***Gad, Asher, and Naphtali  
  
RV131-01***

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

As you probably know, the tribulation era is a seven-year period following the removal of all Christians, dead and alive, from the earth to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air, there to be ushered into heaven itself. We call that the rapture of the church (the catching away of the church). The tribulation itself is actually the last part of what we call the dispensation of the Jews, which began with Abraham. It was interrupted by the church age. The last seven years have not yet been fulfilled. That's what the tribulation period is all about. Since it is the last part of the dispensation of the Jews, it's only natural that the Jews should figure prominently in it.

The ruler of the whole world during this tribulation period will be the antichrist, and he himself will mount a Nazi-like Holocaust of persecution against the Jewish people. The result will be that vast numbers of them will be martyred. They will die. The Jews of the tribulation will be, of course, the same kind of Christ rejectors that they are today. They are in the same position today that Paul originally was; that is, they view Jesus Christ as a fraud: "Yes, he was a good man. Yes, he was a teacher, but he was deluded. What he claimed to be was not so." So, the Jews will enter the millennial era with that same misconception concerning the person of the Lord Jesus.

**The 144,000**

However, as an act of divine grace, the Jews of the tribulation period who are still alive are going to be given another opportunity to accept their Messiah Savior Jesus Christ. God will get the gospel message (that is, the gospel of the kingdom – the good news of the coming Messianic Kingdom based upon faith in Christ) to the Jews via a special body of Jewish evangelists. The 144,000 evangelists will come from the original 12 tribes of the nation, which descended from the 12 sons of Jacob. The antichrist will not be able to silence these men because they will have a special seal of God upon them. As a result of their message, vast numbers of Jews and gentiles are going to believe the gospel, and they will be born again.

**The 12 Tribes of Israel**

The preservation of these 12 tribes is actually a work of God's mercy, in spite of the conduct of the patriarchs and the conduct of the progeny of these tribes. The 12 sons of Jacob, as we have seen, actually pass on their character traits to their descendants, but God sovereignly works around that, and uses it to His will and to their blessing, as a matter of fact.

So, we've looked at several of these sons. We've looked at Reuben, and we found that while he was the firstborn, he was weak in honor. He lacked integrity, and he had no spiritual stability. So, he lost the firstborn position of honor. Levi and Simeon were a twin team. They were men who were short-tempered. They were treacherous. They acted with injustice. So, they lost having even a part of the land to claim for their particular family line. Judah, however, was an honorable man, even though he was also a man of moments of great sin. But he was respected by the other tribes, and he was a leader of the nation, and the royal line of the Messiah.

All of these characteristics are precisely what, we read of in Genesis 49, when Jacob, on his deathbed, looked at the sons, and made these evaluations concerning them. Then we looked at Zebulun, who played the role of providing safety and provision for those in need. Perhaps he will be reaching out in this same way during the tribulation. Issachar was like a docile beast, a beast of burden, who suffered if he was fed and taken care of, rather than to resist oppression. Dan was a bad one. Dan was the source of the idolatry in the nation, and he was a venomous snake in dealing with people. If Dan got hold of you, you could expect to be done in.

**Gad**

The family leadership determines family character for good or evil. That was true then, and it is true today. We now direct your attention to three more sons. In Genesis 49:19, we begin with Gad. He gets one verse: "Gad, a troop, shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last." Gad was the number seven son of Jacob, in the line of sons. He was actually the first son born to Leah's servant girl Zilpah, who had become one of Jacob's wives.

In Genesis 30:10-11, we have the description of the birth of this son Gad. The name means "good fortune," or more precisely, "a raiding troop" ("a raiding party"). At Sinai, when they left Egypt, they had 45,600 men of arms. 40 years later at Kadesh, as they were going to enter the land, they were down to 40,500. So, Gad became a tribe that was whittled down. Numbers 1:24-25 and Numbers 26:15-18 give us these figures. When they finally did get to the Promised Land 40 years later, they got to the River Jordan. Before they crossed it, while they were still on the east side of the Jordan River, they went to Moses, and they made a specific request of him. As the people of this tribe looked around them on the east side of the Jordan River, they recognized that it was very fertile territory, and most desirable for the grazing of flocks. So, they got an idea: "Why don't we stay on this side of the river? We've basically cleaned out the heathen nations that are in here, and we will stay on the east side of the Jordan River."

