***Ephraim and Benjamin

RV133-01***

We are studying the tribulation evangelists in Revelation 7:4-8. This is segment number 10.

The 12 Sons of Jacob, we have seen, were influenced in various ways by the good and bad factors to be found in their fathers and mothers. Joseph proved to be the most divine viewpoint oriented son of all. He received, therefore, a double-portion blessing in the two-tribe dynasty which was assigned to him. Manasseh was the oldest son of Joseph. But he was denied, in the providence and the sovereignty of God, the firstborn position. We have no explanation as to why this was done, and we have no accounting for that except the good pleasure of God. This tribe, the tribe of Manasseh, did perform great military service to the nation, and it supplied men of administrative ability. They did inherit their father Joseph's characteristic of administrative capacity, and they also inherited respect for governmental establishment. In time, however, the tribe fell into idolatry. When it did that, its heritage meant nothing. So, it was taken captive into Syria, and this tribe was never heard from again.

**Ephraim**

That brings us to the other son of Joseph. His name was Ephraim. This was the second son of Joseph now, by his Egyptian wife, Asenath. And, we read in Genesis 41:52, concerning the birth of this second boy: "And the name of the second he called Ephraim, for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

The name "Ephraim" means "fruitful," and he named him that because this son was viewed by Joseph as a sign from God how he had been prospered because of his faithfulness to the principles of the Word of God, and how indeed his prosperity was yet to come before him. Jacob, when he came to bless the two boys, the sons of Joseph, at this time, indicated that God had given the privilege of the firstborn, with all the rights appertaining thereto, to this younger son, Ephraim. So, in Genesis 18:17-20, when Jacob was going to bless these boys, he crossed his hands, and put his right hand on the youngest son's head. When Joseph tried to correct him, he was told, "No, that this is the plan of God for these two boys. So, Ephraim comes into the family history with the firstborn privileges.

**Joshua**

At the time of the exodus from Egypt, this tribe had 40,500 soldiers (men of combat), Numbers 1:32-33 tell us. 40 years later, at Kadeshbarnea, interestingly enough, it had dropped to 32,500, as we find from Numbers 26:37. This tribe became a very prominent tribe in the nation of Israel, and it produced some influential leaders, not the least of which was a man that you're all acquainted with, whose name was Joshua. And, we read in Numbers 13:8 that he was of this particular tribe: "Of the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua, the son of Nun. Numbers 13:8 indicate that Joshua was such a prominent man that he represented the tribe of Ephraim as one of the spies who went out to search out the land.

Deuteronomy 31:7 tells us that this son of the tribe of Ephraim was selected by God to replace Moses as the leader of the nation. Of course, that indeed was no small honor, both for this individual man, Joshua, and for the tribe that he came from. We were told about this in Deuteronomy 31:7: "And Moses called unto Joshua and said to him, in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn unto their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it." This is an honor to Joshua, but it is a sad commentary for Moses at this high point in Israel's history – that he was not going to be able to cross the Jordan and lead them to the final victory after so many years of being the head of the nation. But Joshua was the man selected for it.

The religious center of the nation of Israel during the era of Joshua and of the judges was at a place called Shiloh, which was in the territory of Ephraim. It was a fitting location for those who had the spiritual heritage of Joseph. Ephraim, we find, participated in the military campaign in the days of Gideon. The men of Ephraim were again, like their brethren in the tribe of Manasseh, military oriented men. They were good soldiers, and they understood the importance of military capacity and military preparedness for the preservation of this fledgling nation.

In Judge's 7:24 and 25, we read about this participation with Gideon against the Canaanites: "And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, 'Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan." Here were the two military opponents who were giving them a great deal of trouble. One thing that these men demonstrated, because they were militarily oriented to the doctrines of warfare that had been taught them, was that they knew how to bring peace. They finished off the enemy. There was no more carrying on the battle once the Ephraimites got through with the situation.

