

The Growth of a Great Family

First Chronicles 4

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • June 27, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2021

Scripture Reader and Reading: Jacob Noveske – Micah 5.2

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Phil Joseph – No Suggestions

Persuasion:

I. First Chronicles 4.1–4 • The Dominant Tribe

1 The sons of Judah were Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. 2 And Reaiah the son of Shobal begot Jahath, and Jahath begot Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites. 3 These were the sons of the father of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazeleponi; 4 and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer was the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah the father of Bethlehem.

A. Here Ezra did not list the two sons of Judah who died.

B. Judah became the main tribe.

1. For one thing, they grew more than the other tribes.

2. Why did Judah become the standout tribe?

a) I do not know,

b) unless it was simply because of their growth.

3. What about us?

a) Yes, the pandemic hurt us, but

b) this congregation and Churches of Christ

(1) have been steadily declining for a while.

(2) I invite you to say this prayer with me daily:

Father in heaven, Either lead me to a soul or lead a soul to me who is ready to hear the truth, or open my eyes and ears to a good work that I can do. Also, help me to be ready and to speak boldly.

c) We grow with new converts.

d) The simplest thing you can do is invite people to services.

C. Who was Reaiah?

1. Why did Ezra introduce him

2. without any introduction or connection to what he was writing?

a) It could be that Ezra's generation knew the connection, or

b) that someday we will discover something in archaeology.

D. The last sentence in verse 4 helps me to understand

1. a prophecy about the birthplace of Jesus:

**2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."**

– Micah 5.2

2. Matthew quotes Micah in Matthew 2.1–6.

3. Who was Ephrathah and who was Bethlehem?

a) They seem to have been insignificant.

b) But who was Mary and who was Joseph?

(1) They were unknown but

(2) the Lord has a way of changing things,

(a) making the insignificant significant, and

(b) making the unknown known.

4. I say they appear to be insignificant, but

a) the Bible did not record every significant person or event.

b) It only recorded those things necessary to tell us the story of salvation.

E. To me, this reference to Ephrathah and his son Bethlehem

1. fits in with the genealogy that Ezra recorded, because
2. he mentions the unknown with the very well-known,
 - a) showing them related to one another,
 - b) all playing a part in bringing the Christ into the world,
 - (1) assuring me that he knows everyone of us and
 - (2) that in his book,
 - (a) we are significant and well-known to the God of heaven.
 - (b) We are in the Lamb's Book of Life.

II. First Chronicles 4.5–8 • The Sons of Two Women

5 And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. 6 Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hephher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. 7 The sons of Helah were Zereth, Zohar, and Ethnan; 8 and Koz begot Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum.

A. Ezra made a brief mention of Ashhur back in 2.24:

24 After Hezron died in Caleb Ephrathah, Hezron's wife Abijah bore him Ashhur the father of Tekoa.

1. Here we learn that Ashhur had two wives, because
2. no other Israelite had two wives?!
 - a) No, of course not.
 - b) Why then did he mention that Ashhur had two wives?

B. In this part, Ezra gives more emphasis to males whom the women bore.

III. First Chronicles 4.9–10 • Do Not Cause Pain

9 Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." 10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

A. Years ago, I took the teachers here through a training course.

1. The Seven Laws of the Teacher by Howard Hendricks.
2. The producer was Bruce Wilkinson.
 - a) He would introduce a skit that showed the wrong way of teaching and
 - b) then Howard Hendricks would teach a great lesson.
3. Years later Bruce Wilkinson came out with a book, *The Prayer of Jabez*.
 - a) When I heard that I knew that Bruce Wilkinson
 - b) had read the genealogies of First Chronicles and found a gem.
 - (1) He turned it into a book and
 - (2) over ten years ago it had sold 10 million copies.
 - (a) I have not read the book,
 - (b) so I cannot recommend it, but
 - i) my point is someone read the whole Bible and
 - ii) found something that most people would never know.

B. Listen to what Ezra said about Jabez and his prayer.

1. First, Ezra noted that he was more honorable than his brothers.
2. Yet, he came into the world in a difficult way.
 - a) Genesis 3.16 said that women would bear children in pain.
 - (1) You ladies know that from experience.
 - (a) And Jabez's mother would have observed that,
 - (b) if she had not already experienced it.
 - (2) You may remember that Benjamin was not his first given name:

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. 17 Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also." 18 And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni [Son of My Sorrow, DR];

but his father called him Benjamin Son of My Right (hand), DR].

