***Simeon, Levi, and Judah

RV130-01***

We are studying Revelation 7:4-8. Our subject is the tribulation evangelists. This is segment number 4.

**The 144,000**

We read in Revelation 7:4: "And I heard the number of them which were sealed. And there were sealed 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel." These 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob, and thus representatives of all the 12 tribes. These 12 founding patriarchs had certain personal character qualities which were reflected in their posterity. It was reflected in their personal conduct, and it was reflected in the descendants who came after them. These traits were stamped upon their posterity, both in terms of blessing, and in terms of suffering. This is the principle which was enunciated to the Jewish people in Exodus 20:5-6.

Jacob, upon his deathbed in Egypt, gathered his 12 sons around him, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have recorded in Genesis 49 a prophetic pronouncement concerning the descendants of each of these family lines. We have looked at one of them. The oldest was Reuben, and very naturally he was the one who is mentioned first. As the first-born son, he had special privileges – the privileges of primogenitor. These included: one – that he would be the leader of the family after his father's death, and through his children would come the Messiah; two – he would be the family priest through whom all others would have to approach God; and, three – he would receive a double-portion of the family wealth upon the father's death.

**Reuben**

Reuben, however, lost this birthright privilege through incest and adultery with one of his father Jacob's wives. Reuben himself proved to be an unstable personality. His tribe was never a major influence, nor did it provide a major leader within the nation of Israel. People are born with certain advantages above others, but they can certainly blow it through failure to be positive to the Word of God, and Reuben is an example of that.

**Simeon and Levi**

We now pick up the analysis in Genesis 49:5-7, where two tribes are lumped together: Simeon; and, Levi: "Simeon and Levi are brethren, instruments of cruelty in their habitation." "Simeon" means "hearing." He is the second son of Jacob by his wife Leah. "Levi" means "attached." He is the third son of Jacob by Leah. These two brothers carried a common temperament between them, so they are treated together. They were, in short, characterized as being the hotheaded, angry type – an anger which, as a matter of fact, easily expressed itself in cruelty.

So, Simeon and Levi are two hotheaded characters who influence their progeny in the same way. This quality is seen demonstrated in them in a senseless and brutal massacre which they executed upon the men of one of the cities near where they resided, because the son of the leader of that city, a man named Shechem, had raped their sister Dinah. Dinah was a full sister. You have this recorded in Genesis 34:25-26: "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore;" that is, the men of the city who had agreed to be circumcised in order to associate themselves in intermarriage with the Jews. This was by an agreement made with Simeon and Levi: "It came to pass on the third day, when these men were recuperating, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males, while they were in their condition of incapacitation: "And they threw Hamor, the leader, and Shechem, his Son, with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of his house, and went out."

Now, it is true that what Shechem did was a very brutal crime. Rape is, in the Old Testament order, indeed, a crime which merits execution, and it is a serious, serious violation of another person's freedom. So, obviously, Shechem was guilty, and he was well deserving of punishment. But the problem here was that these two brothers were living up to a characteristic that they had, which was that they were treacherous. They were probably the smiling kind. When you met Simeon and Levi, they were a mouthful-of-teeth, and they were just cordial, wonderful, happy-go-lucky fellows. As you read the account here, it is very clear that these gentlemen were smooth talkers. They had a quality of being personable. You just liked these guys when you met them. So, they came under the guise of trying to bring some resolution to this problem (to this situation) that their sister found herself in. So, they went and made an agreement with these men. You have that in Genesis 34:13. This is the background that reveals the kind of treacherous, double-dealing, hotheaded personality types that they were.

Genesis 34:13: "And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor, his father, deceitfully, because they had defiled Dinah their sister. And they said unto them, 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised, for that was a reproach onto us.'" Shechem really did love Dinah. He did a terrible thing, but he said, "I want to marry this girl." But the brothers say, "No, we can't let our sister marry you. You're an uncircumcised pagan." But they said, "We'll tell you what we're going to do;" smiling all the time, but the Bible says that they had deceit in their mind from the beginning.

Verse 15: "But in this, we will consent unto you. If you will be as we be, and every male of you be circumcised, then we will give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters unto us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if you will not hearken unto us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone." They didn't intend to be gone at all. They didn't intend to let this stop at that. They were laying a trap, and it was going to be a brutal trap. And the worst part about it was that they were not just trying to deal with Shechem, who is the guilty party, but they had vengeance in their heart because they were the hot-tempered, vicious type, and they were going to hit everybody that they could get as well.

