***Zebulun, Issachar, and Dan

RV130-02***

We are studying Revelation 7:4-8, and we are dealing with the tribulation evangelists. This is segment number five.

The special body of 144,000 tribulation evangelists, we have seen, will be the descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob. The future character of each tribe from these 12 patriarchs was predicted by Jacob as he lay on his deathbed in Egypt. We have been looking at those predictions concerning these men, and we have found them fascinating because of their strengths and their weaknesses, and what God does in spite of both.

**Reuben**

So, if you'll turn to Genesis 49, we will continue with that review of the future which was given to us through the Holy Spirit to Jacob. We've already looked at Reuben. Reuben was the oldest son. He demonstrated, however, a lack of personal integrity. He demonstrated a lack of honor. And, worst of all, he demonstrated a lack of stability to be able to assume the privileges that went to the firstborn. This tribe that descended from Reuben followed in the character of its founder. They never produced a great leader in the nation, and they never made any great contribution to the life of Israel. Reuben's sin of incest with one of his father's wives resulted in the loss of the right of primogenitor, which gave him certain privileges above all the other members of the family. Thus, he lost the right to be the head of the family upon Jacob's death, and thus to be the line of the Messiah. He lost the right to be the family priest representing the people before God. Furthermore, he lost the double-portion of the family wealth, which was to go to him.

**Simeon and Levi**

Then we looked at Levi and Simeon, who are lumped together because they had a common characteristic; that is, they had a short fuse. They were hotheaded; they were treacherous; they were brutal; and, they were unjust in the very process that they thought they were exercising and executing justice. Their character in this respect was exemplified in the brutal vengeance which they took on Shechem and the people of his city, because Shechem had raped their sister, Dinah. Of course, that was indeed a grievous sin, and merited being dealt with, but the way they dealt with it was that they slaughtered the innocent as well as the guilty. Consequently, they lost the right of having a portion of the Promised Land for this injustice, and they were scattered in certain cities among the other tribes.

**Judah**

Then we look at the princely tribe of Judah. Judah was the tribe which Jacob said would be respected and would be praised by the rest of the nation, both for its military exploits and for its political leadership. This tribe was appointed by God to become, in time, the royal line for the birth of the Messiah King, the Lord Jesus, through the line of David. This tribe was faithful to the Word of God. Consequently, they enjoyed great prosperity. However, this is not to say that Judah was free at all times from his own moral breakdown. But the thing that distinguishes him from others is the fact that when he did step out of line, he recognized it; he repented; he admitted it; made his confession; and, picked things up and went on with the Lord.

Judah, as a matter of fact, used the subordinate position in which he was born, for he was not born as number one, the firstborn. Yet, he had the qualities that merited the privileges of firstborn. That's often a very tempting position to do something wrong in. When you see somebody who is in a position ahead of you in some capacity where they are incompetent, and you know that you have the capacity and the competence to do the job much better, that's a very tempting time to come into a condition of self-pity, or again, a condition of conniving and maneuvering. Judah did not exercise self-pity, nor did he connive to achieve something in a devious and a deceitful way. Instead, he used his subordinate position. He used what he had been born with, and made that the base of going on to a higher state. Consequently, he became in time the royal family.

**Zebulun**

So, we now begin with Genesis 49:13 as we look at the tribe of Zebulun, which is the next one in line in the order: We read that, "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and he shall be for a haven of ships, and his borders shall be unto Sidon." Zebulun was Jacob's number 10 boy. He was the sixth and final son by his wife Leah. The name, Zebulun, means "dwelling" or "habitation," for when this number six son was born, Leah, who was not a particularly attractive wife, hoped that having born Jacob six sons (of course, sons were a premium in the ancient world – they were an extremely valuable commodity in a family), she thought that now this would so endear her to Jacob that he would begin to share the kind of affection and attention that Jacob reserved almost exclusively for Rachel, whom he dearly and truly loved.