So, in Numbers 32:1, we read, "Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle. When they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle; the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, 'Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, even the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and your servants have cattle.'" They're describing all the tribes that they've wiped out. "'Therefore,' they said, if we have found grace in your sight, let this land be given unto your servants for possession, and do not bring us over the Jordan."

Now this was a very significant (and not an illegitimate) request: "And Moses said unto the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, 'Shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?'" Immediately, Moses brings up the question to them: "The other tribes helped you to clear out your side. Are you asking me to permit you to stay here and permit them to go across and do their own cleanup without your help?"

So, Moses gave them an alternative. And we read about that in verse 28. He said to them that here is a way that they could work out the problem: "So, concerning them, Moses commanded Eliezer the priest, and Joshua, the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. And Moses said to them, 'If the children of God and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan, every man armed to battle before the Lord, and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for possession. But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among us in the land of Canaan.' And the children of God and the children of Reuben answered, saying, 'As the Lord has said unto your servants, so will we do. We will pass over, armed before the Lord, into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side of the Jordan may be ours.'"

So, Moses said, "If you will cross over with us; conquer the land; leave your families; leave your cattle; and, leave your possessions on the East side, once we have conquered the west side of the Jordan, then you may come back, and you may possess that as your land," after this was completely done. And, of course, this is what they did do, and Joshua 22 describes for us how even though they went back over to the East side, they put up a special memorial to remind themselves that they were part of the people who were on the other side of the river as well.

This desire on the part of Moses, to have them help in this conquest, was because there was a characteristic that was very important to them relative to this tribe, which Jacob himself had foreseen and predicted. Jacob's prophecy concerning Gad related to a military characteristic: "Gad is a troop (a conquering troop), and shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last. Jacob's prophecy related here to the military capacity of Gad to repel invaders; and, furthermore, to press the enemy even under adverse circumstances. This tribe was surrounded by Ammonite and other Arab groups on its borders, so it had to be very effective militarily.

The Bible tells us that the Gadites were especially trained and gifted in warfare. For example, in 1 Chronicles 5:18-21, we have this information given concerning this tribe, demonstrating how the prophecy was fulfilled: "The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, a valiant men, able to bear shield and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skillful in war were 44,760 who went out to the war. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. And they were helpless against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them, for they cried to God in the battle, and He was being treated by them because they put their trust in Him. And they took away their cattle and their camels, 50,000; and of sheep, 250,000; and of donkeys, 2,000; and, of men, 100,000."

This is no small securing of loot and no small number of prisoners that they had taken. When they went to war (when you came up against Gad), you were up against men who had been trained and who had an ability in warfare. You'll notice that it tells us that they went into battle under divine direction, and under dependence upon God.

There are still some people who think that Christians cannot go to war; that Christians must not be soldiers; and, that Christians would not call upon God in the process of seeking victory if that cause is justified.

We find, furthermore, that the Gadites were the kind of military people you could depend upon, because when David was exiled, it was men from the tribe of Gad who very quickly rallied to his support. 1 Chronicles 12:8 says, "And of the Gadites, they separated themselves to David, into the stronghold in the wilderness (that is, at Ziklag), men of might, and men of war, fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were as swift as the rows upon the mountain."

Moses described the descendants of Gad with this same comparison. Here they're called: "Men with faces of lions." In Deuteronomy 33:20, Moses says, "They are like lions in battle." The picture here is, if you've ever can put yourself on a safari, and you have a lion that is mad at you, and he's charging you, what's his face going to look like? He's not going to be smiling. His mouth is going to be open, and you're going to see his teeth, and you're going to feel uncomfortable. That's the point of saying, "Their faces were like lions." You knew you were under threat. When you went into battle with the Gadites, you felt like you were facing a bunch of lions that had been turned loose.