– Genesis 35.16–18

- (3) So, Jabez's birth must have been more painful, or
 - (a) she was experiencing a time of pain, or
 - (b) something about it was unusual.
- b) She named him in memory of whatever happened.
 - (1) Every time she called him she called to mind her pain.
 - (2) And he was reminded every time that he heard his name.
3. That led him to speak five things in a prayer:
 - a) He wanted God to bless him.
 - (1) I pray that without ceasing.
 - (2) I have been blessed and I need to be blessed,
 - (a) so I also pray or ask God
 - (b) How I can bless his name today,
 - (c) How I can bless the name of Christ,
 - (d) How I can bless the church.
 - (e) How can I bless my neighbor.
 - b) He wanted God to enlarge his territory.
 - c) He wanted God's hand to be with him.
 - d) He wanted God to keep him from evil.
 - e) He did not want to cause pain.
4. God honored him with what he wanted.

IV. First Chronicles 4.11–12 • Meticulous Records

**11 Chelub the brother of Shuhah begot Mehir, who was the father of Eshton.
12 And Eshton begot Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash.**

These were the men of Rechah.

A. The genealogies in the Bible were not merely for satisfying curiosity.

B. Consider:

1. Since God had made a promise through Abraham to bless the world,
 - a) there was a need for a genealogy
 - b) that we could see the fulfillment and believe.
2. The priesthood required a genealogy.

V. First Chronicles 4.13–18 • Some Judges

13 The sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel were Hathath, 14 and Meonothai who begot Ophrah. Seraiah begot Joab the father of Ge Harashim, for they were craftsmen. 15 The sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh were Iru, Elah, and Naam. The son of Elah was Kenaz. 16 The sons of Jehallelel were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel. 17 The sons of Ezra were Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. And Mered's wife bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18 (His wife Jehudijah bore Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Sochoh, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.) And these were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took.

A. Othniel was the first judge, recorded in Judges 3.

1. He is also mentioned in both Joshua 15 and Judges 1, and
2. the narration shows his relationship to the famous Caleb:

12 Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." 13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.

– Judges 1.12–13

- a) Caleb was Othniel's uncle,
- b) so that his wife was his cousin.

B. In verse 14, Ezra wrote:

Seraiah begot Joab the father of Ge Harashim, for they were craftsmen.

1. As I have said before with some of the things that Ezra recorded,
 - a) why did he mention that they were craftsman?
 - b) Why did Ezra tell us their trade but not the others?

C. Yes, Solomon's wife, I assume his first one, was the daughter of Pharaoh, but

1. here was another man in verse 18 who had an Egyptian.
2. The place that Egypt and the pharaohs occupy in Scripture amazes me.
 - a) Bithiah is a Hebrew name,
 - b) indicating that she must have converted to the Jew's religion.

VI. First Chronicles 4.19–20 • Others

19 The sons of Hodiah's wife, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and of Eshtemoa the Maachathite. 20 And the sons of Shimon were Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi were Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.

A. Another reason for genealogies in the Bible.

B. The building of the wall, and

1. of the temple, and
2. for repopulating Jerusalem after the return from Babylonian captivity,
3. required proof that people were of the Jews.

VII. First Chronicles 4.21–23 • Shelah Grew Up

21 The sons of Shelah the son of Judah were Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of the linen workers of the house of Ashbea; 22 also Jokim, the men of Chozeba, and Joash; Saraph, who ruled in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. Now the records are ancient. 23 These were the potters and those who dwell at Netaim and Gederah; there they dwelt with the king for his work.

A. Shelah was the third son of Judah.

1. Remember that Tamar was married to the firstborn, but he died.
2. The second born was then to raise up children with Tamar but
 - a) he refused and the Lord took his life.
 - b) So Tamar waited for Shelah, because
 - (1) Judah told her to wait until Shelah was grown, but
 - (2) when he grew up,
 - (a) Judah did not give Shelah to Tamar.
 - (b) That is what led her to disguise herself as a harlot...