So, in Genesis 30:19-20, we have the origin of this name. Leah conceived again and brought Jacob the sixth son, and Leah said, "God has endued me with a good dowry. Now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons, and she called his name, 'Zebulun,'" "Zebulun" meaning "dwelling" or "habitation." She said, "Now, surely, Jacob is going to come and stay home at night, instead of wandering off someplace else."

This tribe increased from 57,400 combat-ready soldiers, at the beginning of the wilderness wandering, to 60,500 warriors at the end of the wandering at the point of entering the Promised Land at Kadeshbarnea. This tribe is referred to in Jacob's prediction (in Jacob's analysis) in terms of their geographic location. The land that was allotted to this particular tribe was associated with the seashore, and it extended up to the great seaport of Sidon. The territory of Zebulun was small, but it was a very fertile and prosperous place, and thus they enjoyed an abundance of the things that were important to that agricultural society: things such as olives, and grapes, and wheat.

Zebulun is described here in Jacob's prediction as a safe haven for ships. Genesis 49:13: "He shall dwell at the haven of the sea (that is, by the seashore), and he shall be for a haven of ships." In the ancient world, the fastest way to travel to distant places was not over land – that was very difficult and often very hazardous. The fastest way was by sea, but, of course, traveling by sea had its own peculiar types of hazards that had to be faced. So, the stressing of Zebulun here as a haven by the sea may suggest a certain quality that characterized this patriarch in terms of his being willing to be helpful – to being willing to be a refuge for people who needed a secure place.

In Deuteronomy 33:18, we read, "And of Zebulun, he said, 'Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out (that is, in your reaching out)." So, Zebulun seems to have been characterized by an outreach which we can almost describe as a missionary zeal. He was concerned for what was beyond his own shores, and he was concerned to reach out there to what was out there beyond, and to reach out in a helpful way. That was a great deal of character quality to Zebulun. He may actually have been viewed here by Jacob as a safe house. And in prophetic Scripture (transferring him down to the tribulation), it may be that the tribe of Zebulun (for they will be part of that missionary contingent) will be a safe house for the people in the tribulation. For you remember that there are going to be many people who do survive the antichrist persecutions, and when the end comes, the people are gathered before the Lord Jesus and he says, "Some of you are sheep. You come over here on my right hand. Some of you are goats. You go on my left hand." And the basis upon determining which they are was that they evidenced what they truly were in their attitude toward God (their faith toward God) by how they treated the people who were in need, particularly the Jewish people.

So, you remember that the Lord says, "You took care of me when I needed food and when you needed clothing. When the antichrist threw me in prison, you took the trouble to visit me. You reached out and gave me a safe haven." Many of those people will survive because God's people will be giving them a refuge. This may suggest that perhaps one of the leading roles that Zebulun's descendants will play in the tribulation will be this kind of a refuge for those who need it, as sailors who are tossed on a treacherous sea need a port of safety.

To us, of course, this also pictures the person of the Lord Jesus, who is the place of safety from the ultimate terror that a human being faces in the lake of fire.

This tribe, we find, contributed generously to David's coronation as king, and thereby indicated their loyalty to David. In 1 Chronicles 12:40, we read, "Moreover, they who were near them, even unto Issachar and Zebulon and Naphtali, brought bread on the donkeys, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel." This was on the occasion when, finally, they were rid of Saul, and David was able to enter upon the royal office that he had, sometime previously, been given by God. So, on the occasion of that coronation, the tribe of Zebulun demonstrates its loyalty to the House of David now by bringing a tremendous amount of food to the celebration.

Out of this tribe came one of the judges of Israel. In Judges 12:11, we find that judge number 11 came from the tribe of Zebulun: "After him, Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel, and he judged Israel for 10 years. And Elon the Zebulonite died, and he was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun." This was quite an honor that a tribe should have a judge raised up from its own people. As you know, until Israel became a monarchy, it was ruled by a variety of judges. And the judge was brought on the scene particularly when the people of Israel had reached the end of the line under divine discipline. The Jews never could seem to get it together. When times were good, they very quickly forgot about God, and they very quickly began compromising with the evil nations round about them. They got off into the idolatry; they got off into the sex worship; and, they got off into all of the things that they had been warned not to do.

