephesians, one chapter for each of the six weeks. Each night of that particular week we would re-read the chapter for that week, and maybe we would talk five or ten minutes about some of its implications as we saw what it might mean for what was happening all around us and for our church. Then we would simply get down on our knees in a little circle at the chairs where we were and lay our Bibles open on the chair to that chapter of Ephesians and basically let God guide us for the rest of the two hours with the words and the phrases and the insights and the promises that were in that particular chapter. A lot of things came out of those six weeks of prayer. We saw a lot of answers to prayer even for the next four years on that campus, where we saw literally hundreds of students come to Christ. God did an amazing work on that campus that touched the whole world before it was over.

So to the question: "What is the most formative moment to bring you into a commitment to prayer?" My answer is that it was when I got down on my knees with a group of men who didn't know any more about prayer than I did, and we struggled together, and God's Spirit taught us how to pray as we learned how to pray God's Word back to Him, as we worked through one of the greatest blueprints of revival you can find anywhere – the Book of Ephesians. I have never thought about revival the same again. I saw it as nothing less than a Christ Awakening.

My Most Meaningful Moment in Prayer

A second question I'm often asked as I travel around the Body of Christ is, "What might be your most meaningful moment of prayer?" There have been quite a few, but if I had to pick one that was the most meaningful in my own experience, it would be a moment when nobody prayed.

It was 1997 on the Mall in Washington, D.C. One and one-half million men had gathered for six hours of prayer and repentance to seek God for revival in our nation. I was assigned to get up on the platform toward the end of the second hour and give a short message and then get the crowd back into prayer again. I went to a little prayer tent behind the platform where all speakers were to go to be prayed over before they got up on the platform.

While the prayer team was praying over me in that prayer tent, I began to weep, because I saw a vision in front of me, at least in my heart and mind, of something happening on that Mall, which in fact did take place about twenty minutes later. I knew God was saying to me that He didn't want me to give my talk at all, but He wanted me to get up and do what I did twenty minutes later. I was to read from Revelation, chapter one, the glorious vision that John had of the Lord Jesus Christ, where His eyes were like a flame of fire, His face shining like the sun, His voice like the thundering of many waters. It says that John fell down at His feet like a dead man, and he stayed in that position until Jesus reached out His hand and touched him and said, "Do not be afraid. I have the keys of death and Hades, and I want to show you what is and show you what is to come."

So on the platform, I read that portion of Revelation, chapter one, and then I invited one and one-half million men to prostrate themselves flat on their faces on the ground like dead men, and to take the next three minutes and be like a dead person in absolute silence before the One who was the

answer to all the prayers we were praying on that platform and who was the heart and center of the revival for our nation for which we longed. That's a moment I will never forget, to look out as far as the eye could see and see men flat on their faces, silent before God.

I've had a number of people come up to me in the years since and say, "David, the moment that changed my life was the moment when we did nothing." I believe that was the most significant moment of prayer for me personally – just to be silent before Him because every answer to prayer always begins and ends in Him. That day was truly a foreshadowing of the Christ Awakening that is coming to the Church.

A Valuable Prayer Principle

Another question I'm often asked is, "David, of all the things you have taught on prayer, what would be the most valuable principle you could share with people concerned about prayer?" If there is one I would pick out of hundreds, it would be one that dawned on me one day after I had completed a number of weeks traveling to about twenty-five cities of the world, holding urban consultations on united prayer.

Leaders of various churches and ministries in these cities came together to spend a whole day looking at what it would take to raise up a movement of united prayer in their cities. Most of that time I was writing down the things I was learning from these Christian leaders. I began to discover what I have come to understand is the most important principle for uniting and sustaining a work of prayer, whether in your own life or in your church or in a city-wide movement of prayer. It is to be clear on the hope that you are praying toward – the hope that God has given us in all His promises – and to be sure that that hope is shaped by nothing less than the power and glory of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. In other words we need to be clear on what God's promises would look like if they would be fully revealed in our lives and in our churches and

in our cities, and to become so possessed by that hope, so hungry for the glory and power of Christ and His Kingdom, that we can do nothing else but pray.