"And their words, pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. And the young man deferred not to do the thing because he had delight in Jacob's daughter, and he was more honorable than all the house of his father. And Hamor and Shechem, his son, came unto the gates of the city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying, 'These men are peaceable with us. Therefore, let them dwell in the land, and trade therein, for the land, behold, it is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.'"

Now, the people of them were quite a number of folks. They far outnumbered Jacob and his family. They far outnumbered Jacob and all the families of his 12 sons. So, Jacob was in the minority. These men were in the majority, and they said, "They are peaceable men. Let's join forces with the minority. Only herein will the men consent unto us, for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. Shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs be ours? Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. And unto Hamor, and unto Shechem, his son, hearkened all that went out of the gate of the city, and every male was circumcised, and all went out of the gate of his city."

So, the men agreed to do this. Of course, the relationship of the Jews with these pagans was already forbidden. They were not supposed to intermarry with the nations round about them. And if the nations round about them had understood this, they would have been suspicious right off the bat, because this was not permitted for the Jews. In any case, they proceeded to agree to do this. Then, when the males were incapacitated, and unable to do battle, they came in, and they not only took the life of Shechem, who was guilty of the crime, but they did the vicious thing of a massacre that slaughtered everybody else as well.

We are told that their rage was so great, because of the heat of their temper, that they didn't just stop there. They plundered the helpless women and children of the city as well. Genesis 34:27: And the sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their sheep, and their oxen, their donkeys, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, and all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took them captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house." So, in a rage, they proceeded to destroy everybody, and to take booty of that which these people possessed.

So, in Genesis 49:6, we read where Jacob is evaluating these two sons: "O my soul, do not come into their secrets." That means, "Don't come into joining forces with these men:" "Unto their assembly. My honor, do not be united, for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung oxen." What he is saying there is that in their anger they destroyed (hamstrung means that they even destroyed wantonly) the animals. These men were on a rage. They were just berserk with their anger.

Verse 7 says, "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." Jacob himself was not pleased with what his sons had done, and he pronounced, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a curse upon them, because in their violent anger, they slew a man, and in their self-will, they even destroyed the animals, and the property, and so on. They went beyond justice. They were not just executing justice, they were executing vengeance. The result was that God declared that the descendants of these tribes would not possess a parcel of the land, but they would be scattered and diluted throughout all the other tribes.

Jacob himself was concerned because of what he expected would be retaliation from the people who perhaps were left, and the other heathen round about them. In Genesis 34:30, he says to the sons: "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have troubled me to make me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. And I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed: I and my house."

However, what do they say? They didn't say, "Yes, we got carried away, we were out of line. We've created a feud condition now between ourselves and the people round about, and they're going to be gunning for us now, and we're going to have to be gunning for them." Verse 31 says, "They said, 'Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?" So, they defended themselves by some righteous act. That's the way it is with hotheads. Hotheads always have the quality of having a righteous cause to excuse their viciousness, and their excessive anger in what they are doing.

It is a justice which is exercised in rage, apart from consideration of who is guilty; who is innocent; and, really how to deal with the problem in true justice. What they were doing was violating an eternal principle that the apostle Paul has recorded. We would all do well to remember it if we haven't learned it already. It's in Romans 12:17-21. Paul says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourself, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine. I will repay,' says the Lord."

All that Simeon and Levi had to do was to go to God and say, "You know what they did. They have outraged us and they have violated our sister. We call upon You to bring judgment," and God would have dealt in justice. That's what it means when it says, "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay."

Verse 20 says, "Therefore, if your enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing, you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." God's way is to provide that which is directly different from what these people deserve, and thus to put the coals of fire upon them.

But Jacob saw that his sons were the kinds of men that you could never trust. A hotheaded person is one you can never trust. That's why, in Genesis 49:6, he talks about not joining them; not become the subject to them; and, not having to become party with them in some way – to be united with them, because to be united with them means that you will be united with their anger. The Bible says that association with the hot-tempered type exposes you not only to their violence, but it also exposes you to learning their ways, and to becoming like them with very disastrous consequences.