Moses explicitly warned them, in his final message in the book of Deuteronomy, that: "When you get into the Promised Land, God is going to keep His Word. You're going to find that it is a place of milk and honey. If you are faithful to God, and you obey the doctrines of Scripture, I'm here to tell you that God is going to bless you. You are going to be prospered like you can't believe. But that very thing is going to be the major threat. When you find the money flowing in; when you find the prosperity; and, when you find the good life, God is going to gradually drift off from your thinking. When things are tough, you're constantly calling upon Him. Your eyes are on the Lord. But when the times are going to get good, you're going to forget about Him, and then I'm going to tell you that God is not going to take it. He will bring judgment; He will bring disaster upon you; and, He'll take it all the way." That same principle applies basically in all of God's divine dealings with us today.

So, Israel enjoyed that good life. And sure enough, they forgot about God. And then God would open up their borders to one of these pagan nations, and they come in and take these people over, and make slaves of them. I mean, sometimes they would go for several decades suffering under a foreign conqueror. Finally, when they turned to God in real repentance, He would raise up a judge. Where's he going to get people like that? There are some of these tribes that never provided a judge. Reuben, for example, never provided a judge. It was a tribe whose characteristic and whose family heritage did not suit itself to bring up a man who could rise up and lead the people out of that discipline. That's what was required. So, this indicates some very commendable quality about the tribe of Zebulun – that God raised up judge number 11 from among them.

Furthermore, this tribe was one of the tribes that was a major military element in the Israeli defense system. We read again in the book of Judges that this tribe participated in a great way with the defeat of Sisera. Judges 4:6 refers to that fascinating incident: "And she sent and called Barak (that is, Deborah did) the son of Abinoam out of a Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, 'Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded saying, 'Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with you 10,000 men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun.''" Here was Debra calling attention to the fact that God had called upon them to take action against these pagans, and that God had directed them to pull a military force against the leader of this group, which was Sisera.

In verse 10, we read, "And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali the Kedesh, and he went up with 10,000 men at his feet, and Deborah went up with him."

In Judges 5:14, we read, "Out of Ephraim there was there a root of them against Amalek; after you, Benjamin, among the people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer." So, these men were not only good in combat, but they were also men of literary accomplishment.

Furthermore, we read in Judges 5:18, "Zebulun and Naphtali were a people who jeoparded their lives until death in the high places of the field," so these men, when they were in combat, were exemplary soldiers. They were courageous men that were an example and a great boost to the morale of all the rest of them.

In the Judges 6:35, we read, "And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him, and he sent messengers unto Asher; unto Zebulun; and unto Naphtali; and, they came up to meet him." This is referring to Gideon. This was another occasion where another judge raised up, and he again needed troops to deal with the enemy.

Well, this is one thing that was true about Zebulun When the call to arms came, this is one tribe you could count on that would show up. As you remember, we already learned about Reuben – that on one occasion when the call to arms came, they all sat in their tents on their hands, and refused to turn out.

Later, in the period when David came on the scene and required soldiers, this was still true of this particular tribe. 1 Chronicles 12:33 indicates that, upon a call from David, 50,000 soldiers of Zebulun turned up: "Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, 50,000 who could keep rank. They were not of double-heart." That is a tremendous testimony. These were men who could keep rank; men who would not break under enemy attack; and, men who would not have a courageous heart that was going to melt and turn to water in the face of the enemy.

So, this tribe comes off looking very, very good indeed. Furthermore, after the period of the prophets ceased, about 400 years before the arrival of Christ, that period of time between the Old and New Testaments, one of the outstanding tribes, again, in the era when the Maccabean brothers were giving the Roman government a fit, when they were leading rebellions that Rome simply could not stop and simply could not handle, who should again be out in the field in the forefront of the military service, but the descendants of Zebulun?

