

1 AND 2 CHRONICLES: GAINING DIRECTION OUT OF THE AIMLESSNESS OF APOSTASY

Part I: Gaining Direction From God's Work In Our History From Furthest Antiquity, 1 Chronicles 1-9

B. Gaining Direction From Noting God's INTERACTION With Past Groups In The Faith, 1 Chronicles 4-8

3. Gaining Direction By Noting God's Work With The Tribe Of Reuben

(1 Chronicles 5:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. One key characteristic God seeks in a Christian's walk is uprightness in his moral conduct, 1 Thess. 4:1-8. Failure by way of sexual misconduct brings God's severe judgment and vengeance, 1 Thessalonians 4:4-6.
- B. The history of the tribe of Reuben shows the high cost of immorality, and offers a warning for us:

II. Gaining Direction By Noting God's Work With The Tribe Of Reuben, 1 Chronicles 5:1-10.

- A. The lineage of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, is given in 1 Chronicles 5:1-10, cf. 1 Chron. 5:1a.
- B. However, Reuben's honored firstborn status was given to the sons of Joseph, for Reuben had cohabited with his father's concubine, a terrible sin and social affront to his father, 1 Chron. 5:1b; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1.
- C. Viewing the history behind the event, we note an atmosphere had been created by the parents in the home that helped influence Reuben to be morally unstable and lead to such infamous, immoral activity:
 - 1. Reuben's father, Jacob was deceitfully given Leah in marriage instead of Rachel, Gen. 29:15-24.
 - 2. When Jacob realized he had been tricked by his father-in-law, Laban and Jacob raised an objection, Laban explained it was not customary to give the younger daughter in marriage first; rather, Jacob was to work another seven years for Rachel's hand as he had already worked for Leah, Genesis 29:25-27.
 - 3. Yet, when Jacob eventually wed Rachel, he loved Rachel and hated Leah. Thus, to avoid a family relationship crisis, God let Leah's womb bear children but closed up Rachel's womb, Gen. 29:28-31.
 - 4. However, Rachel did not adjust well to this state, but turned competitive, giving her maid, Bilhah to Jacob to raise up sons unto her by Rachel as was the secular custom of that era, Genesis 30:1-5.
 - 5. Instead of following the example of father, Isaac in praying that his wife conceive (Gen. 25:21), Jacob followed errant grandfather, Abraham (Gen. 16:1-2) in faithlessly cohabiting with Bilhah, Gen. 30:4-8.
 - 6. So, when Leah ceased bearing, she gave her maid, Zilpah to Jacob to bear her more sons, Gen. 30:5-13.
 - 7. In the midst of this rivalry, Leah's son, Reuben, found mandrakes that were held to be an aphrodisiac, and gave them to his mother Leah, Genesis 30:14; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Genesis 30:14-18.
 - 8. When Rachel heard about it, she faithlessly and with moral coarseness before Reuben "sold" her conjugal time that night with Jacob to Leah for Reuben's aphrodisiac so she could use the mandrakes to enhance her chance to bear a son, Gen. 30:14b-21. (Bible Knowledge Com., Old Testament, p. 77)
 - 9. As Leah and Rachel revealed they were hopelessly competitive, God gave Rachel a son, Gen. 30:22-24.
 - 10. In time, and with this example of coarse morality and faithlessness to God in his parents, Reuben had an affair with Rachel's maid, Bilhah, a great sin that was an affront to Jacob, Gen. 35:22; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1.
- D. Thus, Reuben's father, Jacob predicted in his paternal blessing that though Reuben was his firstborn son, his moral instability exemplified in this sin with Bilhah meant Reuben's sons would not excel, Gen. 49:3f.
- E. For this reason, the genealogy of Reuben in 1 Chronicles 5:1-10 notes a modest series of achievements:
 - 1. Negatively, a chief in Reuben's line was captured by Assyria when Israel fell in judgment, 1 Chron. 5:6.
 - 2. Positively, Reuben's descendants became owners of large herds of livestock (1 Chron. 5:9) by gaining a great military victory when they looked to God in faith for help in the battle, 1 Chronicles 5:18-22.

Lesson: *Though Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, he became morally unstable and slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah under the influence of questionable morals and faithlessness by his parents. Thus, he was destined to have his descendants miss his favored firstborn status and gain only moderate fame!*

Application: *(1) May we hold to strict sexual morals to be blessed by God. (2) May we by God's Holy Spirit avoid exemplifying coarse sexual conduct before our children as Rachel and Leah did before Reuben lest we influence them to later gross sexual misconduct, Gal. 5:16-23. (3) May we parents also look in FAITH to GOD for challenges in our marital relationships rather than stooping to human efforts to solve them; otherwise, we will reap a whirlwind of trouble in terms of prolonged family problems (as in the case of Abraham and Sarah with Hagar, or Jacob and his wives with their maids)!*