

The Issachar Factor



an ebook by
Joshua Ong

Warmest greetings in Christ.

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Title Page Note:

The seagull is painted with Chinese ink, and the red seal is my family name.

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
1 Issachar's Mother	7
2 The Birth Of Issachar	15
3 Jacob's Prophecy To Issachar	19
4 Moses' Prophecy To Issachar	27
5 The Promised Land	37
6 A Prophetic People	45
7 Mighty Men Of Valor	51
8 Understanding Of The Times	55
9 Great Givers	61
10 Seekers Of God	69
11 Servants Of God	75
12 The Chosen Ones	83
Epilogue: The Issachar Factor	95

Acknowledgements

Many prophets in the Bible are writers themselves, besides proclaiming the message of God vocally to the peoples. Sometimes the pen is sharper than the mouth as the written words are graven in ink that cannot be easily erased or forgotten.

I started writing about an article a week about 10 years ago and posted them in a website. My heart is inclined to write as the Lord prompts me through times of reading and studying the Bible, worship, prayer, interaction with Christians and pre-believers, and watching world news.

Thanks to God for His amazing grace, and also friends for their encouraging emails and words of exhortation, there are now people from about 50 nations visiting my website on a monthly basis.

From time to time, I write and rewrite short studies based on my findings and understanding of the Bible, and also through searching and researching the works of other godly men. Many are journals in my journey with God.

These thoughts are by no means the authoritative or the last word on any subject. Though I strive for truth, I will endeavour to correct any mistake when they are communicated to me.

Not everything published herein are all original or personal revelations from God. Some of them are taken from other sources or writers. However, I have edited them, and added my own thoughts and findings.

As these are my working files, there will be editions and further editions. Hopefully in this way of sharing, we can be edified in our relationship and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Preface

Today, there is a great need for us to understand the times that we are living in. Until and unless we know and understand the eternal plans and purposes of God, we will lose our cutting edge in ministering His Good News to our current generation, which is going in all different directions.

God is calling a people who are listening to His voice. They are obedient to His instructions. And they are willing to partner with Him in fulfilling His redemptive blueprint for all the nations.

The sons of Issachar have the understanding of the times. They have the ability to seek, search and serve God's prophetic Word powerfully and influentially to the peoples.

They are accurate and precise in administering the insights and giftings that they have received from the Lord. They have the knowledge of what to do, and they also have the wisdom of how to do it.

And the Lord has granted them great anointing and strength to carry out every single task that He has laid in their hearts. They have dreams and visions, and they put all of them to actualization.

I hope that this ebook will bring some significance and information about the sons of Issachar.

With blessings and shalom,
Joshua Ong

Chapter 1

Issachar's Mother

Genesis chapters 28 ~ 31

This story began with Jacob fleeing Esau. Jacob had stolen the blessing of the firstborn that his father had reserved for his elder brother, Esau. His mother, Rebekah, was worried that Esau might eventually cause him harm. Thus, Jacob's father, Isaac, sent him away to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother's brother.

Isaac gave Jacob this specific instruction: "Do not marry any of these Canaanite women. Instead, go at once to Padan Aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle's daughters. May God Almighty bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants become a great assembly of peoples! May God pass on to you and your descendants the blessings that He had promised to Abraham. May you own this land where we now are foreigners, for God had given it to Abraham."

Jacob was told to marry one wife. But Laban had two daughters. Leah was first and Rachel was second. Leah had dull eyes, but Rachel was beautiful in every way, with a lovely face and shapely figure.

The ravishing beauty of Rachel had captured the heart of Jacob. He was deeply in love with her. He told her father, "I'll work for you seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

"Agreed!" Laban replied. "It is better to give her to you than to someone else outside the family." So Jacob spent the next seven years working to pay for the bride price of his lovely Rachel. His love for her was so strong that those seven years seemed to him but a few days.

Finally, the time arrived for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my term," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me Rachel so that we can be married."

Laban invited everyone living there to the wedding feast. When it was dark that night, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. Laban also gave Leah a maid, Zilpah. The man, who had deceived his brother and father, was now deceived by his uncle. He knew not who his wife was.

The next morning, Jacob awoke and realised the mistake. It was Leah! Jacob went to confront Laban, "Why do you trick me? I have worked seven years specifically for Rachel."

"It's not customary for us to marry off a younger daughter before the elder one," Laban replied. "Please wait until the bridal week of celebration is over. I will give you Rachel if you promise to work for me another seven years."

Jacob had no choice. He agreed to work for Laban seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel. Laban also gave Rachel a maid, Bilhah. Jacob finally married his love, Rachel.

The two sisters were married to the same man, not on the same day but a week apart. And Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. He stayed on and worked for Laban seven additional years.

Because Leah was unloved, the LORD gave her children, while Rachel remained childless. Hereby we could see the favour of the LORD upon Leah. She had inner beauty that Jacob did not take notice and had disregarded. Her godliness could be seen in the naming of her children. Rachel's beauty might be just skin deep. Her distressing relationship with the LORD could also be seen in the naming of her sons.

Leah became pregnant. The LORD blessed her with a son. His name was Reuben, for she said, "The LORD has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me." How she longed for her husband's love!

The LORD blessed Leah again. She soon became pregnant. Her second son was Simeon, for she said, "The LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me another son." How prayerful and thankful she was!

The LORD blessed Leah again. She soon became pregnant and had a third son. She named him Levi, for she said, "Surely now my husband will show affection for me, since I have given him three sons!" How she longed for the affection of her husband!

But Jacob still loved Rachel more than Leah. The LORD blessed Leah once again. She became pregnant and had a fourth son. His name was Judah, for she said, "Now I will praise the LORD!" How she loved the LORD!

Meanwhile Rachel was fuming in anger. She had no children. This drove her to jealousy against her sister. She did not turn to God in prayer. Instead she put the pressure on her husband, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

Jacob was furious at her wailing. "Am I God?" he asked her. "He is the Only One Who is able to give you children!" But Rachel did not heed to his advice to ask and seek God. She committed the same mistake as Jacob's grandmother, Sarah. Sarah gave up waiting on the LORD for a son. She gave her Egyptian maid, Hagar, to Abraham to bear him a son. Unto them was born Ishmael.

Using this same ancient strategy, Rachel suggested to Jacob, "Sleep with my maid, Bilhah. She will bear children for me." Jacob bought the idea. Bilhah became his wife, and he slept with her. Bilhah became

pregnant and had a son. Rachel named him Dan, for she said, "God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son."

Bilhah became pregnant again and bore Jacob a second son. Rachel named him Naphtali, for she said, "I have had an intense struggle with my sister, and I am winning!"

Rachel had this *kiasu* spirit that was afraid of losing. She would fight until she won. She did not want to be a loser. Whatever it took to win, she was willing to buy the price. She must win. She must be first. And she must be number one.

At this time, Leah realized that she was not getting pregnant anymore. She employed the same method as Rachel. She gave her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob to be his wife. Now Jacob had four wives instead of one, which his father, Isaac, had originally instructed him to marry.

Ziplah bore Jacob his seventh son. Leah named him Gad, for she said, "How fortunate I am!" Then Zilpah had another son. Leah named him Asher, for she said, "What joy is mine! The other women will consider me happy indeed!"

Leah was full of thanksgiving and praise unto her Maker. She was rejoicing in all the blessings that the LORD had bestowed upon her. She considered herself blessed among the women.

The LORD remembered Leah and opened her womb again. He gave her a fifth son. His name was Issachar, for she said, "God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband." Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. She named him Zebulun, for she said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." After this, she bore Jacob a daughter named Dinah.

Rachel was in a serious plight when she saw the fruitfulness of Leah. And she finally turned to God, and the LORD listened to her prayers. He opened her womb, and she conceived and bore a son. She said, "God has taken away my shame." She named him Joseph, for she said, "May the LORD give me yet another son."

Soon after Joseph was born to Rachel, Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels to flee from his father-in-law. And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions, which he had gained to go back to his father, Isaac, in the land of Canaan. But Rachel stole the household idols that belonged to her father, Laban. She committed theft and idolatry.

Three days later Laban found out that Jacob had gone. So he took some of his relatives along and chased after Jacob. It took him seven days before catching up with Jacob in the hill country of Gilead. But God appeared to Laban in a dream that night and warned, "Don't say a word to Jacob. Don't make a threat or a promise."

Jacob had set up camp in the hill country of Gilead. Laban and his relatives came and set up camp in another part of the hill country.

Laban went to Jacob and said, "Look what you've done! You've tricked me and run off with my daughters like a kidnapper. Why did you sneak away without telling me? I would have given you a farewell party with singing and with music on tambourines and harps. You didn't even give me a chance to kiss my own grandchildren and daughters goodbye. That was really foolish. I could easily hurt you. But the God your father worshipped has warned me not to make any threats or promises. I can understand why you were eager to return to your father, but why did you have to steal my idols?"

Jacob answered, "I left secretly because I was afraid that you would not let me and my family go. About your idols, please search us.

Anyone found guilty of stealing them would be killed! Let your relatives be witnesses." Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the household idols.

Laban searched the tents of Jacob, Leah and the two servant women. He could not find the idols. Then he started to search Rachel's tent. She had hidden the idols in a cushion. She was sitting on it while Laban was searching for the idols. Rachel said, "Father, please don't be angry with me for not getting up. I am having my period." Rachel lied to her father. Laban did not recover his idols.

Rachel died young after giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. When the time came for Rachel's second baby to be born, Jacob and his family had left Bethel and were still a long way from Ephrath. Rachel was having a rough time during the delivery of the child.

The woman who was helping her said, "Don't worry! It's a boy." Rachel was at the point of death. Just before dying, she wanted to name him Benoni, which means "Son of my Sorrow." But Jacob called him Benjamin meaning "Son at my Right Side" (the place of power). Rachel was truly a woman of sorrows till her death.

Rachel was buried beside the road to Ephrath, which was also later called Bethlehem. Jacob set up a tombstone over her grave, and it is still there today.

Leah lived much longer. Before Jacob's death, he gave his sons this instruction, "I will die soon. And I want you to bury me in Machpelah Cave. Abraham bought this cave as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, and it is near the town of Mamre in Canaan. Abraham and Sarah are buried there, and so are Isaac and Rebekah. I buried Leah there too. Both the cave and the land that goes with it were bought from the Hittites." Jacob remembered Leah on his deathbed. He was buried with his wife, Leah.

I believe that as the years went by, Jacob had come to appreciate the goodness and godliness of Leah. He had begun to love her slowly but surely. She was loved finally! Leah was truly a blessed woman. From her third son, Levi, we have the priesthood. From her fourth son, Judah, we have King David and Jesus our Messiah! From her fifth son, Issachar, we could understand the times and seasons of God.

Below is a table of the wives and sons of Jacob:

Jacob's	Wives			
Sons	Leah	Rachel	Bilhah	Zilpah
1	Reuben			
2	Simeon			
3	Levi			
4	Judah			
5			Dan	
6			Naphtali	
7				Gad
8				Asher
9	Issachar			
10	Zebulun			
11		Joseph		
12		Benjamin		

About Rachel, I know the LORD did not forget her. His only begotten Son was born in Bethlehem, the city where she was buried. Her son, Joseph, saved his whole family from famine.

I hereby would like to share this prayerful hymn with you:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
 All our sins and griefs to bear!
 What a privilege to carry
 Everything to God in prayer! **(Remember Leah)**

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer. (**Remember Rachel**)

Chapter 2

The Birth Of Issachar

Genesis 30:14-18

The birth of Issachar was described in more details than all his eleven brothers.