So, Zebulun was a son that must have given considerable satisfaction to Jacob, and was a tribe that indeed proved itself to be a very noble group. "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and it shall be for a haven of ships, and his border shall be in Sidon," a commercial center – a prosperous place, and a place of safety (a haven for those in need). And their military service expressed that in a very significant way.

**Issachar**

Then, in Genesis 49:14-15, we come to another son. His name is Issachar. Issachar was the ninth son of Jacob. He was the fifth child of Leah. We read, "Issachar is a strong donkey, crouching down between two burdens." The name "Issachar" means "wages," for Leah considered that this boy was a reward from God, because after she had born four sons, she could not get pregnant again. So, she was so upset about that, that she finally decided to take her servant girl Zilpah, and give her as a wife to Jacob, so that through Zilpah, she could have another son. Well, lo and behold, Zilpah indeed did bear sons to Jacob, but then Leah herself resumed her childbearing. So, she viewed that as God paying her back because she gave her husband, Jacob, another wife.

I think that that would probably be theologically difficult to establish and to support. I would not suggest that any of you try to get some favor from God by trying that sort of thing. It really has more complications than it does benefits. But anyhow, when Zilpah looked at it, she said, "Hot dog! This is God paying me back." So, she gave this boy the name "wages."

At Sinai, the tribe of Issachar numbered 54,400 warriors. 40 years later at Kadesh, as they were about to enter the land, they had grown to 64,300. Numbers 1:29 and Numbers 26:25 give us those figures.

This tribe, again, was one of the tribes that God honored because it produced the seventh judge, Tola, that ruled for a period over Israel. This tribe joined Deborah and Barak, as we have already read, in the battle against Sisera. In Judges 5:15, we have this exploit on the part of Issachar described: "And the princes of this car were with Deborah, even Issachar and also Barak. And He was sent on foot into the valley," and so on. But Issachar was in on this great victory. As you remember, Sisera ended up in a tent. The lady invited him in, when the Israeli army had put his people to flight. He was running for his life, and she's standing out in front of the tent, she was one of the Israelis. She said, "Do you need a place of safety? I have this tent here. Why don't you come in here?" And she gave him a place to sleep, and covered him up. As soon as he was snoring, she took a tent stake, and drove it through his temple from one end to the other. That finished the battle that Sisera had led against the people of God. But Issachar had a major part in this event.

When the men of Israel were faced with the difficult decision of finally executing the judgment of God relative to King Saul, and to establish David as the king, as God had indicated to them, it took some discernment to know when to make the move, and not to run ahead of God. So, in 1 Chronicles 12:32, we have a commendatory thing said about the descendants of Issachar: "And the children of Issachar, who were men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were 200. And all of their brethren were under their command."

So, when the men gathered from the tribe of Issachar, 200 discerning men showed up to help make this decision. It's a commendatory thing here. It reflects well upon their patriarch founder that it said, "These were men who had understanding of the times." They understood what was going on. They understood the pacing of the events: "To know what Israel ought to do." When you have people in your midst who have a good discernment from the Word of God, and through the leading of the Spirit of God, to know what to do at a certain point, especially when everybody else is a little bewildered and not sure what to do, that's the kind of a person that stands in the breach and carries everybody through. So, this group of 200 men from Issachar's tribe made a major contribution to say, "Now is the time. Now we take the action."

This tribe, as we have read, is described by Jacob in Genesis 49 as a donkey who is lying there resting under his burdens. If you can picture this animal with saddlebags, so to speak, on both sides of him, this is the picture that Jacob saw of Issachar, which is a picture that describes someone who is strong, and yet who is docile. And this was a quality that, while these men had discernment, and while they were willing to join in the battle when it was required, they did also have a strange quality that perhaps they inherited from their founder, of while they were strong on the one hand, they had a kind of a docile quality on the other hand. So, they enjoyed a beautiful piece of the Promised Land. They got a very fertile, high-quality piece of territory, and they wanted to enjoy it in peace.