The freedom, however, were not always able to control their capacity for military endeavors. They got into a civil war with Jephthah which cost them dearly. Jephthah was another one of the judges. In Judges 12:1-6, we read about this situation: "And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Why do you pass over to fight against the children of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house upon you with fire.' And Jephthah said unto them, 'I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon. And when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. When I saw that you did not deliver me, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?' And Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim. And the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, 'You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites. And the Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites.

And it was so that when the Ephraimites who were escaped said, 'Let me go over,' that the men of Gilead said onto them, 'Are you and Ephraimites?' And if he said, 'No,' they said to him, 'Say now Shibboleth.' And he said, Sibboleth,' for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time of the Ephraimites 42,000.

It seemed that in the tribe of Ephraim, they couldn't pronounce the letters "Sh," so they couldn't say Shibboleth. When they told them, "Say the word 'Shibboleth,'" that was a password. All they could pronounce was "Sibboleth." It's like some people who pronounce the word "shrimp" today like "srimp:" "I just had some srimp for dinner." And your hair stand on end, and you say, "You mean 'shrimp?'" And they say, "Yes, that's what I said: 'srimp.'" So you finally give up.

However, the Ephraimites were out of order. They were hot-headed because they hadn't been brought in to the battle. And Jephthah said, "I called you before when I needed you. You didn't pay attention to me, so I ignored you, and I turned to the Lord, and God has delivered me, so, I didn't need you.

Well, that made them mad, so the battle ensued, but the Ephraimites got the worst of it. Finally, they were in flight, and in trying to cross the Jordan at this particular point where they had to come across, they had established this method of weeding out those who were coming who were Ephraimites from those who were the genuine men who had stood with Jephthah.

This is a common way of dealing with people who speak a foreign language. During World War II, one of the things that the Americans found in the Pacific was that the Japanese could not pronounce the letter "L." When they tried to say the letter "L," it came out as an "R," so they would use passwords that had a lot of "Ls" in them, like "Lollapalooza." When a Japanese person came along, who could speak English, they would say, "What's the password?" If he knew it, he would say, "Rorraparooza." And right away, that gave them away, like these dudes here saying "Sibboleth" instead of "Shibboleth." So, that was the idea behind this as a military procedure. It was very severe on the Ephraimites when they took this attitude, and many of them died.

When the ten northern tribes seceded from the royal line of the house of Judah, they were led by a man named Jeroboam. And interestingly enough, guess what tribe problem was from – the rebel who broke up the kingdom? He was an Ephraimite. 1 Kings 11:26: "And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zereda. So, the leader of the ten northern tribes, Jeroboam, was indeed an Ephraimite.

Because of this, during the 200-year history that the northern tribe existed, it was often referred to by the name Ephraim. It had the name Israel, in contrast to Judah for the Southern tribe, but it was also called Ephraim, because its original revolutionary leader was this man from the tribe of Ephraim.

In Revelation 7:8, where the tribes are listed who are going to be providing the evangelists for the tribulation, the tribe of Ephraim is not listed by its name, but instead it is listed by the name of its founder, Joseph. This is probably because of this attitude of rebellion against God's chosen house of David that their name is omitted in that list, though their descendants will be part of those who will be the evangelists.

This was, of course, an attitude which was in contrast to the humble attitude of their progenitor, Joseph, who had the attitude of waiting upon God to solve his problems. Certainly, this is what God does in solving problems, even in terms of governmental problems. Saul came on the scene as the first king, and the time came when God finally said, "That it, Saul. You're out. You've committed the sin of the death, and you are now doomed." David was anointed, but Saul continue to reign. David did not take things into his own hands to create a rebellion to wrest the kingdom from Saul. Instead, said he waited upon the Lord. And, of course, Jeroboam should have done the same, and the Ephraimites should have followed that same pattern.

Jacob adopted Manasseh and Ephraim as his own sons so that they represented the house (the dynasty of Joseph). With Joseph and these two sons, in this way, Jacob honored his beloved wife Rachel, because they were now really three tribes, in effect, that were descended from Rachel. So, we have this in Genesis 48:5, where Jacob says, "And now, your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born unto you in the land of Egypt, before I came unto you into Egypt, are mine. As Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine." So, these two sons were officially adopted by Jacob.