It began with young Reuben, Issachar's eldest brother, finding mandrakes in the field. He brought these amazing fruits to his mother, Leah. When Rachel saw the mandrakes, she demanded some from Leah. This made Leah angry.

There had been much rivalry and jealousy between these two precious sisters since their marriages to Jacob. Their father, Laban, had tricked Jacob into marrying Leah. A week later, he allowed Jacob to marry Rachel.

From that time onwards, there was a constant battle for love, attention and prestige. These two sisters even gave their personal maids to Jacob to become his wives as a strategy to bear Jacob more children.

At this moment in time, Leah had already borne Jacob four sons. Rachel had no children but she still had Jacob's love. But both were miserable. One had children but no love of her husband; and the other had the love of her husband but no children.

Mandrakes grow abundantly throughout Israel and the Mediterranean regions. They are fruit bearing plants with dark green leaves and small bluish-purple flowers. The mandrakes are relatives of the potato family. Their yellow fruits are small, sweet and fragrant. They have narcotic

qualities, and can be used for medicine. The fruit of the mandrake is also known as the love apple. It is considered as a love potion that can make a woman fruitful.

Rachel desperately needed these mandrakes so that she could bear Jacob a son. As Leah had stopped bearing children, she needed them too. But what good were the mandrakes to her if her husband did not desire her?

It was Rachel herself who suggested to Leah that Jacob would be hired out to Leah for one night in exchange for the mandrakes. She said, "Leah, you can sleep with Jacob tonight if you will give me some of your son's mandrakes."

Jacob must have stopped sleeping with Leah completely. He had four wives by then, and must be busy with the other three - Rachel, Zilpah and Bilhah.

When Jacob came in from the field, Leah went out to meet him and told him about the special arrangement that she had made with Rachel.

As this story unfolded, your heart would be filled with sympathy for this unloved woman. Leah was unashamed. She was willing to humble herself and tell her husband that she had actually hired him for one night. But her motives were pure. Besides desiring children, she longed for the love of her husband. Maybe, Jacob would love her this time.

That night, God opened her womb and caused her to conceive. Issachar was born, not by flesh and blood alone but by the divine intervention of God. She called this child Issachar, which meant "I paid for what I hired" or "I got paid back." In other words, "it was worth it all."

Wherever Issachar went, he carried this trademark of his mother's deed in his birth. "Hired! Hired! I was bought and paid for a few mandrakes." This trademark was evident in the character and personality of Issachar throughout his life. Issachar and all his descendants carried this mark of servanthood upon their lives.

The Hebraic name for Issachar was *Yissaskar*. It simply meant "he will bring a reward." Its two root words were *nasa* and *sakar*.

Nasa meant "to lift, accept, advance, arise, able to suffer or bear, bring forth, burn, carry, cast, contain, desire, ease, exact, exalt, extol, fetch, forgive, furnish, further, give, go on, help, high, hold up, honorable, lade, lay, lift self up, lofty, marry, magnify, obtain, pardon, raise up, receive, regard, respect, set up, spare, stir up, swear, take away, take up, wear, yield."

Sakar meant "payment of contract, salary, fare, maintenance, compensation, benefit, hire, price, reward, wages, worth."

Issachar was a born servant. He was born to serve. He was both humble and honorable. He was able to lift and pick himself up even in times of difficulties and calamities. Being a man of humility and compassion, he did not force his way into the lives of others.

His presence in a crowd was not often noticeable. But when he was not around, his absence would be easily felt. When a job needed to be done, Issachar was always ready to render his assistance. He had eyes to see the needs of others, and hands to administer the necessary helps. This was his calling and gifting.

The wages of Issachar were not paid in silver and gold but in terms of love for the services of love. Issachar's service to the LORD could not be measured in dollars and cents but in the height, depth, breath, length and intensity of love rendered and received.

The sons of Issachar were willingly to accept what was before them. They were godly, and they were contented with what they had.

Personal Note:

The birth date of Issachar was significant personally to me. He was the fifth son of Leah but the ninth son of Jacob. I was born in 1959 (note: 59). He was conceived in the time of the wheat harvest, the month of Sivan, which was from late May till mid-June. So his birthday would be in the month of Adar, which was around March, and possibly the first three weeks. I was born in the second week of March.

Chapter 3

Jacob's Prophecy To Issachar

Genesis 49:14-15

Issachar is a strong donkey,
lying down between two burdens;
he saw that rest was good,
and that the land was pleasant;
he bowed his shoulder to bear a burden,
and became a band of slaves.

Before Jacob died, he described his ninth son Issachar as a strong donkey lying down between two burdens.

In other words, Jacob saw that Issachar could be a strong fighter but his love of comfort could cause him to settle for the easy way out.

The tribe symbol of Issachar was therefore a strong donkey carrying two burdens. What were these two burdens? They were their own burden and the burden of others.

In Galatians 6:2-5, Paul told us to carry our own burdens, and to bear the burden's of others. In doing so, we fulfill the law of Christ.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word: "Love your neighbours as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). These two burdens are essentially to love ourselves and to love others.

The sons of Issachar were strong in the LORD. They were able to carry the burdens of God's Word. And these burdens of the Word of God were not burdensome because they were carried in the hearts. This

was the love of God that all His people kept and obeyed His commandments.

And His commandments were not burdensome (1 John 5:3). The sons of Issachar knew this truth. They had hidden the Word of God in their hearts so that they would not sin against Him.

Because they had written the Word of God in their hearts, they were wise people. They knew what to do in every circumstance. They lived their lives based on the Word, pleasing both man and God.

To most human eyes, the donkey is a dumb animal. Its King James name was very degrading and a bit indecent. They used the word "ass." But the Bible viewed the donkey as a special and precious animal. Issachar was not offended when his father depicted him as one.

Donkeys were among the first animals to be tamed by man. They were a great necessity in the Bible lands. Wild donkeys were headstrong and untamed. But the domesticated donkeys were obedient and submissive.

Donkeys were about 4 feet high. They were usually gray, reddish-brown or white. The long-suffering donkeys often won the affection of their households. They were decorated with beads and bright ribbons. Their roles were to serve their masters. They trampled seed, turned the millstones to grind grain, and pulled the plow.

Donkeys were great for transportation. Donkey caravans were the trains and trucks of the ancient times. These animals could carry great weight in spite of their small size.

They were more economical to own as they consumed only a fraction of the feed required by horses. Donkeys were safe and comfortable to

ride. Both the rich and the poor rode them. They were obedient to their masters.

In Psalm 32:9, we are instructed not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding. They must be harnessed with bit and bridle, or else they will not obey.

The mule is not a donkey. It is the offspring of a male donkey (jack) and female horse (mare). The mule had the surefootedness and endurance of the donkey, and the size and strength of the horse. This crossbreeding was outlawed among the Jewish people (Leviticus 19:19).

But from the time of Jewish kings, mules were imported and increasingly used by the Israelites (2 Samuel. 18:9; 1 Kings 1:33; 18:5). In Ezra 2:66, the Israelites brought 245 mules with them when they returned from their captivity in Babylon.

But donkeys were special in the eyes of God. He gave them some remarkable privileges when He gave His commandments through Moses at Mount Sinai:

- Donkeys were to be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb, which was the same price required for men. "But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem." (Exodus 13:13)
- Donkeys were listed among the valuable possessions not to be coveted. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." (Exodus 20:17)
- Donkeys were to be properly looked after. "And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a

donkey falls in it, the owner of the pit shall make it good; he shall give money to their owner, but the dead animal shall be his." (Exodus 21:33-34)

- Thieves found stealing donkeys must pay double for their sin. "If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double." (Exodus 22:4)
- Donkeys were to be properly treated even by the enemies of their owners. "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it." (Exodus 23:4-5)
- Donkeys were protected by the Sabbath laws. "Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed." (Exodus 23:12)
Jesus used this illustration when He was accused of breaking the law by healing a woman on the Sabbath: "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound-- think of it-- for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:15-16)

Throughout the whole Bible, donkeys played some important roles in God's redemptive plans and purposes:

- Abraham saddled a donkey in his journey to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:3).
- The brothers of Joseph used donkeys to carry the sacks of grains from Egypt (Genesis 42:27).
- Moses set his family on a donkey to return back to Egypt (Exodus 4:20).

- God used a donkey to speak to the evil prophet Balaam (Numbers 22:21-34).
- Samson used a fresh jawbone of a donkey to destroy 1,000 enemies (Judges 15:15-16).
- Saul came to Samuel seeking help to locate his lost donkeys. Saul found his donkeys, and Samuel found his king (1 Samuel 9:1-27).
- Isaiah foretold the birth of Christ in Isaiah 1:2-3: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider."" The donkey was smarter than Israel. The donkey knew his Master's manger but His people did not.

The greatest story in the Bible about a donkey was the one that Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem. He called for a donkey, and not a horse! He was the King of King and Lord of Lords. Shouldn't He deserve the best? Shouldn't He deserve some royal treatment? Yet Jesus chose to be humble. He identified Himself with the common people.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He revealed His peaceful mission by riding a young donkey rather than a prancing war-horse. The Messiah, riding upon a donkey, offered forgiveness and peace with God, whereas Christ mounted upon a horse implied war and judgment.

"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Tell the

daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"" (Matthew 21:1-5)

This fulfilled what the prophet had spoken in Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."

This lowly donkey had the greatest privilege of all. He was bearing the Son of God on his back. He was carrying the Lord instead of the Lord carrying him. Why was this donkey so honored? Simply because he was available, humble and willing to do hard work.

Issachar was not embarrassed when his father Jacob equated him and his descendants to donkeys. They were distinguished for their ability and readiness to work hard, even under bad conditions and intense oppressions. They were known for their quiet, patient and industrious spirits. They were fitted and inclined to work and serve. They became a band of slaves or servants.

The donkeys were very sensible. If their loads were too heavy, weighing them down, they would simply sit down and refuse to go on.

In Numbers 22:23, we read about a donkey that saw the Angel of the LORD and refused to go on. His master, Balaam, tried to strike her to get her back on the road. But the donkey refused to conform in spite of the harsh beatings.

Hereby is a lesson we can learn from this amazing creature: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Though Issachar was carrying two burdens, he was able to balance them properly. At times, when the loads were too heavy, he would come to his Master, and cast them down at the feet of His Master.

Like the lowly donkey, Jesus was both meek and mild. The donkey carried the burdens of others. Christ carried the burdens of our sins. Donkeys served the will of their masters. Jesus came to do the work that His Father had commissioned Him to do.

The donkey had many Christ-like attributes such as humility, patience, courage, gentleness and peace. The donkey had been honored with the nickname "Christopher" or "Christ-Bearer." This name was given in reference to the donkey that carried Christ in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

During the early days of Christianity, many teachers of the Gospel received this nickname to show that they carried the burden of the teachings of Christ. They had His attitude of humility, poverty and patience.

Chapter 4

Moses' Prophecy To Issachar

Deuteronomy 33:18-19

And of Zebulun he said:

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,
and Issachar in your tents!

They shall call the peoples to the mountain;
there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness;
for they shall partake of the abundance of the seas
and of treasures hidden in the sand."

Zebulun and Issachar were joined in this Mosaic blessing to illustrate the cooperation and partnership of two brothers. Issachar was the fifth son of Leah, and Zebulun was her sixth son. Both of them were people of joy, always rejoicing in the LORD!