Therefore, in Genesis 49:15, we read, "And he (Issachar) saw that rest was good, and the land: that it was pleasant. And he bowed his shoulders to bear, and became a servant unto forced labor." What this is telling us is that what we historically learn later, one of the things that Issachar did not do when it came into the Promised Land was to clean up the pagans. It seemed that the Jews were regularly making that mistake. God said, "Go in there. Clean them out. I'm going to carry them to victory. Don't leave a single man, woman, or child breathing. Wipe them out. They are a cancer. They will destroy you morally if you don't destroy them." But instead, they did not do that.

Issachar was guilty of the same thing. Later on, the same thing happened to them that happened to the other tribes. Along comes attack from these people that they did not destroy. But in the case of Issachar, he was willing to accept these marauders. He was not willing to bestir himself from enjoying his pleasant land by fighting them. Instead, he accepted their servitude. The result was that they made a donkey out of him. They put burdens upon him. That's the picture here. The pagan masters took over, and Issachar decided that he'd rather have peace than to be dead. Today, we say, "Better red than dead." It's the same principle that the communists pursue today: "Subject yourself to us, or you will be dead. Knuckle under to us, and let us be your masters, and we will let you enjoy something," except that, as always, they are treacherous in their promises. So, Issachar was a person who, while having some qualities of strength and of courage, was also willing to accept enslavement rather than stand for the blessings that God had given him.

Of course, as a servant, he was a type of the Lord Jesus, who became indeed the docile servant of Jehovah in order to suffer at the hands of Satan, to become the one providing eternal life for all believing sinners.

**Dan**

And then we come to a very fascinating tribe in Genesis 49:16-18: the tribe of Dan. This was Jacob's number five boy, and he was the first child of one of the handmaids, Bilhah. His name means "judging," because Rachel said when this child was born that God had vindicated her for her desire for motherhood by giving Bilhah as a wife to Jacob. She was making the same line of thought that her sister did. Her sister called the first boy born to the handmaid, "wages" (reward) – God's commendation. Here she calls this boy "judging" or "vindication" in Genesis 30:6, because she again is assuming that God is honoring her for giving this handmaid to be an extra wife.

"Rachel said, 'God has judged me, and has also heard my voice, and has given me a son.' Therefore, she called his name Dan," which means "judging." Jacob indicated that Dan was to judge his tribe, and this shows that he's going to have some kind of official status, even though he was merely the son of one of the servant girls. Verse 16 says, "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." But then it describes a characteristic of Dan. Dan shall be a serpent by the way – an adder in the path that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backwards." As the father looked at this boy, the Holy Spirit gave him a vision in the form of a rider, a military person on a horse, and suddenly a venomous snake comes out of hiding; hits the horse on the heel; causes it to rear up; causes the rider to fall off; and, therefore, to be in a vulnerable position to be attacked and killed.

Dan was a tribe that, at the beginning of the Exodus, had 62,700 warriors. 40 years later at Kadesh, they had 64,400. Numbers 1:29 and Numbers 26:43 give us those figures. So, they increases. They were one of the biggest. Samson, you remember, was from the tribe of Dan, and if there was anybody who was a threat and a terror to his enemies, that could certainly be said of Samson, who brought severe retribution on the Philistines. You can read that extended story in Judges 13:2 through Judges 16:31.

28,600 Danites came to Hebron to celebrate the anointing of David as king. 1 Chronicles 12:35 tells us that. So, this indicates to us that the tribe of Dan was a tribe that recognized again what God was doing, and they did recognize the merit of the appointment of David.

This tribe was set up in the extreme northern territory of the Promised Land. As a matter of fact, because of the ferocity of the descendants of Dan (the patriarch was one of those big muscle type of characters, and he did not hesitate exercising his muscle), these people actually attacked, not only clearing out the borders of the northern part of Israel, but they went across the border and took territory that was beyond the Promised Land area. They are compared here, as we've said, to a venomous snake who defeats a soldier by attack. What this is portraying is that Dan is a dangerous adversary and a formidable defender upon that northern extremity of the land of Israel.