**Benjamin**

So, that brings us to the last son standing around that death bed of Jacob that we have recorded here in Genesis 49. Jacob's eye now moves to the son who, in his old age, was the most precious of all to him, his youngest boy: the boy named Benjamin. This was the twelfth son of Jacob. He was the second child to be born to Rachel. We have that event recorded in Genesis 35. It proved to be a very sad occasion. In Genesis 35:16, we read, "And they journeyed (that is, Jacob and his household) from Bethel. And there was but a little way to come to Ephrath, and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, 'Do not fear. You shall have this son also.' And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, for she died, that she called his name Benoni, but his father called him Benjamin."

The name "Benoni" means "the son of my sorrow," because here was this young woman, who for so many years grieved over the fact she could not bear children, finally had the joy of bearing Joseph, and then found that when finally she did have a second son, she realized that she was dying, and she would never enjoy being able to rear this child. So, she called him "the son of my sorrow." But his father, Jacob, couldn't get himself to leave that name with the boy all his life, because indeed, while it was sorrow to the mother, it was a great joy to the father to have this Son by this particular woman. So, he changed the name to Benjamin, which means "the son of my right hand." This was the final son – the son of his old age.

These two names, interestingly enough, are a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in Luke 2:35, we're told, "Was a sorrow to his mother." What was going to happen to Jesus was going to be a sword in Mary's heart. But in Luke 3:22, we're told that this same Son was a joy to his heavenly Father, and the Son in whom He was well-pleased.

Well, Benjamin, as Jacob's youngest son, was especially dear to him, and probably more so since the boy had to grow up without his mother. Jacob was very distressed, therefore, over the thought of sending this boy off to Egypt as Joseph demanded that the boy be brought to Egypt upon the occasion of the other brother's coming for food during the famine. The agony is indicated for us as he contemplates the terrible idea of sending this youngest boy, that meant so much to him, to be seen by this ruler, whoever he was, in Egypt. In Genesis 42:36, we read, "And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children. Joseph is not (because he thought that Joseph was dead), and Simeon is not (because Simeon had been kept as a hostage in Egypt), and you will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.

Verse 38: "And he said, 'My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone." And you can see how the man thinks: "He is left alone." What does he mean by that? He's not left alone. He's got all these brothers. He's got a big family. But to Jacob, there were only two sons that really were significant – Rachel's boys. So, to him, this boy was left alone. With Joseph gone, there was no one else. He's left alone: "If mischief befall him, by the way in which you go, then shall you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol;" that is, to what in the New Testament is called Hades – the place of those which, before the resurrection, contained the souls of those who died. So, this boy was obviously very dear.

The older sons, Reuben and Judah, were particularly sensitive to the father's concern for Benjamin. They too had matured. It was actually Reuben and Judah who tried to protect Joseph to begin with. It was Judah who was trying to keep Joseph from being taken off into Egypt, along with Reuben. Both of them were frustrated in this. So, they were particularly sensitive to this Son. And knew what a blow this would be to their father Jacob, if he lost this boy too.

In Genesis 42:37, Reuben expresses his understanding of this when discussing the matter of taking Benjamin back with him for a new supply of food: "Reuben spoke to his father saying, 'Slay my two sons if I don't bring him to you. Deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to you again." Reuben says, "I'll put the lives of my own two sons at stake. You can rest assure that I'll bring him back." And when they were in the presence of Joseph, and Joseph made them think that he was going to take some severe action against them because they had taken the silver cup, and the Egyptians had put it (at Joseph's command) into the bag of grain that belonged to Benjamin. So, Benjamin was accused of this theft.

So, this time, Judas sees that things are really getting out of hand. Here again, we see a commendable quality of this man who was to become the head of the royal tribe. Genesis 44:18 makes a very tender plea in behalf of this little brother: "Then Judah came near onto him (that is, unto Joseph, whom he did not recognize), and said, 'Oh, my lord, let your servant, I pray you, speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not let your anger burn against your servant, for you are even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?' And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one. And his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father love him.' You said unto your servants, 'Bring him down unto me, that I may set my eyes upon him.' And we said unto my Lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die."

