

UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES

1 CHRONICLES 12:32, GENESIS 49:14,
NUMBERS 1:28, 1 CHRONICLES 7:5

Text: 1 Chronicles 12:32

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³² And of the children of Issachar, *which were men* that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them *were* two hundred; and all their brethren *were* at their commandment.

Introduction:

Knowing what to do can give a person the edge. Not knowing what to do can get you fired.

Every age has its unique challenges, and those who understand the times tend to lead the way.

There's an interesting example of this in the Bible that comes to us from the days of Israel's monarchy. Circumstances were changing as David was about to be crowned King of Israel. Saul was dead and the Benjamites had other ideas about the successor to the throne. But the other tribes were in favor of David as their king, and they had met in Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul over to him. It was a tense time in

Israel, and there was a need for great wisdom to discern those times.

It's here that the children of Issachar stepped up knowing what need to be done and how to do it.

We are introduced to Issachar in Genesis 30:18

Genesis 30:18

¹⁸ And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

He was the ninth son of Jacob and the fifth son of Leah.

The word understanding that we read in our text means to have insight or to act with prudence.

The sons of Issachar had analyzed their times and had perceived correctly what those times were all about. They knew what to do because they understood what was happening. It was obvious to them that Saul had not been a good king and there was no established dynasty to keep the kingship in the tribe of Benjamin. David had emerged as a real leader by virtue of his character and ability. He was the type of king Israel needed during those turbulent times.

The sons of Issachar knew exactly what to do. All of the tribes should get together and crown David as the new King of Israel.

Every generation needs people who can understand the times and know what to do in light of them.

This is not a matter of simply understanding the Bible, as crucial as that is. Rather, it's knowing how to apply the truths of God's Word to the issues of our day. Where is the culture going? Why do people think the way they do? What are the real needs of people, as contrasted to their merely felt needs?

Notice:

The Children of Issachar were:

1. STRONG – BURDEN BEARER

Genesis 49:14

¹⁴ Issachar *is* a strong ass couching down between two burdens:

Some of the great events in the Bible took place in the presence of a "donkey" or with a "donkey".

- Samson used the jawbone as a weapon

Judges 15:15-16

¹⁵ And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. ¹⁶ And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.

- The "donkey" was there when Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Genesis 22:3

³ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

The "donkey" was part of the pilgrimage made by the brothers of Joseph to request food from Egypt.

Genesis 42:27

²⁷ And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth.

A "donkey" was with Moses and his small family during their trip back to Egypt to deliver the people from bondage.

Exodus 4:20

²⁰ And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

And it was the lowly donkey had the greatest privilege of all - to bear on his back the Son of God at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem just one week before his crucifixion.

Luke 19:29-38

²⁹ And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and

Bethany, at the mount called *the mount* of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, ³⁰ Saying, Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*. ³¹ And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. ³² And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. ³³ And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? ³⁴ And they said, The Lord hath need of him. ³⁵ And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. ³⁶ And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. ³⁷ And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; ³⁸ Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

Notice is each of these occurrences the donkey was used as a burden bearer.

The tribe of Issachar was known for their ability and readiness to work hard, even under the undesirable conditions of being under oppression.

Notice, not only were they strong but also they were:

2. SOLDIERS – “ABLE TO GO FORTH TO WAR”

Numbers 1:28

²⁸ Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;

A good soldier:

Does Endure Hardness

2 Timothy 2:3

³Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Doesn't Entangle Himself

2 Timothy 2:4

⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Does Enamor Who Chooses Him

2 Timothy 2:4

⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

The tribe of Issachar was known for as soldiers that were able.

Notice, not only were they strong and soldiers but also they were:

3. STEADFAST – “VALIANT MEN”

1 Chronicles 7:5

⁵And their brethren among all the families of Issachar *were* valiant men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies fourscore and seven thousand.

Valiant men are:

1. Those that go beyond the ordinary.
2. Not self-serving.
3. Are not addicted to mediocrity and the run of the mill.
4. Who go out of their way to do what they ought to do or what can be done.
5. Are not addicted to casual Christianity.

Notice, not only were they strong, soldiers and steadfast but also they were:

4. SENSIBLE – “UNDERSTANDING OF THE TIMES”

1 Chronicles 12:23

²³ And these *are* the numbers of the bands *that were* ready armed to the war, *and* came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD.

1 Chronicles 12:32

³² And of the children of Issachar, *which were men* that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them *were* two hundred; and all their brethren *were* at their commandment.

Of all the qualities the children of Issachar had certainly this was the reason for all of the other things we considered – Strong, Soldiers, and Steadfast.

A. They Understood the Times (vs. 32)

They understood the times in which they lived.

If we don't understand our culture and its pressures, we will become a slave to it.

B. They Understood the Scripture (vs. 23)

In order to understand the times you have to be able to differentiate between truth and tradition.

They knew what the scriptures wanted for Israel. If we don't know the Bible, we can't focus our life on God's will.

C. The Understood What to Do (vs. 32)

The men of Issachar not only understood what God was doing but they knew how to respond to what God was doing. They had a plan. We can understand the times and even understand what the Bible says but this means nothing unless we can then act upon that information. We have to be able to respond and apply the truth.

Close:

Today is the most important day of your life. Today is the tomorrow you dreamed of yesterday.

Study yesterday. Learn how yesterday helps you live now. Yesterday was the school that prepared you to live today. If you didn't learn yesterday's lessons, determine to learn them now. That way today will be your school for tomorrow.

Study tomorrow. Tomorrow has great power in your life, for all will live in tomorrow (if we don't die). Our dream of tomorrow will give energy for today.

Study today. Learn the urgency of today. While dreams of tomorrow give us strength, and the lessons of yesterday give us foundation; today is all you have got. The only day you can live is today.

The sons of Issachar

Didn't describe their past, or say they understood their past.

Didn't say they understood their future.

They understood their times, the day that counted.