One of the wisdom literature expressions, in Proverbs 22:24-25, the hot-tempered man is one against whom we are cautioned in this way. The Spirit of God says, "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man, you shall not go, lest you learn his ways, and get a snare to your soul." Can you imagine how many women now weep and regret that they did not have this bit of information of wisdom before they got married, and before they married a hot-tempered type: "Make no friendship with an angry man?"

Here you have a date with somebody, and he proves to be somebody that's really hot-tempered. What do you do? Wash your hands of them? No, you make excuses: "He's so cute. He's so nice." You say, "He just feels so deeply about things that he just gets carried away with himself." Oh, he's going to get carried away just like Simeon and Levi did, and someday he's going to stomp all over you as he gets carried away. And in his deep feelings, he's going to plaster you against the wall. Where do you think battered wives come from? They come from women who were stupid enough not to respect this principle of making no friendship with an angry man: "And with a furious man, you shall not go." The moment somebody demonstrates that he's a hot-temper, don't ever touch him again. I don't care whether he's a Christian or a non-Christian. In your experience as believers, when you find yourself dealing with somebody who is the hot-tempered angry type, just remember Simeon and Levi. And the Word of God says, "These people will be a snare to your soul." Jacob himself, in Genesis 49:7, then cursed his own sons for the cruel wrath and the evil thing that they had done.

The qualities of these two patriarchs was passed on down to their posterity so that they were, in time, judged by God, and they were scattered among the other tribes, as Jacob had predicted they would be. This is one way that God dissipated the hotheaded temperament of the descendants of these patriarchs. God separated them one from another, and scattered them among the tribes.

**Simeon**

The history of Simeon, then, is a history which shows a steady decline. During the years that they were in the wilderness wandering, at the beginning of the wandering, they took a census of how many men of fighting status they had. At the end of the 40-year wandering, they took another census to see what the status was in terms of battle-ready troops. It was a way of measuring the population development of the tribes. It is interesting to note that, at the beginning of the years of wandering, they had 59,000 warriors. At the end of the 40 years of wandering, they had 22,000. It was downhill for the tribe of Simeon. God was weeding out the hot-tempered type. They actually became, Numbers 26:14 tells us, the smallest of the tribes.

Simeon was, as a matter of fact, not even given a portion of the Promised Land, but we're told that he was scattered in certain villages within the territory of Judah. You can read about that in Joshua 19:1-9. They did not enjoy a piece of the land that was their heritage. Instead, they got scattered within the territory of Judah. Some of the tribe of Simeon actually even ended up outside of Palestine as their area in the Promised Land. They were actually outside in Canaanite territory. In 1 Chronicles 4:39-43, you have this description of the tribe of Simeon being even scattered beyond the Promised Land itself. So, God did a super job of dissipating the effectiveness of this tribe and its characteristic quality of violence, and of brutality.

In their attempt to execute justice, they violated another biblical principles which we read of in James 1:19-20. And it's amazing how often Christians forget this one: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear; slow to speak; and, slow to wrath." Why? "For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God." And there is the same principle. The wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. How many times are we Christians made to look like fools, and made to look like real idiots in the eyes of the world whose already antagonistic to us, because we come on as people of wrath, and people of anger, and people that are going to be a tight-fisted group that's going to smash our way through to some righteous cause, and to some righteous objective?" And the Bible tells us, "When you approach it that way, you will go down in defeat." God's work is not accomplished by anger, indignation, and the strong fist.

**Levi**

In the case of Levi, there was a change of heart. Levi had the same bad characteristics that Simeon did, but we do find that someplace along the line, the patriarch began to stabilize and influence his descendants in a more godly direction, and God honored them for that. One of the evidences of this was that the Levites took a stand against the idolatry of the golden calf that Aaron set up when Moses was on Mount Sinai getting the Law. In Exodus 32:25-26, you have this record. Moses comes back, and he hears the sound of what's going on. He comes around the bend, and he's horrified. The people are taking their clothes off; they're engaging in a sex orgy; and, they're around the golden calf. Aaron has said, "Here you are. This is Jehovah, your God." And they're worshiping this calf like the animal gods that they used to watch the Egyptians worshiping across the river.

So, Moses comes in, and executes an act of divine discipline. Exodus 32:25: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies, then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, 'Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.'" So, Moses comes and stands and says, "This is wrong. We're going to do something about it. Who will rally to God in opposition to this which you see here?" And who should come streaming toward Moses but: "The sons of Levi gathered themselves together onto him?"