The Key Passage

Another frequently asked question is, “David, what is the one passage of Scripture that has had the most meaning to you in your life and ministry and prayer?” If I had to choose just one passage, I would choose the one passage in the Old Testament that is quoted most often by the New Testament writers. That way you get the Old Testament and the New Testament all wrapped up in one text. Even Jesus Himself drew on it. It is the one text used to describe what God was doing in that first-century Church, the text that they went back to time and again. It is about prayer and the supremacy of Christ. It is Psalm 110:1-4:

“The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’ The LORD will extend Your mighty scepter from Zion; You will rule in the midst of Your enemies. Your troops will be willing on Your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn You will receive the dew of Your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’”

The New Testament writers, trying to interpret what the Spirit of God was doing among them, went to a text that talks about Jesus at the right hand conquering His enemies, moving among the nations, mobilizing an army to join Him. And that army is arrayed in the garments of priesthood, full of vigor like the youth, and laboring under the leadership of One to whom God has said, “I have sworn and will not change My mind. This is how the battle is going to be fought and this is how it is going to be won. It’s as You, My Son, remain a priest like Melchizedek,” who was both a king and a priest. The New Testament writers said, “That text helps us understand what

God is doing among us,” and I would think therefore that the text describes what God wants to do among us as well.

The Miracle, Message, Mission and Measure of the Supremacy of Christ

The central theme in the answer to those four questions is quite obvious: It is the supremacy of Christ. I can't think of a better word to describe who He is than the word "supremacy."

The supremacy of Christ is the miracle of the worldwide prayer movement. There is no other explanation for why God's people are praying today around the world in ways we have never seen them praying in the history of the Church, except to explain it by the supremacy of Christ. Nothing in us naturally wants to seek the Lord; so if I feel a spirit of prayer stirring inside of me, or if I am a part of a movement of prayer in my church or my city, I know the origin of that is from heaven itself. The mark of that prayer emphasis is the conquering power of Christ, that He could conquer my heart so fully that He is able to put within me a faith and a hope in the promises of God that would stir me to prayer. The miracle that the prayer movement even exists, the miracle of prayer in any of our lives, is explainable only by the supremacy of Christ.

The message of this movement of prayer is the supremacy of Christ. In these twenty-five years I've traveled with the prayer movement, I have heard hundreds of thousands of prayers prayed. If you were to ask me, "What is everybody praying about?" I would say, you could take thousands of prayers that I've heard and bring it down to one request, said in a thousand different ways. Whether God's people are praying for personal deliverance and healing, or revival in their church, or the transformation of their city, or the reclamation of their nation, or the evangelization of unreached people – it is really one prayer, a prayer for Jesus to reveal Himself more fully for who He is in His supremacy.

Think back over the prayers you have prayed this week. Could you be satisfied with the answer to any one of those prayers that was less than Christ revealing more of His glory and His supremacy to you or to someone else for whom you prayed? The reason I am so encouraged that we are on the threshold of a Christ Awakening in the Body of Christ is because this is what I hear God leading His people to pray. I don't believe He is stirring us up to pray for something this grand and glorious, and so in keeping with His promises, only to disappoint us and frustrate us. The message of the prayer movement is that God is getting ready to give an awakening to the supremacy of His Son, and it's not far off!

The mission God's praying people around the world hold in common is to keep laboring before the Throne of Heaven, asking and seeking and knocking until the earth is covered with the knowledge of the glory of the supremacy of Christ like the waters cover the sea. That is the mission of the prayer movement, the passion; that's what's driving God's people into prayer like never before.

Finally, the supremacy of Christ is the measure of the prayer movement. Even while God's people are praying, God has already begun to answer in them. God is first of all conquering His praying people while they pray with a fresh revelation of the supremacy of His Son to them, in the place of prayer. This is the measure of the prayer movement – the glory and supremacy of Christ.

About eight years ago I sat in the office of the pastor of the largest church in the world – a church that has grown in the last forty-some years from a church of one hundred members to one of 700,000, and all of it by prayer cells. I asked him, "Is there any part of Scripture that can help me understand what God has done in this church?" This godly man answered me quickly. "Yes, Matthew 11:12," he said. In the NIV here is what is said: "The kingdom of God is forcefully advancing and the people of force are laying hold of it." As he explained

it, the secret of the growth of this congregation is that the people have begun to sense where God is moving, where His kingdom is advancing, and then they have risen up and laid hold of God's kingdom initiative by prayer, and in the process they have become a people of force as well. The secret is no secret at all; it's the supremacy of Christ.