The serpent comparison, however, may (and probably does) also reflect something more serious about Dan. When they did clear out the northern territories, and when they did expand even across the border, they then proceeded to do one of the worst things they could have done. This was one of the things most forbidden, we might say, by God. That is told us in Judges 18:30-31. "And the children of Dan set up the carved images. And Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. And they set them up Micah's carved image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." As they came into this northern territory, they found this dude Micah who had set up a worship system. He had priests; he had the idols; and, he had the whole works. You would have thought that Dan would have recoiled in horror over what they came across. Instead, they found it attractive. What they did was simply take the whole thing over, in total, and made it part of a worship system which they then incorporated for themselves.

Many years later, they were further solidified and encouraged in this idolatry, which they had introduced into the nation of Israel, when Solomon died. And there was this conflict between Solomon's son Rehoboam and the appeal by the people to revolt; to be more considerate; and, to be more moderate in what he would do to the people than his father Solomon had done, who had taxed the fool out of them; who had taken their sons into servitude and into military service; and, who had taken the fruits of their labors. They said, "Give us some relief." Rehoboam consults with his elders, and they said, "That's good advice, Rehoboam. You should ease up. You will endear yourself to the people if you come and say, "My father was too hard. You will find me more reasonable and understanding."

Then he went to his peers. That was a bad mistake to go to people who are not any smarter than you are at your age; people who have no more experience; and, people have no more perception. And what does he do? He comes up at that point in time, and he says, "My little finger is going to be worse than my father's thigh in comparison. You haven't experienced anything. I'm going to really lay it to you." That's what the young men advise him, and that's what he did.

Well, as you know, the result was that the ten northern tribes said, "That's it. We're peeling off. We're seceding. That led to Judah and Benjamin going under Rehoboam's Davidic dynasty in the South (Judah), and the tribe of Dan went with the ten northern tribes into the segment of Israel. At that point in time, their leader, Jeroboam, decided that he must take immediate religious steps to preserve his ten tribes from reuniting with the South. He said, "If I let these people go down to Jerusalem for the feast; the festivals; and, the worst of times at the temple, they're going to long for the old days when we were one nation, and they're going to be won back to the Davidic line.

So, Jeroboam looked up to what Dan had done, and decided to reinforce the idolatry that the tribe of Dan had introduced into the nation. So, in 1 Kings 12:28, we read, "Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold and said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold, your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Though he is in the North, when he says, "To go up," he's talking about topographically. Topographically, the elevation was higher at Jerusalem than it was where they were in the north. So, that's what he means by "going up."

He says, "It's too much trouble for you to go up to Jerusalem for these festivities." He set one of these golden calves in Bethel in the South, and he set the other in Dan on the north. So, from one end of the country to the other, there was this solid, false-idol worship set up. It's hard to even believe that they would have done that; and, furthermore, for him to say these are the gods that brought you out of Egypt.

Well, the acceptance of this idolatry by Dan (because they jumped in it with both fists and both feet), and their initial introduction of idolatry into the nation of Israel, is probably why they have been weeded out of the privilege of being part of the 144,000 evangelists. None of their descendants will be part of that group. The reason for that was that they violated the explicit command of Moses on this subject in Deuteronomy 29:16-21. Moses says, "For you know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the nations which you pass by. And you have seen their abominations and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them; lest there should be among you, man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God, to go out and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when you hear the words of this curse, that he blessed himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will not spare him. But then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man. And all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him. And the Lord shall blot out his name from under Heaven. And the Lord shall set him apart unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the Law."

So, here you have an explicit statement such that God says, "If you go for idolatry, I'm going to block you, and wipe out your name." And that's literally what has happened in the tribulation. The name of Dan has been wiped out. These people enjoyed their drunkenness. They enjoyed the joviality. They enjoy the phallic cult religious practices (the sexual participation in the idol worship). They had a great time. And God says, "I'm going to cut you out. This is going to turn to wormwood and gall in your mouth. Enjoy it while you can." So, this warning against idolatry was very explicit, and Dan was very guilty of violating it.

