

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

9. Gaining Direction By Noting God's Work With The Tribe Of Naphtali (1 Chronicles 7:13 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Great and often depressing spiritual darkness envelopes many in our world at the international level with the Middle East crisis, the national level with the gay marital union and abortion issues and locally with dysfunctional family and cultural life. One can feel a sense of gloom and hopelessness in it all.
- B. Yet, "where sin did abound, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20), and God's richest expressions of His grace often extends to the darkest of realms. The history of the tribe of Naphtali displays this truth:

II. Gaining Direction By Noting God's Work With The Tribe Of Naphtali, 1 Chronicles 7:13 et al.

- A. 1 Chronicles 7:13 briefly notes the genealogy of Naphtali, giving no word on how this tribe was unique.
- B. Jacob's prophecy notes Naphtali would be like a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns (NIV) or that gives goodly words (KJV), Gen. 49:21. Its people would be a free mountain folk, Bib. Kno. Com., O. T., p. 99.
- C. Viewing the tribe's history, brief but spiritually limited successes initially occurred in the era of the judges:
 1. Barak from Naphtali (Judges 4:6) brought Israel victory over Canaanite invaders, but to the shame of his faithlessness in God, he did so by clinging to the lead of prophetess, Deborah, Jud. 4:8-9.
 2. Naphtali helped Barak fight Sisera (Jud. 4:10) and helped Gideon defeat the Midianites, Jud. 6:34-55.
- D. However, this tribe had close contact with idolatrous Gentiles, leading it into deep spiritual darkness:
 1. Judges 1:33 reveals Naphtali did not drive out the Canaanites from their land as God willed (cf. Judges 2:1-3), but were content to make the Canaanites their slaves and to tolerate their idolatry.
 2. This tolerance led this tribe soon to fall into apostasy, Zond. Pict. Ency. of the Bible, v. Four, p. 372.
 3. Thus, in the era of Isaiah, Naphtali had slipped into great spiritual darkness and resulting tragic gloom:
 - a. Isaiah 9:1 uses the tribal names of Zebulun and Naphtali to refer figuratively to the whole Northern Kingdom of Israel that relatively quickly fell into apostasy, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., O. T. p. 1052.
 - b. Such spiritual failure is described in Isaiah 8:19-22: (1) forsaking Scripture, (2) the people turned to mediums for insight (Isa. 8:19a) when they should have sought God's guidance instead (Isa. 8:19b). (4) Indeed, Isa. 8:20 reveals that unless they said, "To the law and to the testimony!" (or, "Get back to the Bible!"), they had no insight (light) in them! (5) Isaiah 8:21-22 describes the resulting tragic darkness that came upon them: (a) they passed through the land seeking effective spiritual insight, distressed and craving it, 8:21a. (b) Unaware that abandoning Scripture had created the need, they raged and spoke contemptuously against the king and God, blaming them for their lack as they looked to them for help, 8:21b. (c) Desperate, they looked down to inferiors for help only to find distress and gloom, 8:22a. (d) They then had gone into thick darkness and its hopelessness, 8:22b!
- E. Yet, in His great unmerited favor, God would still minister to Zebulun and Naphtali in their hopelessness:
 1. Though God let Assyria distress Zebulun and Naphtali, in the end He would honor their realm, Isa. 9:1.
 2. That tribal region that had replaced the Scriptures with false insight from demons only to end up in distressing darkness would see a Great Light, providing a way out of their gloom, Isaiah 9:2.
 3. That Great Light would be the Supernatural Counselor to supply the insight false counsel of spiritists could not, the Mighty God to lead them effectively, the Father of eternity to provide forever for their spiritual needs and the Prince of Peace to end the unrest apostasy had brought them, Isa. 9:6; 8:19-22.
 4. That One would be the Lord Jesus Christ, God-come-in-the-flesh (John 1:14 with Isa. 9:2, 6), a prophecy that was begun to be fulfilled in passages like Matthew 4:12-23.

Lesson: *Though Naphtali fell into deep apostasy in turning from Scripture's light to spiritism due to communing with apostates, God graciously sent His Great Light, the God Incarnate Jesus Christ, to them to live out the light of God's truth in the flesh that had once been neglected in the Scriptures!*

Application: *(1) May we look to Christ for hope out of spiritual darkness and its gloom, and, (2) once justified by trusting in Him, (3) get "back to the Bible" in (4) the power of the Holy Spirit for blessing, Rom. 8:3-4. (5) If assigned to a dark area, like Jesus, may we live out God's truth in word and in deed!*