Actually, the Bible tells us that God had a special use for these military men in the tribe of Gad in terms of executing His will relative to the people of Israel. In Deuteronomy 33:21, we read, "And he provided the first part for himself, because he was seated there, in portion of the lawgiver. And he came with the heads of the people. He executed the righteousness of the Lord and his ordinances with Israel." Starting at verse 20: "And of Gad he said, 'Blessed is he who enlarges Gad. He dwells like a lion, and he tears the arm with the crown of his head." Here you have this comparison again of Gad to being a lion in battle. Then it says, at the end of verse 21, that: "He was executing the righteousness of God.

In 2 Samuel 23:36, you have a noble list of 30 men who are called David's mighty men. There is one whose name was Bani, and he is listed from this tribe of the Gadites.

The Gadites actually were taught the principles of warfare by God. If you were to research the conquest of the land of Canaan, you would discover that the people were given direct, specific guidelines for executing that conquest. For example, one of the things that the Gadites and the other Israelites we're taught, is that the only way you can establish peace in the face of an aggressive enemy is to destroy his capacity to make war. You must destroy his capacity to make war. On the occasion when Sennacherib of Assyria, for example, came and threatened King Hezekiah, it looked like everything was hopeless. He was sitting outside of the walls of Jerusalem, and he has 185,000 crack infantry troops of all kinds. Hezekiah is absolutely hopelessly in a traumatic condition. He cannot see anything but doom awaiting them. This is in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ, before His incarnation, was called the Angel of the Lord (the Angel of Yahweh). But Hezekiah has the good sense to go in prayer to God to ask for a solution.

It is on that occasion that the Bible tells us that suddenly during the night, the Lord Jesus Christ appears on the scene, and moves systematically through the camp of the Assyrians. And the next morning, those who survive have the unbelievable sight of looking about them and seeing 185,000 corpses. Now you're just going to have to imagine what it is to look and to see a field of dead people. It's pretty hard to fill a field a few hundred. But for you to fill a surrounding camp ground with 185,000 corpses is an enormous thing to try to grasp mentally, and it was a staggering sight. And I want to remind you that it was that Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself executed those Assyrian troops.

Do you know what happened then the next morning? Sennacherib looked out at what he had left, and he called off the battle, and he went home. Why? Because he couldn't fight. How do you stop an enemy from fighting? Not like the United States did in Korea. Not like the United States that in Vietnam. If you had men in government who were oriented to the Word of God, they never would have fought a war without the intention of winning. And it is hard to believe that men in authority would let young men die without any intention of having any benefit from their deaths in terms of victory. So, the Word of God makes it clear that the number one principle of warfare is that you so destroy your enemies that he cannot resist.

King David praised God for the fact that the Lord himself taught him how to fight according to principles such as this. In 2 Samuel 22:38, we have an expression of praise to the Lord for teaching David the principles of warfare: "I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them, and turned not again until I had consumed them." David says, "I learned my lesson. I want this guy to stop attacking me. I want the enemy to be stopped in his tracks. How am I going to do that?" Well God has made it very clear. He taught us how to do that:

"I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them, and turned not again until I had consumed them. And I have consumed them, and I've wounded them that they could not arise. Yea, they are fallen under my feet, for You have girded me with strength to battle. Those who rose up against me, You have subdued under me. You have also given me the necks of my enemies that I might destroy them who hate me. They looked, but there was none to save; even into the Lord, but He did not answer them. Then I did beat them as small as the dust of the earth. I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad. You also have delivered me from the strivings of my people. You have kept me to be head of the nation. A people whom I knew not shall serve me. Foreigners shall submit themselves unto me. As soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me. Foreigners shall fade away, and they shall be afraid, coming out of their forts."