The comparison of Dan to a serpent, of course, is reminiscent of the role that Satan played in the Garden of Eden, who was also opposed to the true God. Genesis 3:15, you remember, predicted that the serpent Satan would bruise the Savior Jesus Christ's heal, but that the Lord Jesus would bruise the head of the serpent.

In the face of such a future false religion, which apparently Jacob could see on the horizon, Jacob could sense that this was the direction that this son was going to go. Though he was a mighty warrior; though he was a very stringent defender of the northern territories of Israel; and, though he provided that service, yet he had incorporated the most devastating sin to the nation of Israel with its idolatry. From then on, everything went down. The worst thing about this is that the people could never get over this. You remember how long it took them to finally quit worshiping idols. It wasn't just Dan. This constantly filtered down through the nation.

Then the Assyrians came and just took these ten northern tribes completely into captivity; spread them across the world; and, made them slaves and captives. Sometime later, Nebuchadnezzar came into the South, and he did the same thing to Judah and to Benjamin. He took them into captivity to Babylon. Those people knew that they were coming back, because it had been told then before that this was going to happen, but they were only going to spend 70 years in that captivity. Then God was going to release them. God said, "I told you not to plant every seventh year. I told you to have a sabbath in the field every seventh year, but you wouldn't do it. You thought that you could make more money, and you could be more prosperous, if you planned at that seventh year. And you robbed me of 70 sabbath years, and I'm going to take them back all at one time, and you're going to spend them as captives in Babylon. But at the end of the 70 years, I'm going to bring you back."

So, those people came back. And lo and behold, what a dramatic change there was after that. There never was any more problem with idolatry after they came back from Babylon. Then they had finally learned a lesson. They had finally unlearned the evil that Dan had interjected into the nation.

So, it is interesting that this comparison between Satan, as a serpent, and the attack upon the true God, that Jacob ends up his evaluation of this son in verse 18 by exploding with the statement, "I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord." The false religion has caused Jacob to cry out, "I'm waiting for Your salvation, O Lord."

The thing that's interesting about this is that the Hebrew word for salvation is, guess what? In Hebrew it is "Yeshua." So, what he is saying is, "I have waited for Yeshua, O Lord." And as you may suspect quite correctly, "Yeshua" is the name "Jesus." So, here he is, exploding, and not even realizing what he is saying. He is even calling the Lord by His name: "I am waiting, O God, for Jesus – the one who is going to disentangle all this false religion; who is going to take all this apart; and, who is going to finally put all this evil to rest.

So, these are rather fascinating sons. Zebulun was a haven for those in need. Zebulun was the one who reached out beyond his border. Zebulun was the one who had some quality of missionary vision, and yet one who was also in that outreach capable of providing the security militarily upon which that outreach can be made. A nation which does not have freedom is not a nation which can reach out to anybody.

Issachar was a donkey: strong; but, docile. While he can be led to move in the right direction and make a contribution, he is quite willing just to hunker down and accept tyranny and accept enslavement so that he can enjoy the good life. This is a very dangerous attitude – choosing the good life at the expense of freedom.

Finally, there was Dan. He was the one who was a powerful personality; who had great strength; who was a military force to be reckoned with; and, who is an adversary that you just as soon have on your side rather than the other side, but who fell into the terrible sin of idolatry, and who led the nation into unimaginable sufferings under the discipline of God because they followed his leading. So great was this sin that his name was wiped out, so that he does not even participate in the tribulation evangelism.

It is amazing again, and well that we should remember, that the Bible tells us that what you parents do will go down to your children unto the third and fourth generation. It happened with these patriarchs. It happens with all of us all the time. Think through very carefully, therefore, the kinds of influences that you are putting out upon those receptive minds, and the lifestyle that you are living, and the attitudes you are projecting. They will pick it up to their blessing or to their suffering.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)