Verse 29: "And if you take this also from me (he goes on to quote his father), and mischief befall him, you shall bring down my gray hairs to sorrow to Sheol. Now, therefore, when I come to your servant, my father, and the lad is not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life. It shall come to pass, when he see it that the lad is not with us, that he will die. And your servants shall bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to Sheol."

So Judah makes his impassioned appeal to Joseph: "Please don't keep our little brother. It will mean the death of our father." Well, this was such a touching scene that chapter 45 goes on to tell us that Joseph just couldn't take it any longer. So, he proceeded to reveal himself to his brothers. This boy was dear to his father.

At the Exodus, the tribe of Benjamin, which came down from this beloved son, had 35,400 troops (men under arms) in Numbers 1:37. When they got the Kadeshbarnea, 40 years later, they had 45,600 men, Numbers 26:14 tells us.

The tribal characters described for us in Genesis 49:27 by Jacob as he looks on this son. We read, "Benjamin shall consume as a wolf. In the morning, he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoils." Benjamin is characterized here as a wolf who devours his prey, and he shares the spoils of war. So, immediately, again, the military characteristic of the sons of Joseph comes into the picture. Benjamin is characterized as a military person who is compared to a wolf who stalks his prey; makes his hit; achieves victory; secures the spoils of war; and, shares them. It says that he does this in the morning and evening: "In the morning, he shall devour the prey. At night, he shall divide the spoils."

"Morning and evening" suggests that there is a constant aggressiveness. The tribe of Benjamin, when it went into battle, pressed the enemy. They did not play it safe. This is the kind of soldiers you like to have in combat. This is the kind of officers you like to have. In World War II, an outstanding men of this character was George Patton, who could always be counted upon such that when he was in command, the enemy would be pressed. He would be like a wolf, and he would stalk them morning and evening. And the Germans knew about it. The Germans considered George Patton the most outstanding general that the allies had, and they feared him more than anybody else. It was George Patton's aggressiveness that they feared.

On one occasion when the Germans had been pressed into an impossible situation, George Patton described it, in his characteristic aggressive way, by saying, "Now, this time we have the Krauts' head in the meat grinder, and we've got hold of the handle." And he proceeded to crank it up as fast as he could, and chew them up as fast as he could.

So, this was the characteristic of the tribe of Benjamin. They were aggressive for plunder in combat, but they were also voracious for that. They had military skills, and they protected and enriched the nation.

This tribe, understandably, therefore, became known for its military skills. They were known to be the most skillful archers, which was the primary weapon among all the tribes of Israel, as well as superb slingers. They knew how to handle a slingshot with enormous accuracy. The thing that made them further more of a problem and a great threat in combat (a disconcerting feature about them) was that they were ambidextrous. That is, they could shoot the bow and arrow with either hand. They could run a sling with either hand. There is something that throws you off balance when you were confronted by a left-handed person, because you don't know what it is, but there is something that you notice is different. And in a combat situation, it's that moment of hesitation and confusion which is enough to do you in, especially in close hand-to-hand combat, which was characteristic of these days. So, these warriors could handle a weapon equally well with either hand.

In 1 Chronicles 12:2, we read, "They were armed (these of the tribe of Benjamin) with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left hand in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren, of Benjamin.

Judges 20:16 tells us: "Among all this people (that is, among the tribe of Benjamin), there were 700 chosen men left-handed." Every one of them could sling stones at a hair breadth and not miss." So, they were in the habit of capitalizing on the confusion created by facing an enemy, and then using their left hands. It's just this disconcerting to have a left-hander come at you. So, these people had an enormous advantage in that respect. And I presume (it must have been), and undoubtedly was a genetic characteristic of this tribe that enabled many of them to be left-handed, but, by and large, they could use either hand equally well.