The symbol for the tribe of Zebulun was a ship. The children of Zebulun were merchants, doing trades or businesses.

One of the symbols for the tribe of Issachar was a tent. The children of Issachar set up tents to study the Word of God.

One produced material blessings while the other produced spiritual blessings. Their brotherly teamwork and unity brought manifold blessings of the LORD to their community.

Besides studying the Word in their tents, the sons of Issachar kept track of the sun and moon so that they were able to calculate and announce the appointed times of the LORD.

The Jewish Calendar was based on the lunar cycle. The arrival of the new moon was a crucial event.

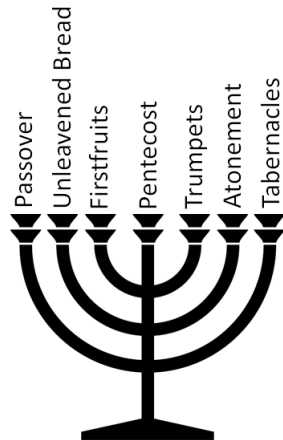
In ancient times, three witnesses were needed to confirm the first sliver sighting of the moon. At such times, a fire would be lit on the Mount of Olives to signal other watchmen. They would then light fires on the surrounding hills until the message was spread throughout Israel that a new month had begun.

In Leviticus 23, God called His Feasts "My appointed times." He had established special times and appointments to meet with man. These significant events commemorated His dealings with man.

His appointed times are His means of reminding His people that He is the King of creation and the Ruler throughout all time - in the past, in the present and in the future.

The seven Feasts of the LORD are namely:

1. Passover
2. Unleavened Bread
3. Firstfruits
4. Pentecost
5. Trumpets
6. Day of Atonement
7. Tabernacles



They are referred to as the Feasts of the LORD, and not the feasts of the Jews! These Feasts, in fact, are holy convocations or rehearsals for the First Coming and Second Coming of the Messiah.

Some of these appointed times have been fulfilled, while some are yet to be realized. This is good reason enough for all Christians to pay close attention to them.

What do we expect in the future? The past will tell us!

These seven Feasts of the LORD reveals the knowledge, wisdom and revelation of God’s eternal plans and purposes to redeem mankind. All the drama unfolding in prophecy today and in the days to come are hinted in these holy rehearsals.

Spring Feasts	Former Rain	First Coming of Jesus	Passover
			Unleavened Bread
			Firstfruits
	Outpouring of Holy Spirit		Pentecost
Fall Feasts	Latter Rain	Second Coming Of Jesus	Trumpets
			Day of Atonement
			Tabernacles

After the 3rd century AD, the church council of Rome passed laws forbidding church members to observe these seven Feasts. Since then, the Church had divorced herself from her Hebraic roots including these appointed times of the LORD.

It was in recent years that the significance and importance of the 7 Feasts were rediscovered! Only in recent times are we seeing a desire to rediscover these prophetic Feasts of the LORD and to participate in the joyful celebrations.

At these appointed times of the LORD, the sons of Issachar would call the peoples to the holy mountain to worship the Lord. There they would offer sacrifices of righteousness unto the Lord.

They would be celebrating in the Feasts, rejoicing in His goodness and greatness. They would also share the abundance of the seas and the treasures of the sand with their people.

Feast	Historical Significance	Prophetic Fulfillment	Spiritual Journey
Passover	Israel's deliverance out of Egypt	Christ's Death	Salvation
Unleavened Bread	From Egypt into the Red Sea	Christ's Burial	Water Baptism
Firstfruits	Coming out of the Red Sea	Christ's Resurrection	Resurrected New Life
Pentecost	Giving of the Law (Torah); Birth of the nation	Giving of the Holy Spirit; Birth of the Church	Baptism in Holy Spirit
Trumpets	Call to possess the Promised Land	Messiah as Deliverer	Tribulation / Rapture
Atonement	National cleansing and consecration	Messiah as High Priest and Bridegroom	Full Redemption
Tabernacles	Possessing the Promised Land	Messiah as King (Millennial Reign)	Full Rest in God

Though the sons of Issachar set up their study tents on the lowly plains, they were able to call their peoples to higher ground to worship God!

The sons of Issachar had both the knowledge and wisdom of the Word. They were prophetic and accurate. They knew where the abundance of the seas were, and they would tell the sons of Zebulun where and how to find them. They were also able to research the whereabouts of the treasures hidden in the sand. The sons of Zebulun would then dig them up.

Herein we could see the working together of spiritual knowledge and wisdom to obtain physical and material wealth. This was a healthy community having both spiritual and secular leadership.

Today, many Christians would divide the sons of Issachar and the sons of Zebulun into two categories - spiritual or secular. This division is not Biblical.

If you are doing Christian ministry or mission work, you are sacred. If you are doing trades or businesses, you are secular. They divide Christians into sacred or secular, doing full-time service or part-time service for the Lord. This dividing line is erroneously drawn basing on the wrong parameters.

The Hebraic mindsets are different. Regardless of their occupations, all Jews are called to worship God and to obey His commandments! They are to observe their Sabbaths and the Feasts of the LORD. Religious Jews believe in God, obey His commandments and keep His appointed times. Secular Jews simply don't.

The dividing line between sacred and secular Christians should also be the same. The distinction is between holy living and unholy living; righteousness and unrighteousness; kingdom and non-kingdom.

All Christians have the same Bible as their Christian leaders working in churches and missions; not one verse more or one commandment less.

We are to worship God and obey Him regardless of race, language or occupation. Our Lord requires all of us to live a godly life by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Him, which is our spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1).

A Christian working in a church or ministry can be in a spiritual place and yet do unspiritual tasks. They can be unrighteous and unholy before the Lord. A very good example is that of the sons of Eli (1 Samuel 2:22-25). They were the priests in the Temple. Besides other bad reports, they were seducing the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tabernacle. They despised the LORD, and were destroyed by Him.

On the contrary, a Christian businessman or a working professional can be in a secular place and yet do spiritual tasks. They can be righteous and holy before the Lord, doing business God's way. Abraham was a businessman, very rich in livestock, silver and gold (Genesis 13:1-5). He was very wealthy, with sheep and cattle and many servants. In the eyes of God, Abraham was righteous on the basis that he believed God.

Another case was King David. He reigned for 40 years. Yet God said that David was a man after His own heart, and he did everything that God wanted him to do (Acts 13:22). Joseph was a Prime Minister serving the Pharaoh. He was serving the LORD full-time in the Egyptian palace. Daniel was serving the LORD full-time in the Babylonian palace. They were effectively doing what the LORD had called them to do. Nothing short of His glory!

God is omnipresent. To say that God only works in the churches and Christian organisations is false spirituality of the highest degree. This is boxing God up and limiting His authority. The earth belongs to God! Everything in all the earth is His! (Psalm 24:1). God cannot be boxed. Very often, God chooses to speak outside His Holy Place, the Tabernacle.

Jesus chose His disciples from the marketplaces. Andrew, Peter, John and James were fishermen (Mark 1:16-19). Matthew was a tax collector (Matthew 9:9). None of His twelve were from the Temple or the synagogues. They were ordinary people having secular occupations.

Jesus is still calling men and women in the marketplaces to become His disciples. He desires to build His kingdom of love among the peoples.

Our God is an awesome God. He has many occupations:

- Master Designer as He designed the universe.
- Master Creator as He created the universe.
- Master Architect as He built heaven and earth.
- Master Landscaper as He mapped out the lands and seas.
- Master Zoologist as He created the animals.
- Master of Oceanography as He created the sea creatures and living things.
- Master of Cattle and Land as He created the lambs, cows and goats.
- Master Gardener as He created the trees and the plants.
- Master of Medicine and Healthcare as He healed all diseases.
- Prince of Peace as He restored peace and order.
- Chief Justice as He gave His laws, precepts and statutes.
- Master, King and Lord as He rules and reigns in righteousness.
- And so on.

All the activities and works of the Lord are holy and honorable not subjected to our dividing line of sacred and secular. This elevation of the sacred above the secular is known as the Catholic Distortion.

Instead of being called the servants of the Lord serving God and the peoples, the Church was then seeking power to rule over the common people. They lorded over the peoples instead of serving them.

By placing a clear distinction between sacred and secular, the common people saw themselves as second class. The Bible was not made available to them. Nobody could read the Holy Scriptures nor interpret them without the religious priests. The Church then went into The Dark Age of self-deception.

All of us are full-time Christians not on the basis of our occupations but on the basis of our faith. We are to live a holy life, walking worthy in obedience and humility. Our Lord requires all of us to know Him.

Our highest calling is to bow down and worship Him, and not to serve Him in a church or Christian ministry. God seeks for a people who are righteous and willing to be still and know that He is God.

The job of the church, especially the fivefold ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers), is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. This work of the ministry is basically the works of service to serve God and the peoples. A teacher teaches, a nurse nurses, a fisherman fishes, a farmer farms and a pastor pastors, and so on.

This is all about seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness. God's kingdom consists of:

- A King Who rules and reigns in righteousness
- Law and order - His precepts and statutes
- Economy, trades and businesses
- Public Services for education, development, defence, finance, health, etc.
- A temple - a place of worship

Nehemiah was a good example to illustrate this. He built the walls of Jerusalem, and Ezra built the Temple. Both of them were doing the

works of the Lord. The city walls had to be rebuilt so that the people could return to settle there, to rebuild their life, homes and economy, and to worship in the Temple of God.

To neglect the city walls would be detrimental. The enemies would invade and destroy the inhabitants and everything therein inclusive of their Temple. The city walls were as important as the walls of the Temple.

I am hereby not putting the marketplace ministry above the church. I am saying that both are important, and both need to serve one another in love! Like the sons of Issachar and the sons of Zebulun, we need to see each other as equal in the Lord. In fact, we need to esteem one other better than ourselves.

We are called the Body of Christ, the Church without walls in the midst of the peoples. The Church is His people, built with living stones and not dead concrete!

The true line we need to draw is love. Are we serving others in love? Are we serving others in righteousness and humility? Are we doing unto others what we want others to do unto us? Do we love them?

Let's us be like the sons of Issachar and the sons of Zebulun. True brotherhood in unity serving the LORD in both the Church and the marketplaces.

Let's all of us break forth in joy and glory! Let's all of us arise and shine for Jesus wherever we go and in whatever we do.

Chapter 5

The Promised Land

Joshua 19:17-23

The fourth lot came out to Issachar,
for the children of Issachar according to their families.
And their territory went to Jezreel,
and included Chesulloth, Shunem,
Haphraim, Shion, Anaharath, Rabbith, Kishion,
Abez, Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pазzez.
And the border reached to Tabor,
Shahazimah, and Beth Shemesh;
their border ended at the Jordan:
sixteen cities with their villages.
This was the inheritance of the tribe
of the children of Issachar
according to their families,
the cities and their villages.

When they entered the Promised Land, the territory allocated to the tribe of Issachar was bordered on the north by Zebulun and Naphtali, on the south and west by Manasseh, and on the east by the Jordan River. Most of the Valley of Jezreel fell within Issachar's allocation. This valley was flat and fertile. It was good for rearing cattle.

The Promised Land was a very good land. It was a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flowed out of valleys and hills. It was a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates. It was a land of olive oil and honey.