So, David says, "I learned the principle of warfare – that you stop war and you establish peace by making it impossible for your enemy to continue the battle." Then David also observes that having done that, and having demonstrated that when Israel comes on the scene, you can expect us to destroy you completely: "Now, do you want to fight? Fine. Just get yourself set up, and we're going to put you through the meat grinder, and we're going to assure you that we're going to have hold of the handle as you go through."

So, David said that the result was that the nations round about them pulled back and they said, "Hey, we don't want to fight the Jews. We don't want to go to war with Israel. We're going to avoid them, because when they fight, they're not nice. They just finish you off so that there's no tomorrow. That is a basic principle of warfare.

Another principle, of course, that the Gadites learned along with all the other Israeli troops, and what made them such fine soldiers, is that they understood that the refusal to go to war is sometimes against the will of God. In that case, it's a sin, as we've already seen. Had they refused to go to war, and stayed on the East Bank, that would have been a sin. It's amazing, isn't it, to realize that sometimes, if you refuse to go to war, you are guilty of sin? Sometimes when the nation refuses to go to war against a proper and legitimate aggressor who is threatening national sovereignty, that is a sin.

Furthermore, the Gadites were taught that war is for adult males. You don't put girls and women into the battlefield. And for the men, under the theocracy of the Old Testament, you had to be 20 years old or up before you were brought into military activity. They were also taught that the troops had to be trained by the chaplains in the Word of God in order to develop combat courage. It was General George Patton who pointed out, during World War II, a basic principle of victory – that an army wins on the basis of its soul more than it wins on the basis of its armaments. He was a perceptive man to understand that, because that's exactly what God taught the people of Israel. The people of God were good soldiers because they understood that if their souls were right, they were terror in battle. If their souls were not right, they would not have combat courage. Once your soul is right, meaning that it is oriented to doctrine, then you can go into battle, because if the worst happens, and your life is taken, you know exactly where you're going, and you know exactly what's going to happen. You also know that, because of your orientation to the Word of God, you have an inherent divine protection upon you.

So, the soul condition determines the outcome of the battle. Furthermore, they were taught that soldiers who are not mentally prepared for battle are to be weeded out, so as to prevent them from demoralizing everyone else, as others see them shirking their duty.

There was also demonstrated that they needed strict military training. You didn't just take somebody; put a weapon in his hand; and say, "Go out there and fight." God said, "You must have a system of military training so that you can convert a mob into a coordinated fighting force." Such military training required, first of all, that you must raise up a core of officers – men who have command presence; men who will press the battle with the drive to win; who will not easily be overwhelmed; and, who will not quickly give up. God so trained David and the Jews for war, so that they could enter the war with the kind of military training that gave them battlefield courage.

2 Samuel 22:35-36 point this out to us, where David says, "He teaches my hands to war, so that a bow of bronze is broken by my arms." I can even pull a bow made of bronze: "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation, and Your gentleness has made me great." He is saying, "You've stooped down to make me great." There is the shield of salvation. In other words, there is soul preparation again for battle.

Another good expression is found in Psalm 144:1-2: "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; my goodness and my fortress; my high tower and my deliver; my shield; and, He in whom I trust, who subdues my people under me." Here David praises God as being the one who is their real protector.

Of course, David knew the fact that the battle ultimately was indeed the Lord's. Therefore, he also understood, having prepared his soul with the Word of God, that he, and the Gadites with him, and all the other Israeli soldiers, went into battle on the realization that God was the ultimate one who decides. In 2 Samuel 22:47, we read, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. It is God who avenges me, and who brings down the people under me, and who brings me forth from my enemies. You also have lifted me up on high, above them who rose up against me. You have delivered me from the violent man." So, David knew that they did not go into battle just dependent upon their tactics and their weapons, but they went in dependent upon God.

Of course, it doesn't matter what battle you're in, whether it's military or some battle of life, you may count on the fact that the ultimate decider, the ultimate sovereign control, who's going to decide what the results are, is God Himself.

