

*“And the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” I Chronicles. 12:32*

## **THE CHILDREN OF ISSACHAR**

**by Craig Marlatt**

When David rose up to take the kingdom of Israel which God had promised him, there were many valiant warriors from the various tribes of Israel who came to fight on his behalf. Nearly 350,000 men in all gathered themselves together in Hebron to become a part of David's mighty army and pledge their allegiance to him as God's chosen king over the nation. I Chronicles 12:22 says, “For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.”

These were not ordinary men in any sense of the word, but skilled in the art of war: “The children of Judah that bare shield and spear. . . , of Simeon, mighty men of valour for war. . . , of Ephraim . . . mighty men of valour famous throughout the house of their fathers . . . , of Zebulon . . . expert in war with all instruments of war. . . , of Naphtali 1,000 captains . . . , the Danites expert in war. . . , of Asher. . . expert in war, Reubanites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Mannaseh with all manner of instruments of war. . . , All these men of war, that could keep rank came with a perfect heart to Hebron . . . to make David king.” And these are not including the mighty men who were already with David during his flight from Saul's persecution (I Chron. 11 and 12).

Certainly an incredible army by any mans standards, comparable to the largest armies in the world even today. Yet among those who joined hands with David at that time, the children of Issachar stand out as unique. They were “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” They were a select group of men, only two hundred numbered among their leadership, but of them it says, “all their brethren were at their commandment.”

Today we are living in a time when we certainly could use a little advice from the children of Issachar. It may be that the Church of Jesus Christ is now standing up against the greatest host of enemies she has ever faced before. Like David the promise of the kingdom has been given unto our true King, Jesus, but in the process of gathering ourselves together unto Him the army has come into great disarray. It can hardly be said about us that we are “men of war who [know] how to keep rank.” In many ways we are a divided lot, hardly keeping step with our own companies, let alone keeping rank with the whole of His forces.

But there are signs that the army of God is coming together and it certainly is encouraging to hear reports of how the Lord is gathering His troops from the various outposts and camps into one vast host prepared to take the kingdom that God our Father has prepared for us.

As the world focuses upon the crisis in the Persian Gulf it would be unwise for anyone to ignore the signs of the time that might possibly be intertwined into this very current event. And not only this but many others also: Earthquakes in divers places, an incredible increase in pseudo-Christian cultism, the New Age movement, false Messiahs, wars on nearly every continent, the rise of the E.E.C. in Europe, and the recent transformation of the communist system and heretofore unimagined alliances now

occurring between capitalist and communist countries, to mention only a few. These things, I believe, are paving the way for the rising Internationalism (One World Government) which will produce a system conducive to anti-Christ control.

Regardless of our own personal dogma's and eschatological views it is not wise to overlook the possibility that we may be standing on the brink of the coming of Christ. With this in view there are several things that God's Word says we should do in order to prepare for his return:

**1. Take Oil in Your Lamp-** Matthew 25:1-13 tells of ten virgins, five wise, and five foolish who went forth to meet the bridegroom. We must make sure that we have oil in our lamps and that our lives are illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God. That we are living our lives as those who are waiting for the Bridegroom, fully expecting His midnight call.

**2. Invest What God Has Given to You in the Kingdom-** We must eagerly invest our time, money, and talents in the places where they will yield eternal returns. So many of us focus (and even waste) our gifts and talents on this life. What a shame when you consider this: Have you ever seen a U-Haul behind a hearse?

**3. Live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly-** Titus warns us that we should purify our hearts and say 'no' to ungodly lusts and pleasures, as we look for the blessed hope, and . . . glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-15) [see also II Peter 3:9-12].

**4. Prepare to Suffer With Christ-** Clearly (in spite of popular doctrine) the scriptures tell us that we will suffer with Christ. Peter says, Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind . . ." The Apostle Paul also reminds us, "Yea, all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). In the best interpretation of Revelation 13:10 it reads, "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patience and faithfulness on the part of the saints." (NIV translation)

**5. Encourage and Provoke Other Christians-** Don't stand by while fellow Christians live in an unfit manner without doing everything in your power to warn them and tell them (Heb. 10:24).

**6. Be Firmly Planted in a Healthy Church Family-** In the rush to keep pace with the modern world it's easy to make church fellowship a sporadic or secondary priority; though we may listen to Christian tapes, T.V. and radio, we must heed the warning of Paul, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25). That doesn't mean we are to find a pew and sit. The model that has become representative of "Church" is not necessarily that healthy or beneficial. It is just as easy to be lost sitting in front of a man in a pulpit week after week as it is to not be in attendance at all. Fellowship happens when two or three are gathered together in [his] name, but Church happens among those who turn fellowship into relationship. Whether it's a traditional sanctuary building, a home fellowship, a storefront church or a gathering

taking place on log pews in the woods, it is the fellowship of believers regularly gathered together in relationship around the Lord Jesus Christ that constitutes Church.

**7. Work and Pray for the Souls of the Lost-** Every Christian should be involved, to some degree, in bringing the lost to Christ. If you don't know how to share your faith get some help and learn how from those who do know. Pray for and support those who are dedicated to the task of world evangelism (Jude 21-23).

If the children of Issachar were alive today they would surely tell us, "It's time to seek the Lord." Indeed there are watchmen today who are warning us of the times and the seasons. Let us heed these warnings and throw in our hands with the Righteous King who is coming to take up the throne prepared for him by the Father. May our hearts be perfect toward our King as were the hearts of those who came that day to Hebron to make David their king. May our determination be steadfast as those preparing to take up the kingdom.

The governments of this world, and Satan, the prince of this world, are on the path of self destruction. Like Saul, Israel's first king, they have forsaken the word of the One who gave them authority to rule, and like Saul, they will ultimately be forsaken by Him.

We, like David under king Saul, are not to seek the destruction or usurping of these things by our own devices. God has his plan and "He will bruise the serpents head" (Gen. 3:15). Psalm 2 say's, " The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them with his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree. . .Thou art my Son"

God will do as He will in accomplishing his plan, and we must do as He instructed us: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mark 16:15; Matthew 24:14).

Do you hear the trumpet cry? Saul is dead! Gather yourselves to Hebron for the coronation of the King. May God awaken us all to the reality of the times that we are living in that we may rise up and go forth to pledge ourselves as part of the gathering host.