It was a land in which they would eat bread without scarcity, in which they would lack nothing. It was a land whose stones were iron and out

of whose hills they would dig copper. When they had eaten and were full, they would bless the LORD their God for the good land which He has given them (Deuteronomy 8:7-10).

But there was always the danger of forgetting the Lord by not keeping His commandments, His judgments and His statutes. It would occur when:

- they had eaten and were full.
- they had built beautiful houses and dwelt in them.
- their herds and their flocks were multiplied.
- their silver and their gold were multiplied.
- all that they had were multiplied.
- their hearts were lifted up.

They might say in their hearts that they had gained this wealth by their own hands, their own power and their own might (Deuteronomy 8:11-17). When the people of God became rich and full, they might deny God. Who would need God when they had everything? Who would need God when they could do all things by themselves?

How did God deal with this problem of self-sufficiency and self-boasting? He leads us through a journey of trusting and obeying Him. No faith, no righteousness. The righteous shall live by faith in trusting and obeying Him.

Salvation is a complete journey from justification to glorification. "And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified." (Romans 8:30; NIV)

Between justification and glorification is the sanctification process.

Leaving Egypt was one thing but entering the Promised Land was another. Located between them was the wilderness. This wilderness experience was the sanctification process. Through the Passover, God delivered Israel out of Egypt, but through the wilderness experience, God sanctified Israel.

The wilderness removed any remaining Egyptian ways out of their hearts and minds. It was there God began to humble them, and to test them in order to know what were in their hearts, whether they would keep His commandments or not.

To gain full benefit of this wilderness experience, we must understand the nature of our spiritual bondage. In knowing this truth, we will be truly set free. The wilderness forces us to be with God and no one else. We will begin to see Who He is and who we are as He reveals Himself to us.

One of the greatest bondages enslaving us is our human tendency to cling to what is familiar, regardless of how painful and bad they can be. We also tend to resist change regardless of how promising and good they can bring.

It is this bondage and false security in the familiar that caused Israel to murmur against God in the wilderness. They longed to go back to Egypt when they faced the unfamiliar in the wilderness.

In Egypt, they knew at least what to expect. But in the wilderness, everybody needed God for everything from food to drink and from clothes to shoes! The slavery in Egypt had made them very comfortable even under the severe and strict control of Egyptians.

They were at least able to know where to sleep, when to wake up, and what to eat or drink etc. Everything was routine and expected. But in

the wilderness, they had to depend on God to provide everything they needed.

It was in this wilderness experience that God revealed Himself to His people. He provided everything they needed. He also gave them His laws and commands. These commandments were the terms and conditions of living in the Promised Land. They were not to bind Israel but to help her to live freely in the Promised Land.

The Israelites had stayed in Egypt for more than 400 years. Throughout those years, they had been indoctrinated with the Egyptian ways and their types of leadership, ideas and ideals. As Egyptian slaves, they were entrapped not just physically but also emotionally and spiritually. In Egypt, they did not know God and His ways!

Through mighty signs and wonders, God delivered them out of the hands of Pharaoh. But they could not enjoy true freedom. Their minds and souls were still trapped in their own thoughts and understanding. Their ways were not God's ways!

To live in the Promised Land like the way they lived in Egypt would be disastrous. They had been slaves; they would make slaves out of their own people, and became slave drivers themselves. That was the only way they were acquainted and familiar with. That was the method they saw working successfully in the land of pyramids and sphinx. But this was slavery and not true freedom!

God wanted to completely set them free so that they would be able to live well in the Promised Land. But Egypt remained in their hearts even after they had left Egypt. The signs and wonders came and went, no longer thrilling them. They wanted to go back to slavery when their ways did not work out in the wilderness. God had to discipline them just as a man disciplined his son.

But they rejected His sanctification process. They could not understand the love of God. All they wanted was the fulfillment of the promise of God and the Promised Land.

In the wilderness, everything was the exact opposite of the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. All promises of God from conception to fulfillment required faith and patience such as Abraham having a son, Israel being delivered out of Egypt, the birth of the Messiah etc.

The main purpose of the wilderness was the preparation of their hearts so that their faith could be built upon solid foundations. It was also there and then the Israelites could build a habitation for God so that He could dwell among them.

There and then they had to depend on Him for every piece of bread and every cup of drink. They needed to have total dependence on God so that they could have an intimate and personal relationship with Him.

But they kept disobeying the LORD, rejecting His laws and commands. After moving in countless circles for 40 long years, they remained untaught and unchanged. They nearly wore God out to that extent of God wanting to destroy them completely.

In Exodus 33:3, God said, "But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." (NIV)

Though the Israelites faced some of their greatest difficulties in the wilderness, they also experienced some of their glorious encounters with God. It was a great blessing and not a curse to be alone with God in the desert.

Spiritual slavery was not only evident in Israel; it was also in the Church.

In the New Testament, Apostle Paul exposed spiritual slavery in the Corinthian Church: "For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face." (2 Corinthians 11:20)

The type of church leadership in Corinth that Paul rebuked was:

- one brings us into bondage by having endless church programs and activities;
- one devours us by making us do this and that for him in the name of the Lord;
- one takes from us by demanding great portions of our money, time, strengths and emotions;
- one exalts himself by enslaving us and lording over us through his false teachings and prophecies; and
- one strikes us on the face when we do not do according to what he says.

These characteristics of spiritual slavery were also evident throughout the church history and even today. The church has adopted worldly standards and ways of leading their sheep. Almost every church is playing the number game. We do not pastor and take care of our flocks. We push our sheep to get other sheep in.

We fill their weekly timetables with programs after programs until they become burnouts. We push them to give and give continually towards mega church building projects. This style of church leadership is derived from the secular world. Because we are familiar and comfortable with such systems, we become blind and we deceive ourselves.

Carnal people will respond to carnal authority. Until we come to the realization and acknowledgment of this spiritual slavery, we would continue to abide by their rules and regulations.

We can talk about how silly and stubborn the Israelites were in their journey to the Promised Land. Yet how often our fingers are pointing back at ourselves when we commit the same errors over and over again.

Church history is continually repeating itself in choosing familiarity of spiritual slavery instead of freedom of spiritual sonship. Until we will to do His will, we will be moving in circles in our own wilderness.

The wilderness experience is necessary. Even our Lord Jesus went through it. But He came out victorious after 40 days (Matthew 4:1-2). He passed the test with flying colors. He was tempted in the same way as the Israelites, and in a greater measure. Yet He sinned not! God has never intended us to overstay for 40 years in the wilderness. Maybe 40 days is more than sufficient!

The journey into the Promised Land can be a very pleasant one if we abide by His laws and commands, and do it in the manner He desires us to.

We must turn ourselves back to God and be careful to follow every command that He has given to us so that we may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that He has promised us.

We must remember how the LORD our God has led us all the way in our wilderness experience to humble us and to test us in order to know what are in our hearts, whether or not we would keep His commands.

He has humbled us, causing us to hunger and then feeding us with His Word, to teach us that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

We will acknowledge the dealings of the Lord that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD our God disciplines us. We will observe the commands of the LORD our God, walking in His ways and revering Him (Deuteronomy 8:1-6).

When we do so, we will become joyful and fruitful like the sons of Issachar in the Promised Land. Our delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law we meditate day and night. We shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever we do shall prosper. (Psalm 1:2-3)

Chapter 6

A Prophetic People

Judges 5:15

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
as Issachar, so was Barak sent into the valley
under his command;
among the divisions of Reuben
there were great resolves of heart.

The sons of Issachar were working with the prophetess Deborah (Judges 4:4). She was the leader, judge and prophetess of Israel during this time.

In partnering and working together with her, the sons of Issachar were involved in her prophetic ministry. They became a prophetic people. Great prophetic anointing and power were released. Their enemies were outwitted and defeated. And God gave them victory.

This prophetic legacy of the sons of Issachar was evident throughout the ages as they faithfully passed on from generation to generation. They were strong in the grace and anointing of the LORD.

And they were great disciple-makers. Whatever things they had learnt from the LORD, they were able to commit them to faithful men who would be able to teach others also.

Do you know that God desires that all of us are prophets? In Numbers 11:29, Moses said, ""Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD'S people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" Moses desired that the LORD would put His Spirit upon all His people so that all of them would be His prophets!

Prophets hear directly from God and become His mouthpiece as they speak forth His Word to the people concerned. Prophets are not those who chase after the prophecies of others, nor are they constantly seeking after other prophets.

True prophets seek God! They can be in the company of other prophets as they seek God together. They are sensitive to hearing the voice of the Lord through reading the Word, prayer and intercession, praise and worship, dreams and visions, and times of intimate walking and talking with the Lord along the paths of life.

The Apostle Paul gave us this exhortation in 1 Corinthians 14:1, 39-40: "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy...Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order."

All children of God are encouraged to prophesy. We are to seek earnestly this spiritual gift. God desires to give it to us! But we must ask Him for it! We have not because we ask not!

This art of hearing God requires an undivided heart so that we can give Him full attention when He speaks to us. God is always speaking to us. But the problem is that we are not hearing Him.

In John 12:28-29, we have this account of the Father speaking to His Son: ""Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him.""

There were those who heard the sound but did not receive the message. They only knew that it was thundering loud! There were those who heard the message but they were not able to distinguish the

source. They thought it was the voice of an angel. They did not know the voice of their Heavenly Father! But John, the author of this gospel account, heard the message, and he also knew the Source! It was the Father speaking to His Son about glorifying His name!

Hearing God demands our obedience. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). We are disobedient by our own sinful nature. We often filter off what we do not want to hear and retain what we want to hear. We follow after our heart's desires and not His desires.

We need to learn and develop this art of hearing God. Only then, we will begin to hear His voice more easily and accurately as the days go by. Hearing God requires our spiritual ears to be sensitive and attentive to His voice. When we disobey Him on one given prophetic message, our hearts may become hardened.

To hear God clearly requires pure hearts and clean hands. The pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). They will hear God too. But those hands that are stained with sins and disobedience will build walls that separate them from God. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us (Psalm 66:18). And we will not be able to hear God clearly.

Some of us have closed ears (Acts 28:27). Our hearts have grown dull. Our ears are hard of hearing, and our eyes are closed. We become weary after hearing too much. All inputs and no outputs will eventually become a Dead Sea! Too much prophetic words without proper actions taken will result in spiritual gossips.

When we hear God, we need to do what He says. What is the use of prophetic words if they are not faithfully carried out? God does not give us messages to make us feel spiritually high and heavenly good.

All the prophets in the Bible lived out the Word they prophesied! Each of the messengers bore the messages with their own lives! They became His living epistles!

Some of us have itching ears (2 Tim 4:3-4). We will not endure sound doctrine, but according to our own desires, we will heap up for ourselves teachers. We will turn our ears away from the truth, and sway aside to fables.

Always seeking new revelations, dreams and visions but never work on those already being revealed, interpreted and envisioned. Always wandering from one church to another church; one teacher to another teacher; and one prophet to another prophet.

Some of us have spiritual ears, and we are hearing God and what the Spirit is saying to us!

The Book of Revelation is a book containing the seven letters to the seven churches. In Revelation 1:11, the LORD spoke this to John, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

All the seven letters was written in one book. And this one book was sent to the seven churches. Each of the seven churches received the book containing all the seven messages. Besides their own letters, they got to read the contents of the letters to the other churches too. Each of the seven messages, exhortations, rebukes and rewards were different in each of the seven churches.