There is something that was taught in the book of Job, which was of great importance to tribes like the tribe of Gad, which were so engaged in military battles. That is that God protects those who are His chosen one in battle. In Job 5:19, Job says, "He shall deliver you in six troubles; yea, in seven, no evil shall touch you. In famine, He shall redeem you from death; and in war, from the power of the sword." Job is listing things that God says, "I'll protect you from if you are in My will." One of the amazing things is that those who are in the will of God will not be killed on the field of battle either. He will move and protect them.

This was the tremendous and significant tribe of Gad. It was a military tribe that the nation depended on – one who had learned the ark of warfare.

**Asher**

The second tribe that we'll look at in this session also has just one verse – the tribe of Asher. Genesis 49:20: "Out of Asher, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." The family background here is that this is the eighth son of Jacob. He is the second by Leah's servant Zilpah. He's the full brother of Gad. Zilpah was given to Jacob when Leah no longer was bearing any children. After the fourth son had been born, Leah was bearing no more children. She was still competing with her sister for children. So, she decided that what she would do was that she would get a substitute to bear the children. So, Zilpah became Jacob's wife. Then, when Asher was born as the result of this arrangement, Leah called him "happy," because she anticipated what she wanted, and that was the praise of the women because a child had been born. That's not much different than it is today. There is, understandably and rightly so, a certain great honor as a woman bears a child, and it's a happy occasion.

So, for Leah, though the child was born by her maidservant, it was ultimately her child, so it was a happy occasion for him, and she gave him the Hebrew name "happy," which is "Asher." In Genesis 30:12-13, you have this described: "Now when Jacob looked at Asher (as he stood there by Jacob's deathbed), Jacob said that this tribe would be a producer of desirable foods." The word "fat" here means "in abundance:" "And Asher, his bread shall be fat." That means that there'll be an abundance of it.

In Deuteronomy 33:24, Moses gives us a little more of a description concerning Asher. Moses says of Asher, "Let Asher be blessed with children. Let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil." Now somebody has come up with the idea: "Aha, this is why the Jews have oil. It's right here. It says, 'They're going to dip their foot in oil,'" and don't think you won't find that in commentaries, because you will. The truth of the matter is that the Jews have always bemoaned the fact that Moses led them throughout that whole vast territory; all over the Arabian Desert; all over that peninsula; all over that area there; the Sinai Peninsula; and, so on, and he settled them on the one place where there wasn't oil. They walked over all the other places, and the Jews have said, "Why couldn't he have settled us here when they have the oil, or here where they have the oil? Instead, he takes us to one place where there's no oil." So, this has nothing to do with petroleum.

What he's talking about is the thing that was the primary cooking element again in that time, which was olive oil. This is another description for the fact that they would be a people that knew how to eat well. It was not merely that Asher was Israel's breadbasket, but also that it was going to be the source of the kind of delicacies that you would prepare for a king. Asher, in other words, was the original expert at French cuisine. Asher was the original donut man who rises early in the morning to prepare the donuts for you to dunk during the day.

So, Asher just had the reputation for desirable food preparations. And the rest of the country learned from Asher. This tribe was actually given a very fertile territory along the seacoast north of Mount Carmel, all the way up to Tire and Sidon. Joshua 19:24-34 describe this territory. It was a very fertile territory – one in which they could produce the things they needed to produce the kind of desirable things to eat that they were famous for.

When they left the land of Egypt in the Exodus, they had 41,500 fighting men. Numbers 1:41 tells us that. At Kadeshbarnea, 40 years later, they had grown to 53,400 (Numbers 26:47). However, one of the things that they failed to do, as so many of the other tribes did, was that they failed to completely conquer the surrounding heathen. Instead, they didn't dominate the Canaanite culture. They just sort of floated along with it. Of course, the inevitable happened. They loved the ease. They'd rather just get along with these people rather than execute God's direction to remove them. The result was that they themselves deteriorated into a love for ease and a refusal to stand up for what is right. In Judges 1:31-32, we read about their refusal to drive out these inhabitants.