What Is the Supremacy of Christ?

I've spent quite a few years studying verses of Scripture on the supremacy of Christ. Thus far in my studies I've boiled it down to three little phrases: Who He is; what He imparts; and where He leads. The supremacy of Christ is who He is as the Son of God; what He imparts as the regent of God; and where He leads in the purposes of God.

The supremacy of Christ is first of all not what He is doing, but what He is as the Son of God: His character, His nature, His ways, who He is as creator; who He is as Lord of the nations; who He is as redeemer of the whole earth; who He is because of the cross; who He is because He has conquered death. The supremacy of Christ is first of all about who He is – the Son of God before the worlds were made. It is also about who He will be always for all the ages to come.

Secondly, it's about what He imparts as the regent of God. He is the One to whom God has submitted all of heaven and earth; the One who has all authority in heaven and earth, who is not only the Lord of the nations, but the Head of the Church. As such He imparts to the Church His gifts, the fruits of His risen life and His presence, His love, His holiness, His righteousness. He wants to fill His people with Himself. He brings to pass all the promises of God for all the people of God and for all people and for all the creation of God.

And finally, the supremacy of Christ is where He leads in the purposes of God as He leads His Church into the fullness of the stature of Himself; as He leads the missionary cause among

the nations; as He leads all of history into its last and final consummation when He comes as Lord of lords and King of kings in all of His resplendent glory.

When I think of His supremacy I think of Colossians 3:1-4, where Paul says to set your mind on things above where Christ is seated. Don't put your affections on things on earth; put your affections on things above, for you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God, and when Christ who is our life appears, then will you appear with Him in all of His supremacy finally displayed for every eye to see and every tongue to confess, and you'll be there in it with Him. That's who He is as the Son of God.

When I think of His supremacy, I think of Ephesians, chapter one, where Paul talks about the power that raised Him and seated Him above every rule and authority and every name that is named, not only in this age but in all the ages to come in order that He who fills the whole universe might fill His Church with the fullness of God. That is supremacy working its way out inside the people of God as He fills us with the life of His Son. That's what He imparts as the regent of God.

When I think of His supremacy, I think about 1 Corinthians fifteen, where it says He will be the first fruits of all of us whom He has raised from the dead, and then it goes on to say that He must reign until He has defeated every one of His enemies, and the last enemy to be conquered is death. But then Paul says that is not the end; he says that then even after He has conquered death, there is more of God's purposes into which we are to be led. He says that there is coming that moment in the consummation when the Son will take the kingdom which He has formed out of the whole universe, redeemed by His blood, and He will bring it back and submit it to the Father so that God may be all in all. That's where He leads us in the purposes of God.

Focus, Fullness, Fulfillment

Over the years I've coined three little words to describe these three dimensions: Focus, Fullness and Fulfillment. Who He is as the Son of God – that's the focus of His supremacy. What He imparts as the regent of God – that's the fullness of His supremacy. Where He leads in the purposes of God – that is the fulfillment of His supremacy.

Is there a difference between the centrality of Christ and the supremacy of Christ? Yes, there is. Centrality is part of supremacy, but centrality by itself is not enough. The centrality of Christ – keeping Christ at the center – means we want to keep Christ as the center of our lives, the center of what we do, the center of how we grow in the Lord, the center of where we are headed in our life in the Lord. That's important, and that is part of owning up to His supremacy. But the supremacy of Christ means more. It points us to what God wants us to be at the center of who Christ is, what He's doing, and where He's headed, and that implies a whole lot more. That has to change the way we pray.

We often say, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." That is true and that is wonderful. That is about centrality. But supremacy would say it this way: "God has a wonderful plan to bring glory to His Son for all the ages to come, and He loves you enough to give you a place in it." It isn't just that God has a plan for my life from Jesus. It's that my destiny is locked into who Christ is and what He's doing and where He is headed. My life is about God's plan for His Son!