We need to hear what the Spirit is saying to us and also to others. The best way to learn is through the mistakes of others so that we will not commit them ourselves!

Some mistakes are best not to be committed. The pains can be prolonged, intense and extensive. All the seven messages are written in one book so that we can encourage, edify and exhort one another in love.

Some of the prophetic words are for the general public; some of the prophetic words are for a targeted audience; and some of the prophetic words are for just one particular individual.

But every word of prophecy should be tested. The Apostle Paul gave us this godly counsel (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22):

- Do not quench the Spirit.
- Do not despise prophecies.
- Test all things; hold fast what is good.
- Abstain from every form of evil.

The beloved disciple of Christ, John, also gave us this advice (1 John 4:1): "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Always test every word of prophecy with the Word of God, the Holy Bible! Always test the spirit of the prophet with the Spirit of God in us.

The message includes the attitude, the behaviour, the tone and the life. Does the life bear the message? Is the messenger also the message?

God is raising up a prophetic people who will hear Him directly. He is fine-tuning us with His Word and His Spirit. Unless we know the Word of God, we do not have anything to test any word of prophecy. We also may not give a prophetic word according to His Word. His Word is our light and our guide.

God has given us His Holy Spirit. Besides enabling and empowering us to live the Christian life, He is also our beloved Teacher. Unless we have the Holy Spirit in us, we will not be able to discern false prophets and spirits. We also will not be able to test our own spirit operating in us when we give the prophetic word. We can easily deceive our own selves.

As sons of Issachar, we are to be accurate and reliable. We know the Word of God ourselves. We have integrity as our lives are living epistles for others to read. Our hearts are totally committed to God.

We will fulfill the vision and purpose that God has called us to be. Our giftings and anointings are being developed over the years. And we will faithfully pass them on from generation to generation.

God is raising up us to be His prophetic people. He is perfecting us to live the life according to His Word. We will trust and obey Him. Every prophetic word from Him is proclaimed and faithfully carried out. No halfway abandonment for comfort and no giving up for the lack of faith and strength.

The LORD Who gives us the prophetic word is faithful, He also will do it. He will bring it to pass! Every word that He sent will fulfill His purpose!

This is His promise in Isaiah 55:11: "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Chapter 7

Mighty Men Of Valor

1 Chronicles 7:5

Now their brethren among
all the families of Issachar
were mighty men of valor,
listed by their genealogies,
eighty-seven thousand in all.

All the sons of Issachar were a strong and valiant people. All of the 87,000 of them! Not one less! They were not weaklings. There was total unity in the whole community. Not one family member was missing and left out. Everyone was doing well in the Lord!

They were bearing one another's burdens. Those who had much shared with those who had less so that all had sufficient. These blessings of true brotherhood flowed in them and through them to the other tribes of Israel. They shared their blessings!

Why are these sons of Issachar so strong? In Daniel 11:32, we find the answer. The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

Issachar had four sons, namely Tola, Puvah, Job and Shimron (Genesis 46:13). The sons of Issachar were not the same as the sons of Joseph.

Issachar and his sons went with their father Jacob to Egypt to escape the famine. The sons of Issachar were hit by the famine. They had to go down to Egypt to get food and water. It was Joseph who prepared the storehouse in Egypt and not Issachar! And Joseph was not a son of

Issachar, he was Issachar's younger brother. Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob.

Before his death, Jacob described Issachar as a strong fighter but his love for rest could also cause him to settle for the easy way out. In spite of his reputation for seeking comfort, the tribe fought bravely against Sisera (Judges 5:15).

We are living in a time where great courage is required. Courage to face reality, courage to overcome adversity, and courage to stand tall in the midst of calamities!

It is time to open our eyes to see how big our God is in comparison to the events that are happening in the world. We are to be faithful as He is faithful so that those follow after us will be faithful with us being their examples!

God is sovereign, in full control of everything and every situation! In fact, God is the middle of everything, and thus we shall not be moved (Psalm 46:5). Nothing has taken our Almighty God by surprise! No evil is allowed unless He allows it.

The political leaders are all under His power, jurisdiction and order – to do and fulfill God's purposes. They are just like puppets in the moves and controls of the Master's fingers! God has put it into their hearts to accomplish His purpose until His words are fulfilled (Rev 17:17). He is still the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Facing a world that is shaken by wars and rumors of wars, we are to be unshaken! Whatever can be shaken will be shaken, and whatever cannot be shaken will remain! God's kingdom is unshakeable (Hebrews 12:26-28) even in the midst of earthquakes, wars and disasters! We must know Who our God is; otherwise we will be weak and easily shaken!

To be strong in the Lord, we need:

- Daily bread
- Daily drink
- Daily walk

The only way to be strong in the Lord is to abide in Him and Him in us. This is the time to return unto the Lord and His Word! The sons of Issachar know their Bible.

How can we know God if we do not know what He has spoken to us through the Old Testament and the New Testament! It's time to embrace His ways, statutes, laws and precepts – in which we will find life, we will wise up, and we will fear the Lord! His Word is our daily bread!

Our daily drink will be worship! Worship in the deepest is when mortality comes into contact with immortality; when time meets eternity; when darkness fades into light; when death surrenders to life and when fear turns into courage! It is time for us to be still and know that He is God! (Psalm 46:10)

Worship is more than just singing songs. We need to align our praise and worship with the purposes of God to touch heaven and change earth! Prophetic praise and worship offered by holy lives and pure hearts are acceptable in the sight of the Lord! We are called to be His royal priesthood – first to minister unto the Lord to know His heart, and then unto the people!

Our daily walk will be the work God has elected us to do! Those who are elected to be like Josephs will be able to feed nations in the midst of famine.

Those who are elected to be like Daniels will be able to counsel kings and make decisions that will impact kingdoms towards God. Those who are elected like the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach And Abednego, in the fiery furnace will be able to testify that God is still our Deliverer and Saviour!

Those who are elected to be like Elijahs will be forerunners preparing the way of the Lord. Those who are elected like Moses will lead the people out of Egypt. Those who are elected like Joshuas will fight in faith as the Lord grants victory – and the list goes on!

Therefore, we must give diligence to make our calling and election sure: for if we do these things, we shall never fall (2 Peter 1:10).

We must be strong in His Word so that we will be bold to do it His Way as we go against the system of the world. We have been doing things the way we have been schooled and taught.

Now we are in the school of His Word and His Holy Spirit, our minds are renewed! God has given us His Holy Spirit so that His Word will be written in our hearts, He will be our God and we will be His people!

As sons of Issachar, we need to be strong in the Lord!

Rejoicing always in the Lord for the joy of the Lord is our strength!

Chapter 8

Understanding Of The Times

1 Chronicles 12:32

"...of the children of Issachar
who had understanding of the times,
to know what Israel ought to do,
their chiefs were two hundred;
and all their brethren were at their command..."

One of the symbols for the tribe of Issachar is the sun and the moon. They represent the understanding of times and seasons.

Because of their knowledge of the Word, the sons of Issachar were able to move in the prophetic throughout the history of Israel. They had unusual insights about political situations.

When it was time for David to become King of Judah and Israel, the sons of Issachar understood the times of God, and they knew what Israel should do. All the 200 leaders of the tribe gathered all the sons of Issachar and became the mighty men in David's army.

Because of their ability to understand the times, all the other eleven tribes heeded their commands. David entrusted them to provide the prophetic and military leadership to the whole nation of Israel.

They understood the times that God was seeking true worshippers that would worship Him in spirit and in truth. God was seeking a king that would follow after His own heart, and not one who did his own thing.

They understood the times that God's hand was no longer upon King Saul but on King David. They chose to follow the LORD. They lived up to

their name of being a strong fighter. They did not settle for the easy way out.

How can we understand the times of God? How can we understand His plans and purposes for our lives and the lives of others?

In Amos 3:7, the prophet told us, "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." This verse illustrates the intimate relationship between the prophet and God.

The Hebrew word for secret is *cowd*. It means a session, a company of persons in close discussion, intimacy, consultation or a secret. It is an assembly of insiders as they share and discuss secrets.

Its root word is *yacad*. It means to set, to sit down together, settle or consult. It also means to appoint, take counsel, establish, lay the foundation, instruct, lay or ordain.

Putting *cowd* and *yacad* together, we will understand the full picture.

Hereby we can see a close and intimate relationship between God and His prophets. There is a close communion and discussion going on as two or more people are resting upon cushions, couches or pillows. They are reclining in total relaxation. Nothing strenuous.

The Old Testament prophets knew God very intimately:

- Adam, Enoch and Noah walked with God (Genesis 3:8; 5:22; 6:9)
- Abraham was a friend of God (James 2:23)
- Moses saw God face to face (Numbers 12:6-8).

God's desire was that we might all be prophets (Numbers 11:29). He longed for us to go back to His Garden where He can commune with us

as Friend with friend. We are called to be His friends. As friends, we can have a face to face encounter with Him, sitting down together and discussing the matters upon His heart and our hearts.

A good way to imagine this friendly relationship between God and His prophets is a nomad's tent. They are away from the crowds, somewhere in the desert. They are discussing some important matters or just having times of refreshing and intimacy.

There is no necessity to shout or scream. Lying side-by-side at close proximity, the still small voice of God can be heard. In the case of Elijah the prophet, the voice of God was not in earthquake, thunder or fire (1 Kings 19:11-12). It is in the peace and quiet.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining at the Last Supper (John 13:23-25). Among all the disciples, he was the closest to Jesus. Peter motioned to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was. John then moved closer to Jesus' side and asked softly, "Who is it, Lord?" It was sweet communion between dear friends.

Upon His cross, Jesus entrusted John the important responsibility to take care of Mary, His mother (John 19:26-27). John was also the one who gave us the prophetic book of Revelation. God opened up the future for John to see. God then instructed him to write down the visions and prophecies in a book.

God does not have special favorites. His secrets are not meant only for some privileged few. God gives His prophets access to His confidential plans, counsels, and strategies simply because His prophets are His friends and His servants. They are willing to do His will. They are willing to pay the price. They are willing to proclaim the messages even in spite of possible persecutions and rejections. God chooses them because they will love and serve God!

The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant (Psalm 25:14). Very often, His secret is not allowed to be disclosed to another (Proverbs 25:9). Just take it back to the Lord in prayers. Not to organize seminars and conferences, sell away and publicize the secret of God. Not to download to others who do not fear the Lord!

Today, many false prophets and apostles often boast that God downloads volumes of information to them every day. Or that they go up and down heaven a few times daily. Fresh bread or manna. But very often, their information are not Biblical. Their prophecies do not come true. And looking at their personal life, they do not have the fear of God. By tracing the love of money, we will be able to know the agenda of their hearts! And one thing for sure, God does not visit His prophets in person every day, and His prophets do not go up and down heaven to visit Him on a daily basis! Sometimes a word from God may take years to fulfill. Like the deliverance of Israelites out of Egypt.

This idea of secrets is not about God favouring a few celebrity pastors or ministers who can have free access to Him. It is about ordinary people drawing near to Him as He draws near to them. It is about people desiring to hear Him and do what He says! Not hearers of His Word only, but doers also. When they are faithful, God will share some secrets with them. They will be His friends, the prophets.

The book of Job was probably the oldest book in the Bible. It dated back to about 2000 BC. Job was a contemporary with Abraham. They were nomads living in tents.