Well, of course, this came to plague them later because they picked up the bad habits. Asher was not a prominent tribe in Israel's history. It produced no significant leaders. It is a tribe, however, that did come to the aid of Gideon when he called for help against the Midianites. Judges 6:35 and Judges 7:23 commend them for that.

When David came to his coronation, finally, after years of trying to escape Saul's vengeance, they sent 40,000 of their military men to celebrate David's coronation (1 Chronicles 12:36). In the New Testament, we read that the prophetess named Anna, that looked for the coming Savior, was from this tribe of Asher. Luke 2:36: "And there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher." So, this lady that was there giving testimony to the Savior – that this baby was the Messiah Savior, came from this tribe.

**Naphtali**

Then the last tribe we will look at in this session is the tribe of Naphtali. This tribe also gets just one verse, in Genesis 49:21: "Natalie is a hind, a doe let loose. He gives beautiful words. This name "Naphtali" in the Hebrew means "wrestling." He is the number son of Jacob. He is the second one by Rachel's handmaid Bilhah. He is the full brother of Dan. Here again is this competition between the two sisters as to who could have the most boys" "And Rachel saw, when Naphtali was born, a victory over her sister Leah, with whom she was always wrestling for Jacob's attention, and for Jacob's favor."

So, in Genesis 30:7-8, we have the explanation for the boy's name: "And Bilhah, Rachel's maid, conceived again, and bore Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, 'With great wrestlings have I wrestle with my sister, and have prevailed. And she called his name Naphtali.'" She felt that she had one up now on her sister again, and the battle was continuing.

Jacob, on his deathbed, as he looks upon this Son, describes him as a doe, a female deer, freely roaming – one that's uninhibited. Furthermore, one that has the gift of language. That's an interesting combination.

At the Exodus, this tribe had 53,400 troops. Numbers 1:43 and Numbers 2:30 tell us that. 40 years later, they had fewer: 45,400 (Numbers 26:48-50).

This tribe also did not drive out the Canaanites, but they lived actually among them. The fact is that they came up with a unique idea. Instead of looking upon these as a potential threat to their survival and their walk with God, they said, "Why should we kill all these human beings?" And they came up with an idea that Hitler used in World War II. Even the Jews that Hitler gathered together for ultimate execution were carefully processed, so that those who had strength and capacity were used as forced labor before they were finally destroyed. That's exactly what this tribe proceeded to do. They looked upon the people that they had under them, and the tribe of Naphtali said, "We won't destroy them. We'll make them forced labor." So, they not only had them around, but they brought them right into their society.

Well, the influence of these Canaanites soon the tribe of Naphtali into the grossest kind of phallic cult worship. The Canaanites were Baal worshipers. They were sex worshipers. And the tribe of Naphtali just went right down the line.

The concept of Naphtali being a doe, obviously, suggests swiftness. If you've ever been deer hunting, this is one thing you discover about deer. They are fast. It is nearly impossible to try to hit a deer in motion. This concept of the swiftness of Naphtali was again brought to bear in terms of their military activity. In World War II, the Germans came up with a radically new concept of warfare. Right up to the time that World War II began, the minds of most military people were still back in World War I. In World War I, the war came to a certain place, and then everybody dug trenches. They had these myriad interwoven trenches that they would run around in. Once in a while, they'd go over the top, and they'd attack, and then they'd run back and get down in the trenches. The result was that both sides came to a stalemate, so it was a slow moving operation. You were forever digging; throwing up dirt; and, making a new track.

Hitler said, "That's no good. What we will do is that we'll take a page out of the doctrine of the United States Marine Corps, which is to hit the objective fast and hard with maximum speed; take your bruises; and, get out. The result will be fewer casualties. So, a new concept of warfare was devised which was called the blitzkrieg. The German word "blitz" is "lightning;" and, "kreig" is war: "lightning war." Suddenly, Hitler unleashed his armies against France, and they came so fast. I mean, they were thundering along in their vehicles. They were high-speed. They were moving as fast as they could on the highways, and the French could not stop them. Suddenly, the word was transmitted back to Winston Churchill in England saying, "France has fallen." Churchill's immediate reaction was, "You must be mistaken. They could not have been defeated already. We're talking about a few days since the campaign began." And they said, "Yes, France has fallen. Germany came like lightning through them." So, from then on, warfare had a totally different concept.