So, we have a little clue here that something good has begun to happen in this family line, in spite of the temperament of anger and of violence that they were prone to. Here, as a matter of fact, Moses uses this very quality in the Levites to have them use it in a legitimate execution of divine justice: "You people are prone to being strong-fisted. You're prone to exercising muscle. Well, let's exercise the muscle in the right direction."

Exodus 32:27: "And he (Moses) said unto them (to the Levites), 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel.'" And I want you to notice that he is giving a direction from God, not something that Moses himself decided: "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." This is right up the alley for Levites. This is the sort of thing they were good at. He said, "Put on your weapons, and God's going to execute justice, because we're going to execute these people who have been guilty of sexual immorality, and have been guilty of worshiping a false God. Those are capital crimes."

Verse 28: "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about 3,000 men."

So, this act of humble submission to God's truth and His guidance placed them under divine blessing. In Exodus 32:29, we read that Moses had said, "Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son and upon his brother, that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day." So, God said, "Having executed God's justice in God's way, in God's order, now God can bless you." And He told the children of Levi to prepare for a special blessing upon them.

Well, that blessing eventually resulted, as you know, in the tribe of Levi, who was not to receive a portion of land as had been predicted of them, being selected to be the priestly tribe – the people who represented God. So, we read in Joshua 21:1-3: "Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites until Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua, the son of a Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. And they spoke unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, 'The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the pasture lands thereof for our cattle."

They are now in the Promised Land, and what God said to the Levites, because of their change of heart and their direction of obedience, was that, "I'm not going to forget what you did. We're not going to remove the judgment that has been placed upon you. You will not have your own part of this Promised Land, but we will give you certain cities scattered throughout the territory." Of course, this was necessary because they were going to be the priests, and they had to be scattered as well throughout the land to execute that ministry.

So, Joshua, 21:3 says, "And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites, out of their inheritance at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their pasture lands." So, they receive their inheritance throughout the territory of the Promised Land.

Their heritage of human viewpoint-directed zeal was channeled by God into the zeal for God's service. Both Simeon and Levi are, of course, graced out by being included in the honored company of the tribulation evangelists.

**Judah**

Then in Genesis 49:8, the next tribe that came up was the one that was to become the leading tribe. Jacob looks upon Judah, and the Spirit of God begins making pronouncement concerning this Son: "Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise. Your hand shall be in the neck of you enemies. Your father's children shall bow down before you." This was the fourth son of Jacob by his wife Leah. Judah's name means "praise." And Jacob indicates that the other tribes would indeed praise Judah and his descendants. And that's exactly what subsequently happened. Judah was a tribe that everybody praised and looked up to. Furthermore, this was a tribe, because it was so well-oriented to God's point of view, that they made the most capable soldiers. They are a tribe that brought many military victories to the Jewish people over their enemies, which is exactly what Jacob said: "Your hand shall be in the neck of the enemies."

Judah was sent on a special mission, as a matter of fact, against the Canaanites, and they achieved a very great victory. We read about that in Judges 1:1-2, as an example of the kind of military exploits that this tribe was capable of: "Now after the death of Joshua, it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the Lord saying, 'Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first to fight against them?' And the Lord said, 'Judah shall go up. Behold, I have delivered the land to his hand:'" "With Joshua gone, who's going to lead us now to finish this job against the pagans around us?"

Verse 19 says, "And the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron." So, it was the tribe that everybody looked to for military survival.

Of course, you know that David eventually came from this tribe, and David was one of the all-time great military geniuses of the people of Israel. His exploits militarily extended the territory of Israel to the maximum limits that it ever achieved.

The other tribes, indeed, as Jacob predicted, bowed in subjection to Judah, which became the ruling tribe. In Genesis 49:9, Judah is compared to the king of the beasts: the lion: "Judah is a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, you are gone up. He stooped down; he couched as a lion; and, as an old lion, who shall rouse him up?" This analogy to Judah as a lion is again a reference to the fact that they would be the kingly tribe. Judah would receive the right to become the head of the family instead of Reuben, who should have been the head of the family. Judah became the head of the family upon Jacob's death.

So, you will notice that Judah is mentioned first in Revelation 7:5 in the list of the tribulation evangelists. The royal scepter of kingly authority would never depart from the house of Judah after coming to it through David. 64 years after this prophecy was uttered, this took place: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Judah would retain the right to reign over Israel: "Until he to whom it belongs." That's what "Shiloh" means here. Shiloh is not a good translation: "Until he to whom it belongs." That is the final right of rulership, referring to Jesus Christ as the final King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So, the Lord Jesus is going to assume his right of royalty at His Second Coming to rule in the millennium, as the final descendant of the tribe of Judah.