The aggressiveness of Benjamin, of course, understandably put them regularly on the side of victory. When they went into combat, they did not go like a bunch of Americans who were told to go into a place like Korea: "You may fight, but just be sure that you don't win." And when any officer became too aggressive in the Korean War, he was pulled out of command, because he was considered a threat, and because he was pressing toward victory. Well, none of that kind of nonsense was to be found with the tribe of Benjamin. They pressed for victory, and they were usually on the side of victory.

This tribe took part in one of the great campaigns in the times of the judges when God had to punish the people, when they deserted Him and His Word, by bringing a foreign enemy on top of them. We have, in Judge 5:14, the description of their participation with the campaign under Deborah and Barak: "Out of Ephraim there was a root of them against Amalek after you, Benjamin, among your people, out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer." So, Benjamin was part of the people who responded to the call of Deborah and Barak.

This tribe produced a famous left-handed judge. His name was Ehud. Judges 3:15 tells us about this famous personality. And another famous personality from this tribe, that all of you were acquainted with, is the first king of Israel, whose name was Saul, and who was of the tribe of Benjamin.

1 Samuel 9:1-3 says, "Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish," and it goes on. Verse 2 says, "He had a son whose name was Saul. He was a choice young man and handsome. There was not among the children of Israel a more handsome person than he. From his shoulders and upwards, he was taller than any of the people." So, this tribe had the characteristic of producing impressive leaders. The first king of Israel was from the tribe of Benjamin.

The territory that was assigned to this tribe, furthermore, was in a very critical place in the nation. Consequently, some major sites of the nation were found in the territory, among which was: Jerusalem; Gibeon; Bethel; the Valley of Aijalon; and, Bethhoron. These were important sites in Israel's history, and very fittingly placed into such a reliable place under such people who could be expected militarily to protect these cities.

However, as always, the sin nature is there. There is a sad commentary upon the tribe of Benjamin, because they were guilty of a great evil of harboring a group of evil men who, in their territory, had killed a Levite concubine. This led to a civil war, because the Benjamites would not execute justice upon the men who were guilty of this heinous crime. The result was a civil war, and it almost destroyed the whole tribe of Benjamin – a tribe that was so capable militarily, and a tribe that had so many outstanding leaders. No matter what you were before, it doesn't count anymore.

In Judges 20:46, we read, "So that all who fell that day of Benjamin were 25,000 men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor." Do you realize how many men 25,000 men is? That's an enormous loss, and it shattered the tribe. And that came upon them as divine discipline because of their unwillingness to exercise justice toward the men who had committed this crime in their territory.

Judges 21:1-3 say, "And now the men of Israel have sworn in Mizpeh, saying, 'There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin in marriage.'" The rest of the tribes were so indignant at this crime that they said, "One of the things that we're going to do is cut you people off. We will not allow our daughters to intermarry with anybody from the tribe of Benjamin:"

"And the people came to the House of God, and abode there till evening before God, and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly and said, 'Oh, Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel; there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel," because the implications were obvious. So many men had been killed, and if they would not permit any of their daughters to intermarry with them, the tribe would, in time, simply disappear.

In Judges 21:12-13, the other tribes came together, and sought a solution from God, and this is what they proceed to do: "And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead 400 young virgins who had known no man by lying with any male. And they brought them into the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin, who are in the rock of Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them." The other tribes had second thoughts. They said, "We'll not go back on our word. They're not going to marry our daughters, but we don't want to see this tribe destroyed. So, we will keep our word, but we will take action to solve this problem that we have imposed upon them:

"And Benjamin came again at that time, and they gave them wives whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabeshgilead; and yet so they did not suffice them." But even this provision apparently did not provide enough women for the wives that were needed. So, they came up with another solution, and suggested to them that there would take place shortly, a celebration – a festival at a place called Shiloh, and that many of the women of that particular group of people would be taking part in those festivities. And they suggested that they hide in the vineyards, and then, at appropriate times, to rush out and simply capture one of the women that they may take as wives. So, they proceeded to do that.

In verse 21, we read, "And see and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come out of the vineyards and catch every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the Land of Benjamin. Verse 23: "And the children of Benjamin did so, and took themselves wives according to their number of them who danced, whom they caught, and they went and return unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them." So, this was a very interesting courting procedure. But they did get the girls back in, and the tribe was preserved. So, this is one way to find a wife: find a vineyard, and run in, and catch your girl. But that doesn't always work. In any case, it was a way that they solved the problem and saved the tribe.