So, you had this picture of Naphtali as the swift-moving creature.

Furthermore, he is described by Jacob as the one who would have a way with words: "He gives beautiful word." He was going to be known as a writer of beautiful literature. One place that this is illustrated is the victory song of Deborah and Barak, which you have recorded in Judges 5:1-31. Barak was of the tribe of Naphtali, and he won a great victory over Jabin and Sisera in Judges 4:6 and Judges 4:15: Barak and Deborah brought their gifts of literary accomplishments to bear, and they produced that marvelous victory song that we have recorded here in the Scripture.

It is indeed a wonderful gift to be able to use eloquent and descriptive speech to describe great historical events. It is a lost art today. People don't know how to talk. People know how to look. They know how to sit and look, but people don't know how to talk, and people don't know how to talk in such a way as to describe precisely what's going to happen.

If you were here the other night, you heard the old joke again about the guy who's putting in the fence posts, and his friend tells him, "I'm going to put this post in. When I nod my head, you hit it," but he didn't clarify what the antecedent was, so his friend hit him right on the head when he nodded it. That's the beauty of knowing how to use language, and using it precisely. This is an art which we do not have.

If you've ever read some of the statements and the writings of Winston Churchill, or if you were alive during World War II, and heard his declarations on the radio, you may remember, on the eve of the Battle of Britain, France had fallen, and Dunkirk had taken place. The British had barely escaped with most of their troops from Dunkirk after they had been pushed to the sea, with their back to the English Channel. By a grace mercy act of God, they were able to get enough of every kind of boat to get those men back to England. Then they were faced with most of their material left on the beaches in France. The Germans were in full control, and England had really been brought to her knees.

Well, suddenly, Winston Churchill gets on the radio, and with the eloquence of descriptive words, he electrifies the nation with those words of how they would fight on the beach, and in the streets, and in the homes, and so on. He built it up to a high point, and he declared, "If the British Empire should last 1,000 years, may this be described as her finest hour. We shall never surrender."

The whole nation rose up in cheer. You could hear it all over the nation. People were sitting by their radios, clapping and cheering. And a nation, which should have been easily defeated by the Germans was never defeated. The channel was open. All they had to do was come across. Hitler had all the boats. He had everything lined up. He had taught his troops to sing a song called "We're Marching to England." The troops got hoarse singing the song, but they got nowhere closer to England. One thing after another stood in their way, and England was able to resist, because the people brought to bear a maximum effort, just because you had a man who could use words.

So, when Deborah and Barak described this momentous event of the defeat of Sisera, it was something that electrified the nation for a long time.

When Barak called for the tribes to battle the Canaanites, Naphtali is to be respected, because she was the first tribe to respond, again in keeping with her characteristic of being swift to battle.

They also joined Gideon in his battle against the Midianites, and there was a special honor that God had reserved for the territory of Naphtali. In the book of Isaiah, this tribe was honored with a prediction concerning something that the Savior was going to do when He finally came. Isaiah 9:1-2, says, "Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first, he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." This is describing the judgments that God brought upon them in their territory: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined."

If you'll turn over to Matthew 4:12, God the Holy Spirit very carefully points back to the territory of Naphtali and the fulfillment of that prophecy: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into the prison, He departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'The land of Zebulun and the Land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who sat in darkness saw great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up.'" So, the territory of Naphtali was honored as being a major point where the enlightenment concerning the Savior was first given.

So, here are three sons. Gad was a military force that preserved Israel's freedom. Asher was a producer and a connoisseur of good food – one who knew how to provide for the good life. And Naphtali was a swift moving force, executing justice, with a literary gift to inspire to action. These are tribes which have come down with specific gifts that played a major role in the nation's history.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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