B. Later, Shelah did marry and

1. some of those descended from him
2. were linen workers and potters for the king.
 - a) Why did Ezra mention that they were linen workers and potters?
 - (1) They may have been exceptional workers.
 - (2) They may have produced an exceptional product.
 - b) They worked for the king,
 - (1) showing that he liked their work,
 - (2) making them exceptional in that way also.

C. Interestingly, at least one of his descendants became a ruler in Moab.

D. His older brothers, Er and Onan, ruined their possible great future.

1. Their little brother made something of his life.
2. They had Jacob as their grandfather and Judah as their father.
 - a) What great things could they have done?
 - b) I think this of anyone who dies young because of sin.

VIII. First Chronicles 4.24–27 • Simeon

24 The sons of Simeon were Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul, 25 Shal-

lum his son, Mibsam his son, and Mishma his son. 26 And the sons of Mishma were Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, and Shimei his son. 27 Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many children, nor did any of their families multiply as much as the children of Judah.

A. This is where we learn of the growth of the tribe of Judah.

1. We can see it when there is a census recorded in Scripture and
 - a) Judah has way more and
 - b) a larger army.
2. The tribe of Simeon did not multiply like Judah.

B. Although there was one man who had 16 sons and 6 daughters!

1. Evidently he was the exception.

IX. First Chronicles 4.28–38 • Some Maintained Their Genealogy

28 They dwelt at Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual, 29 Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, 30 Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, 31 Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri, and at Shaaraim. These were their cities until the reign of David. 32 And their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan—five cities— 33 and all the villages that were around these cities as far as Baal. These were their dwelling places, and they maintained their genealogy: 34 Meshobab, Jamlech, and Joshah the son of Amaziah; 35 Joel, and Jehu the son of Joshibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel; 36 Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, and Benaiah; 37 Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedayah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah— 38 these mentioned by name were leaders in their families, and their father's house increased greatly.

A. In addition to telling us the cities of the Simeonites,

1. Ezra also mentioned that they maintained their genealogy.
2. Perhaps with the others Ezra had to do research, but
 - a) with this tribe,
 - b) the work was already done.

B. If you have ever done genealogical work,

1. you know how much is involved.

2. I'm sure that pleased Ezra.

C. Perhaps Simeon did not grow as much as Judah, but

1. when you consider the millions that have descended from Jacob,

2. it truly boggles the mind, and

a) it is amazing that records were kept of all this growth.

b) However, all records that were kept in Jerusalem

(1) were destroyed when the Romans attacked in AD 70.

(2) Now no one today can show that they have descended from Levi,

(a) so that they cannot reestablish the priesthood,

(b) as premillennialists maintain that Israel will do,

i) which they claim will signal the end.

X. First Chronicles 4.39–40 • Seek and Ye Shall Find

39 So they went to the entrance of Gedor, as far as the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. 40 And they found rich, good pasture, and the land was broad, quiet, and peaceful; for some Hamites formerly lived there.

A. God gives, but he also expects us to search.

B. Ham was one of the sons of Noah,

1. who eventually moved into Africa.

2. The Hamites must have taken good care of this land.

XI. First Chronicles 4.41–43 • The Simeonites Did Not Cease Taking the Land

41 These recorded by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and they attacked their tents and the Meunites who were found there, and utterly destroyed them, as it is to this day. So they dwelt in their place, because there was pasture for their flocks there. 42 Now some of them, five hundred men of the sons of Simeon, went to Mount Seir, having as their captains Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. 43 And they defeated the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped. They have dwelt there to this day.

A. Hundreds of years passed

1. from the time that Israel entered the Land of Canaan
2. to the time that Hezekiah was king.
 - a) During that time Simeon had not conquered all his land.
 - b) Nevertheless, they did not give up.

B. King Saul was supposed to have utterly destroyed the Amalekites, but

1. some managed to flee and
2. Simeon had to deal with them later.

Exhortation:

I. Concerning the craftsmen mentioned in this chapter:

“Produce! produce! were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God’s name!”

– *The Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary*, page 18

A. Whatever you do do it with all your might.

B. Do it in the name of the Lord.

II. Regardless of from whom you descended,

A. be everything that God wants you to be,

B. asking him for help along the way.