In the book of Job, the word *cowd* was used in a very enlightening manner. In Job 29:4, we would understand that the wisdom of Job was derived from God's presence in his tent:

Version	Job 29:4
KJV	As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle...
NIV	Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house...
NKJV	Just as I was in the days of my prime, when the friendly counsel of God was over my tent...
TLB	Yes, in my early years, when the friendship of God was felt in my home...
ASV	As I was in the ripeness of my days, when the friendship of God was upon my tent...

In Job 15:8, Eliphaz asked if Job knew God's secret plans, "Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?" (KJV)

This is a perfect example of close friends in a tent. The friendship of God was in Job's house. God was his close Friend. Throughout his youth, he had gained knowledge, wisdom, understanding and counsel through times of sweet communion and fellowship with God.

In Job 19:19, Job complained, "All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me." The Hebrew word used herein for "close friends" was again *cowd*.

Another excellent illustration about *cowd* was the friend of God, Abraham. God came down personally to visit Abraham, His friend, in his tent (Genesis 18:1). In Genesis 18:17-18, the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

After the two angels had gone towards Sodom, the LORD remained with Abraham for a while longer in his tent. Abraham came near to the

LORD and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23) Because Abraham was God's friend, he was able to plead and bargain with God over the lives of Sodom and Gomorrah. To have this close relationship with God, we need to be a friend of God.

This Genesis 18 account is significant for us to know that God does not hide His plans from His friends, His prophets (Amos 3:7).

In John 15:15, Jesus told His disciples, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you." Today, Jesus is still desiring to make known what is in the Father's heart to us!

As the sons of Issachar, we are to be friends of God. We are to be His servants and His prophets. We must carry the prophetic mantle to listen to His voice, bringing strategic insights, proper perspectives and right priorities back into our own lives and communities.

We are to be strong and valiant, proclaiming the right word to the right people in the right place at the right time!

We must be like the sons of Issachar having the understanding of the times! God is seeking true worshippers and seekers of His heart! God is now raising up His priests, prophets and kings!

- Priests who will minister to Him first before they minister to others.
- Prophets who will hear what God is saying before becoming a voice of God.
- Kings who will follow after God's own heart and not their own hearts!

Chapter 9

Great Givers

1 Chronicles 12:40

Moreover those who were near to them,
from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali,
were bringing food on donkeys and camels,
on mules and oxen-- provisions of flour
and cakes of figs and cakes of raisins,
wine and oil and oxen and sheep abundantly,
for there was joy in Israel.

David was thirty years old when he began to reign. He reigned for forty years. He reigned in Hebron over Judah seven years and six months. Thereafter, he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah (2 Samuel 5:4-5).

After the death of King Saul, his son, Ishbosheth began to reign over Israel. And he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. At this time, David was king only in Hebron over the house of Judah (2 Samuel 2:10-11).

There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker (2 Samuel 3:1).

When the time was ready for David to be the king over all Israel, all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron. They spoke, saying, "Indeed we are your bone and your flesh. Also, in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.'" All the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron.

And King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel.(2 Samuel 5:1-3).

The sons of Issachar were instrumental in this crowning of King David over all of Israel. They provided the prophetic insights. They understood the times of God, and they knew what to do. They were able to command and lead their people in complete unity to make this one decision.

It was recorded 1 Chronicles 12:38-40 that all the tribes of Israel came in battle array to Hebron with this single purpose of making David the king over all of Israel. And all of Israel was ready for this change.

They feasted and drank with David for three days. And preparations had been made even before their arrival.

Guess who were the planners and providers for the food and celebrations. It was people nearby and far away, namely the sons of Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali.

They had brought food on donkeys, camels, mules and oxen. Vast supplies of flour, fig cakes, raisins, wine, oil, cattle, and sheep were brought to celebrate the event. There was great joy throughout the land.

The sons of Issachar had forethoughts and foresights. They did the preparations way ahead of the events. They were fruitful and generous. They provided for both the materials and spiritual needs of the people. They were their brother-keepers. They had received and they gave. They were blessed, and they blessed others.

They knew how to do the dirty works of the ministry, and they knew how to celebrate and worship the LORD in spirit and in truth! They were a joyful people, and they brought great joy to the people of God!

As the prophetic sons of Issachar, we have two basic ministries - to minister unto the Lord, and to minister unto others. We can see this clearly in the life of a great prophet of Israel, Elijah.

In 1 Kings 17:2-9, the word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying, ""Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."

So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

God's first instruction to Elijah was to hide himself by the Brook Cherith. God was concerned for the overall welfare of His beloved prophet. He wanted to protect and to preserve him from his enemies.

Elijah needed to withdraw himself from the public life. He had just dramatically intruded into the lives of an evil king and a wicked queen. The whole nation of Israel had no rain for three and a half years! Everyone hated him for prophesying the true word of God!

Humanly speaking, to take such a retreat after disturbing the livelihood of everyone in Israel might seem sneaky and weak. But God knew that was exactly what Elijah needed. He had a greater task for him ahead, which was even harder to face!

At Cherith, Elijah was shielded with complete security from his enemies who were hunting him down throughout the land. While famine raged all around, he was being fed by unclean ravens. This was indeed a very humiliating and humbling experience! While drought prevailed everywhere else, he was being refreshed by the waters of the brook.

To be hidden and sustained, in such a manner, even for a short while, was exactly what Elijah needed from God. By thrusting Elijah into a public ministry, God had made him to be a target for intense hatred of Ahab and Jezebel, and the starving people of Israel. Everybody was blaming him for the drought and disaster.

Elijah's experience at Cherith lasted long enough to teach him that whatever his future circumstances would be, he could be assured of God's continual protection and preservation!

When he had no one to support him, he was sustained by the LORD Himself! Jehovah Jireh provided his every need!

To leave Elijah at Cherith for too long will be bad for him. This prophet was by nature not a social man. The solitude and quietness of Cherith would suit his character and preferences perfectly. But God told Elijah to arise and go to Zarephath.

In all the cities and villages of Israel, men, women and children were crying for help. They had no food and no water! They were toiling away, scraping the hardened ground for whatever little sustenance they could find.

Elijah must not divorce himself from all these. The man whom God chose to preach His Word to His people must be living in close contact with the sufferings, feelings and problems of those to whom he was

sent to minister. Why should the prophet of God be exempted from the temptations and hardships of the people whom he was to serve?

Jesus came down to earth; He was involved with human life, and He showed us the way back to God. He did not send the angels! He came Himself! He knew our pains and shame because He went through all that! He even feed the multitudes with bread and fish!

After His transfiguration, the Lord came down from the mountain. He could have stayed there longer just as what His three disciples, Peter, James and John had suggested. But He knew what God the Father had called Him to do - to save the lost and to die for their sins! So He came down to the valleys.

After a while, the brook dried up. We need to seek the things that are above. But whenever we put too much attention or spend too much time cultivating the devotional life at the expense of our active Christian witness in the community, then the heavenly brooks at which we seek to refresh ourselves have a natural way of drying up. In spite of all our praying, Bible reading and church-going, we will soon become hungry and thirsty. Our brooks will dry out.

In John 7:38, Jesus said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." There is something we need to know about wells and living water.

Wells that are often being used will never run out of fresh waters. The running waters will keep the well clear of eroding soils and other debris from building up and blocking the inlets.

Wells that are seldom used will soon dry out. Their inlets are easily blocked over time. Any remaining water will become stale and smelly.

When we give unto others, the Lord will replenish the supplies. There is always no lack of resources when He is our Boss.

If our devotional life is an end in itself, we will become unreal to the world in need. There is no way to satisfy self-indulgence in spiritual luxuries and activities. We will always crave for more.

Our devotional life can only become meaningful when it is kept as an integral part of a community living and involvement with other people - touching them with the love of God in both tangible and intangible means.

We must not imagine that our devotional life is a place where we take in from God and our ministerial life is a place where we give out to others.

Christian life is not a matter of storing up and accumulates resources through worship and prayer at one time, and then dispensing them through active service.

It is a matter of obeying God, moment by moment, living His life in and out! Just as Elijah was to minister to the widow at Zarephath, she was also ministering to his needs. Elijah needed her just as she needed him! Our ministerial life is not just giving out but also receiving from others! Giving and receiving at the same time!

How hard it was for Elijah to believe that God had sent a desperate, poor widow to minister to his needs in the critical weeks and months ahead.

How hard it is also for us to grasp today that our Lord Jesus Christ is seeking to help us by surrounding us with poor, despised, broken, desperate and rejected people of the society.

The poor will always be with us (Matthew 26:11). We always need His help. And the way He chooses to help us is often through vessels that seem the least likely to give us help.

God desires to minister His amazing grace to us through the most unlikely channels. Instead of shunning those who are needy and desperate, we may find that they are really God-sent ministers to us, and they bring to us God's answers to our prayers. The weak become strong and the poor become rich!

Like the sons of Issachar, we need to be blessings to bless others. We need to love and be loved. We need to give and receive. Tangibly and intangibly. And God loves a cheerful giver!

Chapter 10

Seekers Of God

2 Chronicles 30:18-19

For a multitude of the people,
many from Ephraim, Manasseh,
Issachar, and Zebulun,
had not cleansed themselves,
yet they ate the Passover
contrary to what was written.
But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying,
"May the good LORD provide
atonement for everyone
who prepares his heart to seek God,
the LORD God of his fathers,
though he is not cleansed
according to the purification of the sanctuary."

In 2 Chronicles 30, there was an account of a delayed Passover in the first year reign of Hezekiah. The Temple was cleaned for sixteen days from the first to the sixteenth day of the first month.

Passover fell on the fourteenth day of the same month. As the people were not ready to observe the Passover, a delay of one month was recommended.

Messengers were sent throughout the land to invite the people of God to come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. Many refused; some even scorned those runners who carried the invitation message. That year the Passover was on the 14th day of the second month. Even after the delay, many were still not ready to observe the Passover.

Many of the people arriving from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun were ceremonially impure. Because they had not undergone the purification rites, the Levites killed their Passover lambs for them, to sanctify them. Then King Hezekiah prayed for them, and they were permitted to eat the Passover anyway, even though this was contrary to God's rules.

Hezekiah prayed, "May the good LORD pardon everyone who determines to follow the LORD God of his fathers, even though he is not properly sanctified for the ceremony."

And the LORD listened to Hezekiah's prayer and did not destroy them. So the people of Israel celebrated the Passover at Jerusalem for seven days with great joy. The enthusiasm continued. So it was unanimously decided to continue the celebration for another seven days.

The sons of Issachar were true seekers of God. They seek His kingdom and His righteousness. Like the Psalmist, the one thing that they had desired of the LORD, that they would seek, was that they might dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of their lives, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple (Psalm 27:4).

Today we have a new term called 24/7. It denotes 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, continuously non-stop mode. Now we have:

- 24/7 TV & cable TV programmes
- 24/7 News & MTV
- 24/7 Internet access & connectivity
- 24/7 Shopping malls
- 24/7 Coffee shops & restaurants

One thing the Lord truly desires us to have is a 24/7 relationship with Him. To be with Him always in His presence every second of our life. To

be always connected to Him so that He can have free access to us without fail.

God has built within each one of us the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians. 6:19). Our body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit! Everywhere we go, He is! It is a spiritual place not built with lifeless stones but living stones.