The investment of the tribe of Judah with ruling authority over Israel also indicates the tribe from which the Messiah would come. If Judah is going to be the kingly tribe, then the Messiah had to come from that tribe. Of course, Jesus fulfilled that.

The nations of the earth would be gathered for salvation to this one who is coming from the tribe of Judah. When the Kingdom of Israel was split in two, Judah remained loyal to the house of David. In Genesis 49:11-12, we're told that Judah's posterity would be a prosperous people. This is a people loyal to God. This is a people subject to the Word of God. This is a people that were, therefore, oriented to good military service. Furthermore, this is one that God prospers: "Binding his foal unto the vine" is an expression for the fruitful vines that would grow so strong that they could tether their donkeys to it. Now ordinarily, grapevines don't grow that strong. But God said, "I'm going to prosper you to the degree that your vines can even tether your animals:" "And his donkey's colt unto the choice vine."

Furthermore: "He washed his garments in wine," describing that the bumper crops of grapes would require so much stomping, and it would take so long to process the grapes, to squeeze out the juice" (which, as you know, they did by stomping on them with their feet in a big vat). They stomped the juice out of the grapes, and in the process, they could not help splashing up on themselves. So, their garments were soaking with the juice, and they were soaking red in color: "Washed his garments in wine (is what that means), and his clothes in the blood of the grapes."

Then verse 12 says, "His eyes shall be red with wine," which seems to indicate the abundant drinking of the juice. We're not exactly sure whether that suggests that they were inebriated. In any case, it does mean that they enjoyed an abundance of drinking of the juice of the grapes.

Then, furthermore, the prosperity of their surroundings was also indicated by the fact that: "His teeth were white with milk," meaning that even their food production would be great. This is a general term for food production. Milk is a basic element of food. It would be so abundant that their children would grow up with an ample supply of calcium, and their teeth would be strong, well-nourished, and white.

However, the character of Judah was mixed. The selection of Judah as the royal line was an act of divine grace and sovereignty. It was not an act of merit in Judah. That's always comforting to know. When you look at someone like Judah, someone that has so many admirable, noble qualities that God does bless in such an abundant way, making them the kingly tribe and all that, it almost gets discouraging when you think, "I don't think I can be that good. I don't think I can rise to that kind of a level," because there are these moments of ups and downs. But I can assure you that that is possible, because Judah had his moments when he was up and down.

First of all, we should recognize that Judah showed himself a certain nobility when he wanted to take steps to preserve the life of his little brother Joseph, when his other brothers wanted to kill him, because of their envy of Joseph, and the wanted to take away the father's esteem by getting rid of the boy. In Genesis 37:22, we read, "And Reuben said onto them, 'Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him, that he might rid him out of their hands to deliver him to his father again." This was Ruben's idea: "I'll come back, and I'll let him go later."

Verses 26 and 27: "And Judah said unto his brethren, 'What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?" So, Judah joined his older brother and said, "Let's not kill the boy." Instead, verse 27: "'Come,' Judah says, 'and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites. Let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh and his brethren were content."

So, he did, we must say, at least take steps to preserve the life of his brother. After God had rejected Reuben, and after he rejected Simeon and Levi for being hotheads, Judah was next in line, and Judah did show the qualities of leadership that commended him to this kind of authority. Judah demonstrated high character. He demonstrated this quality in offering himself as a slave to his brother Joseph, whom he did not recognize in Egypt, when Joseph was a ruler, to take the place of his little brother Benjamin, so that his father would not come to grief. He had a tender feeling for his father, and that highly commends this man. In Genesis 44:18-34, you can read about Judah's attempt to use himself as a hostage in place of his brother Benjamin, so that his father would not be put to further grief by the brothers coming home and saying, "They kept your youngest son in Egypt."