After Saul's death, this tribe, of whom Saul was one, remained loyal to the dynasty of Saul. They supported Saul's son Ishbosheth against David. 2 Samuel 2:15-31 tell us about that. These men did have a sense of loyalty. They were military men, and as military men, they had a sense of loyalty to the commander-in-chief and to the command which was over them. It took them a little while to catch up to what God was doing here.

However, at the division of the kingdom, Benjamin remained loyal to the royal house of Judah. So, that is a commendation to them. We have this in 1 Kings 12:21-24: "And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. But the Word of God came unto Shemaiah, the man of God, saying, 'Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, King of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: you shall not go up nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.' They hearkened therefore to the Word of the Lord, and returned to depart according to the Word of the Lord.'"

**The Apostle Paul**

So, this was a tribe which had a very honored history within the nation, and not the least of which was a man in the New Testament that all of you are also well-acquainted with, who was from this tribe – a tribe whose spiritual orientation enabled God to pick up Paul of Tarsus, and make him the great apostles to the gentile world. In Romans 11:1, Paul identifies himself in this way: "I say then, has God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." He refers to this again in Philippians 3:5: "Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrew, as touching the law, a Pharisee." So, the tribe of Benjamin certainly had an outstanding personality in the person of the apostle Paul, even in New Testament times.

**The Gospel of the Kingdom**

So, these are the 12 tribes from whom the missionary contingent will come during the tribulation era. The descendants of Jacob's son are going to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in the tribulation. The gospel of the kingdom is with John the Baptist was proclaiming. It is not strictly the same as the gospel of the grace of God, which we preach today. Its basic requirement was the same; that is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but the particular emphasis was different. In John's day, the gospel of the kingdom was being preached; namely: "The Messiah is here. The one who is promised from the line of David has finally arrived. The Kingdom of God upon this earth is ready to be established, and I call you to national repentance, and to trust in this one, the Messiah that God has sent." Of course, the nation did not accept Him. They rebelled against Him, and ultimately they crucified Him. But the thrust of the message of the gospel of the kingdom was that the Jewish messianic kingdom was about to be set up. But to be saved was still, just as with us: "Believe (trust in) that messiah.

So, the kingdom message (the kingdom gospel), in that particular aspect of the gospel, is what's going to be preached again by these tribulation evangelists. These evangelists, furthermore, will themselves be conscious of the supreme importance of their message to the Jewish people who, at that time, will still be dispersed all over the world. They will know that they are again proclaiming the message, which, if the Jews had listened to in the first place, would have brought in their kingdom. Instead, they crucified their Messiah. So, these men are going to know that their message is very important to the Jews scattered around the world. God is again giving them an opportunity to have their kingdom established. So, these missionaries will be conscious of their former special national standing, and that it is about to be restored if the Jewish people respond in the right way. So, they're going to have great motivation with the message that they're going to preach – these 144,000 evangelists.

The nation of Israel today, of course, you understand, is not God's client nation. It is not under God's blessing. The nation of Israel that exists today on the Mediterranean Sea is a nation which is under God's divine discipline. It's the dog's tail of all the nations, and it is under the curse of God, and the suffering that God is imposing upon it – the discipline that He is imposing for the rejection of the Savior.

Furthermore, the tribulation evangelists themselves will not constitute the nation of Israel in the tribulation. The nation of Israel that will exist in the tribulation will be just like it is today – those who are anti-the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the nation of Israel in the tribulation will be pro-antichrist, not Jesus Christ.

These men are, of course, going to have to operate under a sense of the reality of their message. If you have a message to give to somebody, the zealousness with which you deliver it, and the urgency with which you deliver it, is dependent upon how important that message is to you, and how crucial you think it is for people to hear it. If you find yourself in a house that is on fire with other people in it, you don't sit there and think to yourself how you should broach this subject to everybody else in the house. You don't just walk in and knock on the door and say, "Are you all getting hot in there? Well, I don't know how to tell this to you (how to break this to you), but this place is going up in flames."