Implications for the Prayer Movement

Once this gets hold of you it will change the way you study the Scriptures and what you see in the Scriptures. It will change the way you pray. It will change the way you spend your money. As you live your life you will think, "How does this fit into who Christ is, what He is up to, and where He's headed?" Psalm 110 says, "The troops will be willing in Your

day of battle.” In other words, the troops aren’t all wrapped up in whether the king is coming among them and bringing the blessings they desperately need in their lives. The troops are looking at where this Priest-King is headed, how He intends to fight the battle, and they are saying, “We’re ready! We’re going to go with You. We’re going to go where You’re going, and we’re going to do it Your way. It’s Your day of battle. Lead on!”

When you say, “I pray this prayer in Jesus’ Name,” what does that mean? Does that mean I pray this with His authority? Yes. Does that mean I pray this because I belong to Him? Absolutely. You’re taking His identity upon yourself. That’s what gives you the authority and the right to come before the Throne of Grace.

But may I suggest that no prayer is valid if we cannot also say at the end of it: “Father, I pray this in Jesus’ Name – because I believe that if You answer this prayer, it will increase the focus of many on the supremacy of Your Son; it will increase our experience of the fullness of the supremacy of Your Son; if You answer this prayer I believe it will help to advance the purposes of Your Son.”

That’s what it means to pray in Jesus’ Name. That’s what gives me confidence that if I ask according to His will I have what I ask (1 John 5:14-15). If it is all about the Son, if it is all about the life that is in the Son, if I pray with that understanding and that agenda – then I know He hears me and will answer me.

It is good to ask yourself before you ask anything of the Lord, “To what end am I about to pray this? What do I ultimately expect to come out of this? How far into the horizons of God’s promises am I willing to look as I ask this prayer?” Then when you finish a prayer, see if you can finish with this little phrase, “Father, I ask this in order that...” Try for a few days never praying a prayer without finishing

with the phrase, "in order that...." and then you fill in the blank. I am suggesting that what you put after that phrase has to relate somehow, directly, to the supremacy of Christ.

When Jesus' disciples said, "Teach us to pray," He said, "First of all, pray the Father will reveal the matchlessness of His name." That is focus. "Pray that His kingdom come, that His will be done on earth just as it is in heaven." That is fulfillment. "Pray He will meet your daily needs, that He will keep you bound together in love and forgiveness and that He enable you to continue triumphing over every attack of the enemy." That's fullness.

In John seventeen, when Jesus is standing at the threshold of the greatest moment of all eternity and He prays, what does He pray about? Jesus prays, "Father, glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You." Focus. Jesus prays, "Father, I pray You will keep them bound together in a oneness that's like the oneness You and I have." Fullness. Jesus said, "I pray not only for them but for all who will believe because of their word." Fulfillment. The whole prayer of John seventeen is about the supremacy of Jesus Christ! He ends by praying, "That when My glory is finally revealed before the whole universe, that these who are standing in this room with Me right now, will be there with Me to see it all in its climax."

In Revelation five we read the great hymn about the worthy One: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Before singing this hymn, we see the elders offer up incense. John says that the twenty-four incense burners represent the prayers of the saints. Then they sing. It is almost like, "Here are the prayers; now here is the answer." Look at the great prayers in Revelation five and ask, "Do my prayers in

any way touch on those themes? Do my prayers in any way exalt the supremacy of Christ in the way I'll be singing about the answers for all Eternity?"

In Revelation chapter eight, again we see the incense burners and the smoke, which John says represents the prayers of the saints. He says when they are offered up there is silence for thirty minutes. Why? Because something is about to happen, the magnitude of which we don't even begin to know. Everyone is breathless and watching. After the silence the angels move into place and the rest of the Book of Revelation unfolds – with all the thunder and lightning and all the destruction, as well as the redemption, with the saints rising up and showing themselves to be overcomers and victorious through it all. The rest of the Book of Revelation is the answer to the prayers of the saints.

There is silence in heaven because God is about to answer the prayers of the saints beyond what any of them had dared to dream or believe was possible. They've had foretastes to be sure. But there is even more to come and somehow in the divine economy, what God does in the rest of the Book of Revelation is related to the prayers of His people, including your prayers this very day. The implications of the supremacy of Christ for our life of prayer are significant. As Paul says in Ephesians 3:20-21, He whose power is at work in us is willing to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. "Now to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever."