However, I must say that Judah also had his moments of moral corruption. That's why I say that he was not picked because of something within himself. It was just because God graced him out in terms of what Judah was ultimately willing to do. One of the saddest chapters in the Bible is Genesis 38. In this chapter, we read the account where Judah had promised to give his youngest son in marriage to his widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar, as her husband. He had given two previous sons to Tamar. They had both died. He said, "When the youngest boy becomes of marriageable age, I will give him to you." Instead, he forgot about his promise. So, Tamar, in her indignation, heard that Judah was making a trip. She put herself on the road. She pretended to be a prostitute. She enticed Judah, whose wife had now died. So, Judah, as a widower, was a high priority target. And the result was that Judah descended to an act of immorality with this woman that he thought was a prostitute.

The result was that Tamar conceived by Judah. In time, as the months went by, the pregnancy of Tamar became evident and became known, and Judah indignantly called his daughter-in-law into him; reamed her out; and, called for her execution. Tamar, in the meantime, had taken certain tokens from Judah that identified him as the father. When she brought those evidences out, and said, "The child belongs to this man," Judah recognized her, and remembered the incident, and, in spite of this terrible thing that he had done, the Bible does recognize that he had the character humbly to acknowledge that he was at fault in violating God's laws, and that he was, in fact, more guilty than even Tamar for what he had done. So, the result was that he took a position of humility, and God dealt with this man according to his repentance.

So, Judah had some noble qualities: there was a tenderness; there was a concern for parents; there was a concern for his family; and, there was a concern for his younger brother, so there were qualities that made this man head and shoulders above the rest of them in terms of being the ruling family. Jacob, on his deathbed, recognized that that's what God had in store for this man. But it wasn't because this man was perfect. It was what God was going to do for him.

When Dr. Harry Ironside used to be a Bible lecturer at Dallas Seminary, we would have these special outstanding Bible teachers come for two weeks at a time to teach a portion of the Word of God. One of the illustrations he used to like to use was that of a man who walked into an artist's studio. This artist was drawing on one of these tremendous canvases. It was many, many feet long. It went from one side of the room to the other. He had a scaffold, and this man had been working on this huge canvas. When his friend came in, the artist said, "Oh, I'm so glad to see you. I want to show you what I've done." The picture was well underway, and he took him several feet back and he said, "Look at that. It's working out magnificently. Isn't that beautiful?" His friend looked at him. He looked at the canvas. It had some lines here; a little color here; and, some outlines here and there. And he said, "I don't see anything significant up there." The artist looked at him, and he said, "Oh, I forgot. You can't see the way it's going to be when it's finished, the way I can see it."

That was a beautiful illustration of the people who are offensive to us, even among Christians, to remember that God isn't finished with us yet. As the artist was not finished with his canvas, in his artist's eye, he could see the way it was going to be. He could see where he was going. But until it was finished, the beauty would not be evident. But he knew that it was there.

So, in Judah, God knew what was there. God wasn't finished with him at these low moments, and he brought him, in time, to being the man through whom the Messiah was born, and being the man whose greater son, Jesus Christ, is going to rule the world during the millennial period.

Judah is a tremendous example of a person who begins in life at a lower position than other people have, but he uses that inferior position as an incentive to rise in life. There are some people who are born in a lower position in life, and all they want to do is whine about it. There are other people who have the quality to find themselves in a disadvantaged position, and they view that as a reason to move ahead to do something better. He did not whine about the fact that he was not fortunate enough to be the firstborn with the privileges of the primogenitor that Reuben had. He used his volition, instead, to pursue a quality of righteousness, and thus he became worthy of the blessings that Reuben cast aside with contempt.

Americans today have forgotten the example of Judah – the privilege of using your free volition to rise to a life better than you were born in; to do things better than your parents did them; to do things better than your peers around you; and, to use the position that you were born in as a stepping stone to something greater. Judah's positive volition toward improving himself and his lot in life resulted in his personal stability. In leadership, he was not like his brother Simeon and Levi at all, who acted in anger, violence, and viciousness.

So, if you think that life has not dealt you a full deck, it didn't to Judah either. But Judah said, "This is my jumping off place to do something greater. This is my ground for capacity to do something better than what I was born in." And he did it by starting with the Word of God, and being positive to it. And when God saw that, He said, "This is a man that I can make something out of." If God can make so much out of Judah (and don't forget that this is going to last for all eternity), just imagine what He can make out of many of you who start with far better advantages than Judah had, and who have the full canon of Scripture (the full Bible), and the full knowledge of the Word of God – infinitely ahead of what this man had. If you're young, you're a pathetic creature if you don't go far ahead of your peers, and even better than your parents.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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