What are we to do in His Temple? Simply live the life that He has designed us to live. There is a season and a time for everything and every purpose under the sun:

- A time to be born and a time to die
- A time to plant and a time to pluck what is planted
- A time to kill and a time to heal
- A time to break down and a time to build up
- A time to weep and a time to laugh
- A time to mourn and a time to dance
- A time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones
- A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing
- A time to gain and a time to lose
- A time to keep and a time to throw away
- A time to tear and a time to sew
- A time to keep silence and a time to speak
- A time to love and a time to hate
- A time of war and a time of peace.
- A time to pray and a time to preach
- A time to praise and a time to worship
- A time to fast and a time to feast
- A time to eat and a time to drink
- A time to rejoice and a time to be still
- A time to work and a time to rest
- A time to sit and a time to stand

- A time to prostrate and a time to relax
- A time to walk and a time to talk
- A time to sleep and a time to stay awake
- A time to study and a time to teach
- A time to evangelize and a time to be angelic
- A time to pastor and a time to prophesy
- A time to pioneer and a time to proclaim
- A time to share and a time to care
- A time to sow and a time to reap
- A time to plan and a time to play
- A time to live and a time to believe
- A time to commune with man and a time to commune with God

God desires us to be a whole integral person – complete in Him. He has made each of us beautiful. And He continues to perfect us to become more like Him. He has placed eternity in our hearts so that without Him, we are undone.

This work that God does from the beginning to the end is eternal and nobody can comprehend it. Whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it so that we should fear before Him.

It is therefore good to rejoice and do good in our lives, and to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all our labor. Even this is a gift of God. God keeps a faithful account of our lives.

In His Temple, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable and pleasing to Him. This is our spiritual act of worship. We do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Then we will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.

We should receive the grace of God and be gracious towards others. Let us not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but rather esteem others better than ourselves.

Just as our body has many members with different functions; likewise in the Body of Christ, we, the various members, have different roles and functions. But we belong to each other and we need each other. Without each other, we are incomplete.

We have given different gifts, according to the grace that is given to us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve. If it is teaching, let him teach. If it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. If it is leadership, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above ourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep our spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute us; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge for it is His to avenge. On the contrary, feed our enemies if they are hungry, and give them something to drink if they are thirsty. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Living sacrifices have a 24/7 relationship with Christ, and also with one another. A 24/7 relationship is a covenant relationship. God is our God forever! The LORD is our Lord forever! A husband is a husband forever. A wife is a wife forever. A brother is a brother forever! A sister is a sister forever! A friend is a friend forever!

As His living sacrifices, we live for God and for one another! Living sacrifices live simply so that others can simply live. Living sacrifices are willing vessels ready for their Master's use. Living sacrifices die daily so that the fragrances of their lives become a sweet aroma that ascends to His throne continually.

When our lives become prayers, we have become the living epistles. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. God is more concerned about the lives of the ones praying than their prayers. He looks at the 24/7 relationship.

Jesus declares that He will be with us always till the end of age (Matthew 28:20). Can we pledge our love to Him that we will be with Him always all the days of our life? Can we affirm in every breath that we take, He is the Lord of our lives and the Lover of our souls?

As sons of Issachar, we need to be seekers of God's heart. In Him we live and move and have our being! 24/7 forever!

Chapter 11

Servants Of God

Ezekiel 48:30-35

"These are the exits of the city.

On the north side, measuring four thousand five hundred cubits

(the gates of the city shall be named after the tribes of Israel),

the three gates northward: one gate for Reuben,

one gate for Judah, and one gate for Levi;

on the east side, four thousand five hundred cubits,

three gates: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin,

and one gate for Dan;

on the south side, measuring four thousand five hundred cubits,

three gates: one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar,

and one gate for Zebulun;

on the west side, four thousand five hundred cubits

with their three gates: one gate for Gad,

one gate for Asher, and one gate for Naphtali.

All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits;

and the name of the city from that day shall be:

THE LORD IS THERE."

God strategically positioned the tribes of Israel around His holy city, Jerusalem. Their placements were according to His calling and choice so that they would fulfill His eternal purposes and plans.

In Revelation 4-6-8, we read about four living creatures around the throne of God: "Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back . The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying

eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

The basic direction for the Hebrews is the east – from the rising of the sun. In determining any direction, the Hebrews faces the direction where the sun rises each day. Thus, the east is the front, sometimes called the place of dawning.

The entrance to the Temple was called the East Gate. All other directions receive their designations relative to the east as the front. Thus, west is the rear, north is on the left, and south is on the right. The correct sequence of the directions is clockwise (not crisscross) – east > south > west > north.

This Hebraic system of directions is the same as the Chinese system:

东南西北

Using these Hebraic directions, we had the four living creatures corresponding to the four gospels, namely Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The table below will illustrate this clearly:

Creature	Gospel	Christ
Lion	Matthew	The King
Calf	Mark	The Servant
Man	Luke	The Son of Man
Eagle	John	The Son of God

	Reuben		Judah		Levi	
Naphtali			North			Joseph
			Eagle John			
Asher	West	Man Luke		Lion Matthew	East	Benjamin
			Calf Mark			
Gad			South			Dan
	Zebulun		Issachar		Simeon	

Looking at the tables, the sons of Issachar are classified by the living creature that looks like a calf, and the Gospel of Mark.

The theme of Mark is Christ the Servant of God. The sons of Issachar are truly the servants of God.

In Mark 9:34-35, the disciples of Jesus were disputing among themselves about who should be the greatest.

Jesus said to them, "Anyone wanting to be the greatest must be the least. Whosoever desires to be great in His kingdom must be the servant of all! Whosoever desires to be first must be willing to be the last!"

Jesus was both the King and the Servant. He was both the Son of Man and the Son of God. Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last." (Rev. 1:11)

God deeply impressed this truth upon me one Sunday at church. We were greeted at the church corridors by some youths from Boys' Brigade. They were standing at their designated positions to receive donations for the ministry. As we walked from the outside to the inside of the church building, at least ten cheerful hearts and sunny smiles approached us.

The last boy at the line was Jerry. His name was clearly displayed on his badge. I told him jokingly that he was the last in the line. Therefore, he would receive the least donations. And this human reasoning of mine was entirely wrong.

At the end of the service, Jerry was still there. He was now the first in the line from the inside of the building. From the outside, he was the last but from the inside, he was the first.

Jesus is truly the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Greatest and also the Least. He was born in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, the least among the cities of Judah (Matthew 2:6).

This attitude and mind of Christ should also be in us. Though he was God, He did not demand and cling on to His rights as God. He laid aside His majesty, power and glory. He became a human being just like us. He was born not in ivory palaces but in a dirty manger where cattle had their feed.

He came to serve and not to be served. He was both the Servant of all and the Lord of all. He humbled Himself even to the extent of dying a criminal's death upon a cruel cross.

Because He was willing to be the Least, He became the Greatest. God raised Him up to the heights of heaven and gave Him a name, which is above every other name. At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Every tongue shall confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11).

In Matthew 19:29-30, Jesus said: "And anyone who gives up his home, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, children, or property, to follow Me, shall receive a hundred times as much in return, and shall have eternal life. But many who are first now will be last then; and some who are last now will be first then."

He then gave them this illustration of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 20:1-16;TLB):

The owner of an estate went out early one morning to hire workers for his harvest field. He agreed to pay them \$20 a day and sent them out to work. A couple of hours later he was passing a hiring hall and saw some men standing around waiting for jobs, so he sent them also into his fields, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day.

At noon and again around three o'clock in the afternoon he did the same thing. At five o'clock that evening he was in town again and saw some more men standing around and asked them, "Why haven't you been working today?"

"Because no one hired us," they replied. "Then go on out and join the others in my fields," he told them. That evening he told the paymaster to call the men in and pay them, beginning with the last men first.

When the men hired at five o'clock were paid, each received \$20. So when the men hired earlier came to get theirs, they assumed they would receive much more. But they, too, were paid \$20. They protested, "Those fellows worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as those of us who worked all day in the scorching heat."

“Friend,” he answered one of them, “I did you no wrong! Didn't you agree to work all day for \$20? Take it and go. It is my desire to pay all the same; is it against the law to give away my money if I want to? Should you be angry because I am kind?” And so it is that the last shall be first, and the first, last.

God is righteous from the beginning to the end. All His ways are just. Even His blessings upon Israel was not reserved just for them. They flowed out to bless all the other nations and peoples.

The gospel came to Israel first. They saw and heard the Messiah with their own eyes and ears. But they rejected Him. Since then the gospel had gone to the Gentiles on a westward journey from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. To Macedonia, England, America, Korea, China, Asia, Australia, Africa, Middle-East. And now it is coming back to Jerusalem again. The first shall be the last, and the last shall be the first.

The story of King David was a good illustration of this truth. After God had rejected King Saul, he sent His prophet Samuel to find and anoint the new king for Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-14). He was specifically sent to Bethlehem – the least important among the cities of Judah.

When Jesse showed Samuel his firstborn son, Eliab, Samuel thought, "Surely this is the man the LORD has chosen!" But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by a man's face or height, for this is not the one. I don't make decisions the way you do! Men judge by outward appearance, but I look at a man's thoughts and intentions." The selection went on till all in the list of Jesse were rejected.

It was not the eldest, the strongest or the wisest chosen that day. The chosen one was not even there in the line. He was out in the fields tending the sheep.

He was the youngest son of Jesse. His earthly father did not include him in his list. But God did not forget David. He was the last to be called before Samuel. But he was the first choice of God – a man after God's own heart!

When Samuel took the olive oil and poured it upon David's head, the Spirit of God came upon him and gave him great anointing and power from that day onwards. The last became the first. The least became the greatest! The rejected was the chosen! The weakest became the strongest.

When we look at how the world selects its own, we often will have to contend with worldly mindsets and standards. What are the selection criterion and parameters? In the eyes of the world, greatness is measured in terms of lordship and leadership. In heaven's eyes, it is measured in terms of servanthood and discipleship.

When others see a shepherd boy, God may see a king. When others see a Baby, God sees a Saviour. When others see the sufferings of Christ, God sees the triumphs of Christ! When others see the death, God sees the resurrection! When others put you last on their list, God may put you first on His list. God still uses ordinary people to fulfill His extraordinary purposes.

From the outside, you may be the last, but from the inside, you may be the first! Remember Jerry.

The sons of Issachar bear the marks of their mother, Leah. Though she was the first wife of Jacob, yet she was the last. She was unloved. But in the end, she was again first in the eyes of Jacob. He was buried in the same place besides her.

The sons of Issachar bear the mark of true servanthood. They are not afraid to be the least. They are not afraid to lose. They don't have to be

number one. For they know that the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

Chapter 12

The Chosen Ones

Rev 7:7

"...of the tribe of Issachar
twelve thousand were sealed..."

When Jesus sent His twelve disciples out to do ministry, He commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."" (Matthew 10:5-8).

This mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel still goes on today. In the last parable of Jesus concerning the endtimes (Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus specifically shows us how He divides His sheep from the goats when He comes to judge the nations:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me. "

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me."

"Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The New Testament clearly taught us to love and honor even the least of the brothers of the Lord. Who were the brothers of Jesus? Jesus Himself was a Jew. All of His disciples were Jews. All the writers of the Old and New Testaments were Jews. His brothers were clearly the Jewish people.

In Ephesians 2:11-18, the Jews and the Gentiles were united by Christ in one body to become one new man in Christ.