Christ Awakening – the Need of the Church

The theme of this conference is, "A Christ Awakening." Why is that such an important theme to have for a prayer conference? What does an awakening mean for a life, a church, or a whole generation? It's similar to how you woke up this morning. An awakening to Christ is God bringing enough things to invade our consciousness that we begin to arouse and to start seeing

Jesus in whole new ways. It is not God giving us something we did not have. It's all here because it is all in Christ and He is here among us right now – not part of Him but all of Him (Col. 1:27). It's God awakening faith, awakening hunger, awakening revelation of who His Son is.

Which comes first – a Christ awakening and then we start praying, or we start praying and then God gives a Christ awakening? I think it is both at the same time. They work together. The more God reveals of His Son to us the hungrier we get to seek His face, which is an expression used all through Scripture to describe a life of prayer. We are seeking His glorious face in all His glorious supremacy. To answer our prayers, essentially God wakes up an individual, a church, a city, a whole nation – to whom Christ is in new measure; He awakens us to what we have not seen in Christ before. That's the ultimate answer to all of our prayers.

There has been much prayer for revival the last number of years. Why don't we see the revival we are praying for? One of my answers to that is, "We are in the first phase of it!" God is waking up His people enough to what He wants to give of His Son and His Kingdom to this generation that they're praying like they have never prayed before. And that is phase one of the awakening. But there is so much more to come because there is so much more of Him to which we are to be obedient and which we are to proclaim to the world.

You say, "What does a revival look like?" I want to read you something from a series of lectures given in 1830 by Dr. Ebenezer Porter of Andover Seminary. He lived through what Church historians call "The Second Great Awakening" (beginning 1792), one of the great revivals of all Church history. When he was in his late 70's, Porter was invited back to Andover Seminary to give a series of lectures on what he understood revival to be. He was a scholar and theologian and had also experientially been through one of the greatest revivals in Church history. Lecture Number Four on page 102 has this

paragraph. It is one of the best descriptions of a Christ Awakening I have ever read. I believe it is what God is preparing His Church for on a magnitude that we have never known in the history of the Church.

Ebenezer Porter said, "The history of these revivals shows that the genuine tendency of such seasons is to render Christians grateful and watchful and fervent in spirit. Now many doubtless must be viewed as sincere Christians who are not necessarily consistent Christians. The wise and the foolish virgins all slumbered together..." [Note: I don't care how alive you feel you are, compared to what God is getting ready to do, you are still asleep and so am I. Even the wise virgins went to sleep.] "...but when the Redeemer comes in the triumphs of His grace to visit His churches, then His true followers are seen to be waking up from their apathy and they are seen to go forth to welcome the King of Zion and to do so with an energy and an earnestness and an ardor of affection that greatly surpasses their first love."

I've often heard revival sermons on the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2 and how Jesus said, "Come back to your first love." That's wonderful, but Porter says that what he observed was that when Jesus visits His churches and reveals Himself as the King that He is, it stirs His people with such an ardor for Him, such a willingness to live for Him, to follow Him, and to be with Him where He is, that one has to conclude that the love he sees flowing out of their hearts for the Savior is even greater than anything they had when they first met Him.

The Prayer of All Prayers

All of this brings us to the last prayer of the Bible. It is for a Christ Awakening. In a sense it is just one word. All the prayers of all God's people for all the ages can be boiled down to one word. That word is "Come." What is that prayer asking to happen? When John says, "Come" at the end of the Book of Revelation, having seen the consummation of all

history, having seen the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of the anointed King upon His throne, John is saying, "Come, Lord Jesus! I want to see You reveal Your supremacy to that degree and no less, so there will be an awakening to You that saturates this entire universe, that scatters all the darkness, destroys all the enemy and quickens all the saints forever!" That's how the Bible ends – with a one-word prayer for a Christ awakening!

Should not such a passion for His glory possess the modern day prayer movement, and all of us who seek God for genuine revival among the nations?

Edited from a message given at "The Christ Awakening" Conference, held in Terre Haute, Indiana, October 23-25, 2003. Used by permission.