No, the urgency would be so great that you would be running, yelling, "Fire. Fire. Get out." And you'd be directing people how to get out. The urgency of the message would compel you to get it out, and get it proclaimed as quickly as possible. So, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to have to become very, very real to these 144,000 men for them to preach with the urgency; to preach in the face of the opposition that they're going to get; and, to face up to the world personalities that are going to come down upon them. Unless that message is real to them, they're not going to want to fight back. They are not going to want to take the suffering. But this message is going to be that real to them. They're going to capture a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and their confidence in the message that they proclaim is going to give them the courage and the capacity to take all the abuse, and all the suffering, and all the rejection.

**Jeremiah**

They're going to be indeed men who operate in the great tradition of the prophet Jeremiah, who was another man who, in his time, came to a message that could only be described by the word "fire." He stood at the threshold of a point in time of national destruction. God had made it clear to Jeremiah what was coming. He had told Jeremiah why it was going to happen, and the Jews were alerted to it. He was warning them not to depend upon Egypt, which they were trusting in for their military survival. They had diluted their products that they were making. They wouldn't sell you straight wine. They'd mix it with water. They perverted their money by putting base metals in with the gold and silver, so that they were cheating people with the coins. They were inflating the money. That's what they were doing. As you know, the Bible says that it is a grievous sin for a nation to inflate its money. God forbids a nation from inflating its money. Eventually, He brings economic destruction on a nation that's doing that.

So, for all these things, Jeremiah said, "You're going down to destruction, and I'm warning you." Well, you know what they did to him. They threw him in a pit. They said, "You're crazy. We're sick of listening to you." They threw him into a slimy pot, and there he was. This man of God was treated like a dog.

However, in Lamentations 3:19, there is a noble statement by Jeremiah, which represents the spirit that these 144,000 evangelists will have to come to themselves: "Remembering my affliction, and my misery; the wormwood and gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to mind. Therefore I have hope." He says, "I remember all the bitterness. I remember all the agony." But he says, "I remember something else, and it gives me hope. It gives me confidence and courage in my message. Yes, I've been rejected. I've been abused. But here's my hope:"

Verse 22: "It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions do not fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul. Therefore, I will hope in Him. The Lord is good unto those who wait for Him; to the soul that seeks Him." That was Jeremiah's attitude. While he knew the suffering, he had the hope of the promises of God.

So, what did he do? Jeremiah did not back down from proclaiming the Word of God and turn to self-pity, as he could have. He didn't abandon his calling to be God spokesman with the truth. Jeremiah was down, but he was far from out. He kept fighting back. Why? Because he knew that the message was for real, and he remembered God's promises and grace, which had carried him through in the past, and he expected them to carry him through in the future. He knew that God had even indicated to him that following this terrible time, he was going to be brought back. He told Jeremiah, "Buy a piece of property, and hide the title deed. When you get back, it's going to be yours. These dudes will sell it to you for nothing, because they think that everything has come apart. Hit them up, Jeremiah. Buy it up, and when you come back, you'll be on easy street.

Jeremiah did it. Then he waited confidently for the victory which God had promised to him. This will be the spirit of those in the tribulation era. These will be men of great courage, and men of capacity to proclaim the Word of God, particularly the gospel of the kingdom, because they will know that it's for real.

For you and me – we need to take a lesson from them. When we have a message, and when we have an awareness of what people are headed for in their eternal destiny, which is for real, then we speak up. When we do not take that gospel message very seriously, and when we do not really recoil in horror from envisioning a person burning in hell for all eternity, then we are very indifferent toward proclaiming the message. But when it grips our hearts, and when it becomes real, then every person we look at, in the back of our minds, there is the hope; there is the opportunity; there is the analyzing; and, there is the watching for the moment of proclaiming to them the message of the gospel, which is their means of escape. May we follow in the great tradition, which will be true of the 144,000, and which was true of such great men as Jeremiah and the apostle Paul.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1984

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