We should never forget that we are Gentiles. In fact, we were formerly called the uncircumcised by those who took pride in being circumcised. At that time we did not know about Christ. We were foreigners to the people of Israel. We had no part in the promises that God had made to them. We were living in this world without hope and without God. We

were far away from God. But Christ offered His life's blood as a sacrifice and brought us near God.

Christ had made peace between Jews and Gentiles. He had united us by breaking down the wall of hatred that separated us. Christ gave His own body to fulfill all the laws of Moses with all its rules and commands.

He even brought the Jews and the Gentiles together creating one new man in Christ. He united us in peace. On the cross Christ took away our hatred for each other. He also made peace between us and God by uniting Jews and Gentiles in one body.

Christ came and preached peace to the Gentiles, who were far from God, and peace to the Jews, who were near God. And because of Christ, all of us could come to the Father by the same Spirit.

In Romans 11:11-36, Paul wrote that all Israel shall be saved! Would the people of Israel fall and never to get up again? Certainly not! Their failure made it possible for us, the Gentiles, to be saved. This would make the people of Israel jealous.

If the Gentiles were blessed so much by Israel's rejection of their Messiah, they would be blessed even more by Israel's full return to their God. Someone noted that the number of people coming to receive Christ corresponded proportionately to the number of Jews returning to Israel.

When Israel rejected God, the Gentiles were able to turn to Him. And God had not forgotten about Israel! He would make friends with Israel again. He would resurrect Israel from death back to life!

In May 1948, the modern State of Israel was founded. It was undoubtedly one of the most important events in history. For the first

time in world history, a people that had been uprooted and dispersed for more than 2000 years returned as a sovereign nation back to their historic beloved homeland. This incredible wonder occurred after the Holocaust, an unforgettable event that shocked the whole world!

The most amazing miracle was the people who rebuilt the modern nation of Israel. These builders were not strong, healthy and muscular men. They were neither rich with abundant supplies. Israel was built by Jewish men and women who had just escaped the hells of Nazi concentration camps.

These courageous survivors were staggered ashore, barely alive. Their bodies were famished, skinny and thin, but their determination were strong and their hearts courageous. Against insurmountable odds, facing European opposition, American apathy and British blockades, they were decided and determined to make their homes in the Holy Land.

As Gentiles, we are not to be proud and arrogant! Paul told us the mystery of what had happened to the people of Israel (Romans 11:25-28). Some of them had become stubborn, and they would remain so until the complete number of the Gentiles has come in.

After which, all of Israel will be saved, as the Scriptures say, "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

God is faithful to all His covenants and promises. Whenever He had promised, He would fulfill. If God is not faithful to the Old Covenant, how can He be faithful to the New Covenant? He is the Faithful One!

One wrong teaching about the New Testament is this: "God makes the Old Covenant with Israel, and the New Covenant with the Church."

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:7-13, the New Covenant was clearly made with Israel and not with the Church:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

What is the New Covenant? It is God putting His law in their minds, and writing it on their hearts so that He will be their God, and they shall be His people.

Jesus did not come to bring us the New Covenant, He came to fulfill it. In Matthew 26:2, Jesus said, "For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

He didn't say that this is the New Testament or Covenant. He said, "This is My blood of the New Covenant." He did not give us a New Covenant. The New Covenant was already given long ago in the Old Testament. He came to seal the New Covenant with His blood.

In fact, the New Covenant was more correctly known as the Renewed Covenant. It was God renewing His Covenant and His love with His beloved people, Israel. Because they were blessed, we became blessed.

The good news came from the Jews. Jesus was a Jew! And the good news had come to us Gentiles through the Jews. Now we are enjoying the love of God while the people of Israel are still far away from God.

But they are still the chosen ones. God loves them because of their faithful forefathers. These gifts of God are irrevocable! God doesn't take back the gifts He has given! He has not forgotten about the people He has chosen.

We must always remember that we, Gentiles, had once rejected God. God showed His mercy to the Jews. But when Israel rejected God, God bestowed His mercy upon us. Because of the mercy God has bestowed unto us, God will show His mercy to Israel again! This is the endless and eternal love of God. All people have disobeyed God, both Jews and Gentiles alike! God will have mercy on all of us!

Who can measure the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God? Who can understand His decisions or explain what He does? Has anyone known the thoughts of the Lord or given him advice? Has anyone loaned something to the Lord that must be repaid? Everything comes from the Lord. All things were made because of Him and will return to Him (Romans 11:28-36).

God's relationship with Israel is everlasting. God called and chose her to fulfill His purposes and plans to redeem the whole earth! They were obedient to God's Word, and they recorded it down. That's how we have our Bible today! They brought forth the Light of the world when one of their descendants was born as the Messiah and the Saviour.

The Jewish people have partially fulfilled their roles so far. This fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant that "in you will all the nations on the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

As humans, they erred. But who did not commit mistakes or sins? God had already forgiven them when He sent His Son to live among them. His name is Jesus, which means "He shall save His people from their sins." His people was and still is the Jews!

God made an everlasting covenant with Israel. He will never forget or annul His ancient people. If God will not fulfill His promises to Israel, what guarantee do we have that He will fulfill His promises to the Church?

What is the role of the Church? Basically, two-fold. To make disciple of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20) and to show mercy to the people of Israel (Romans 11:30-31).

How can we show mercy to Israel? We are:

- To give our material gifts to help them (Romans 15:27).
- To pray for them especially peace in Israel (Psalm 122)
- To be a watchman on the walls to protect them (Isaiah 62:6-7).
- To help bringing the Jews back to Israel so that they can rebuild the Holy City of God (Isaiah 49:22-23; Isaiah 60:9-11).

What happens to the Church when she refuses to help Israel?

- She will embrace the Replacement Theology.
- She will become Anti-Semitic.
- She will replace Israel.
- She will not understand who she really was.
- She will become arrogant and self-centred.
- She will boast with the nations against the Jews and Israel.
- She will miss the blessings of God by not blessing Israel.
- She will have no role in God's redemption for Israel.

- She will miss some of the greatest prophecies in both the Old and the New Testaments that are yet to be fulfilled with regards to God's prophetic calendar for Israel.
- She will lose her opportunity to participate in God's plan and prophecy for the Church, Israel and the world today.

What happens to the Church when she helps Israel?

- She will have the full gospel that includes both the Old and New Testament, and not just half the gospel in the New Testament.
- She will fulfill her role in God's redemptive plan for the world, including Israel.
- She will understand the faithfulness of God, never changing from Genesis to Revelation.
- She will love and honor God by loving and honoring His covenant people.
- She will have prophetic insights and foresights for the endtimes.
- She will become better disciples of Christ as she embrace the Hebraic roots of her faith.

With the divine providence of God, I know all the promises in the Old and New Testaments will come true. I have a dream, and it is fashioned after Psalm 87:

I have a dream
Of a holy city upon a hill
The city of God
Where wonderful things do happen

I have a dream
When Egyptians and Babylonians

Are listed among the peoples
Who obey the LORD

I have a dream
When the people of Philistia, Tyre and Sudan
Are numbered among
The inhabitants of Jerusalem

I have a dream
Of Zion it will be said
All the nations
Belong there

I have a dream
The LORD will write a list of the peoples
And include all of them
As citizens of Jerusalem

I have a dream
When all the peoples of the earth
Will dance and sing together in Zion
Where all the blessings of God flow

I have a dream
When mercy and truth have met together
Righteousness and peace have kissed
And truth shall spring out of the earth

I have a dream
Of brothers dwelling in unity
Isaac and Ishmael
Jacob and Esau

I have a dream
Of a holy Bride
Ready to receive
Her Bridegroom

I have a dream
Of Israel and the Church
In one union
With Christ

I have a dream
Of perfect peace and rest
Dwelling and feasting
In the presence of God

I have a dream
Of a glorious kingdom
Where righteousness and mercy
Flow like a river wide

I have a dream
Of dreamers' dreams coming true
Of the created
Meeting their Creator

I have a dream
Free at last!
Thank God Almighty
We are free at last!

As sons of Issachar, let's work while it is day.

And I know that this dream will come true:

- Because it is written in His Word

- Because God will divinely provide to ensure its fulfillment
- Because all things are possible with God
- Because the works of God will never lack the resources of God.
- Because the Word of God has the power to fulfill every promise it makes!

Epilogue:

The Issachar Factor

What is the Issachar Factor? When I looked through all the qualities of the sons of Issachar, I was reminded of their famous forefather, Abraham.

The sons of Issachar had many attributes which were very similar to Abraham. Like Abraham, the sons of Issachar were a prophetic people. They were mighty men of valor. They were chosen to be friends of God. They understood the times and seasons they were living in. They were great givers. God gave them the Promised Land. And they were fruitful.

Have you wondered why God chose Abraham? The answer is found in Genesis 18:18-19: "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him." (NIV)

God chose Abraham simply because He knew that Abraham would instruct his children and his household in the righteous ways of the LORD.

Abraham was not only a man of faith; he was also a faithful man. He obeyed and carried out the instructions of the LORD. And by being a living example, he taught his children to obey the LORD's commandments, statutes and precepts. Even today, this Abrahamic attribute runs down the Hebraic race (Genesis 26:5): "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

God is interested in both Abraham and his generations after him. He is vitally concerned with what Abraham did to prepare the next generation to love and serve Him. He called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He made His covenant not only with Abraham but also with Isaac and Jacob. The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) originally given to Abraham were renewed with his son Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5), and with his grandson Jacob (Genesis 28:12-15).

Abraham fulfilled God's plans as he faithfully directed his children and his household after him to keep the ways of the LORD by doing right and being righteous. And the LORD fulfilled His promises to Abraham and his descendants. This legacy that Abraham passed down to his children continues even now. God is not making a covenant with Abraham alone. He is making it with his descendants also.

In Deuteronomy 6:1-13, Moses told the Israelites before they were about to enter the Promised Land:

"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you--' a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-- when you have eaten and are full-- then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name."

God desires to be their God, and also the God of their sons and grandsons and thereafter. His commandments are to be written upon their hearts. They are to impress them on their children. Talking about the Word of God everywhere whether sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down or getting up. That's teaching and training by role models and life examples. That's the best way to train their children in the ways of the LORD.

They spend quality time with one another. They have 24/7 relationships. Their relationships between one another are nurtured

over meals, family devotions, praying and playing together, seeking and finding the Lord.

This precious time together is unhurried. Walking through the neighbourhood or along a quiet path, parents and their children can laugh, speak and listen, share and learn from one another. These times are holy and sacred. They are commanded by the Lord!

Their parents illustrate to their children by their life examples from day-by-day decisions and endeavours. That's how they reveal the living Lord to their families. That's give the greatest impact and impression to their loved ones from doing daily chores to making daily choices.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul gave us this exhortation: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

It is the primary responsibility of the fathers to train and teach their children in the Lord, not just the mothers, the schools and the churches! However this important task has been totally left to the academic institutions and churches.

By outsourcing their responsibilities completely, their children are not firmly rooted in love and in the ways of the Lord. Without the proper foundations, their children eventually abandon their faith and their God!

The wise counsel to all fathers is still Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

God desires us to live the covenant relationship with Him. He desires to renew the Abrahamic covenant with us! This covenant requires us to obey Him so that our children and grandchildren will know by our life examples how to live the abundant life that God has designed us to

live! The Bible is the Textbook. Its writings are to be written on our hearts so that we can bear the true witness to our children and their children!

As sons of Issachar, we must pass on the Abrahamic covenant and its blessings to our next generation and beyond!

This is our legacy to the world in need of Christ!