

JULY 7

1 Chronicles 4:5-5:17

1 Chronicles 4:5-43

Vs. 5-23 Ezra is tracing again the descendants of Judah. There are a few famous names here so I would guess that Ezra wants to show the returning Israelites where some of their folk heroes came from.

Vs. 5-8 You have to be dedicated to keep going back and forth to make connections in all of this, but it is possible. Earlier, Ezra was tracing the lineage of one of the descendants of Judah through his son Perez, then Perez's son Hezron. So far this is all in the lineage to David and to the Messiah. Hezron had three sons and Ezra immediately developed the lineage of Ram, who develops the line of David. Now, Ezra wanted to show the significance of one of Hezron's other sons, Chelubai, who here is called Caleb, but not the Caleb we all love who was a good spy. That Caleb will come later. This Caleb, the son of Hezron, (through the wife of his father) had a son named Ashhur. That brings us to today. Ashhur was the father of Tekoa. Tekoa is a famous town in Israel.

So you're reading all of these names and suddenly you come to 4:9-10. Before, when I used to preach on Jabez, I would have someone read 4:1-10, because you could hear the monotony break when you got to v. 9. But then I stopped doing that because no one could really read those hard-to-pronounce names anyway.

Vs. 9-10 When I returned to the States in 2001, I was stunned to hear that BW had written a book called The Prayer of Jabez. This portion had been one of my favorite sermons in English and German, and now people were telling me that everyone was sick of hearing sermons on Jabez. I've never read the book. You might already know all this information, but here are some notes.

Jabez is from the tribe of Judah. You can see this if you look back at the beginning of this chapter.

The time of his prayer appears to be the beginning of the conquest of Canaan. One of the ways to find this is to read your Bible every year. Another way is to use a search program. I found this by reading every year. If you look at the words *enlarge my border*, you'll see them again next year in Deuteronomy 12:20. This was what Moses said to the people just before Israel crossed the Jordan.

The promise was made to all of Israel. You can picture all the soldiers of Israel standing there, sword in hand, ready to take the land, but Jabez prayed. He prayed according to God's promise, and he prayed because he had learned to go to God because of the mark his mother had put upon him, in punishment for his painful birth. His adversity taught him to go to God. That is why Jabez was more honorable or "of greater substance" than his brothers. All the people were ready to go and claim the land, but Jabez humbled his heart before God, having learned, and knowing now, how much he needed God. Adversity doesn't always lead you to God, but it did in Jabez's case.

I've heard some people preach this saying that God was so happy to have anyone pray, that He was willing to answer even a selfish prayer, as long as it was a prayer. How silly. Everything Jabez prayed was a promise of God.

As disciples, the Father prunes us through adversity to be fruitful in His harvest. The promises of God do not relate to our comfort or bank accounts, but to His mission. That is where Jabez found God's blessing, doing God's work, and that is where we find our blessing, following Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 11-23 All this seems too hard to follow, but there are some interesting names. After Jabez, you have Othniel, the first judge of Israel. This also helps to establish the time of Jabez. In this lineage you also have our hero, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

Vs. 24-43 These are the descendants of Simeon. A possible reason for their mention here is that their land was south of Judah's land. When the nation became divided, it wasn't just divided by tribes, but also by geography - north and south. The ten tribes north became Israel, and the two tribes south (Judah and Benjamin) became Judah. The land of Simeon became the possession of Judah and the people either remained in Judah or went north. Notice in v. 41 that in the days of Hezekiah, before the exile, some of the tribe of Simeon became registered citizens of Judah.

To understand the focus of this section of Chronicles, look for any mentions of genealogies or registers. Ezra was making sure everyone knew to whom they were related.

1 Chronicles 5:1-17

Vs. 1-10 This is the genealogy of the sons of Reuben. This is an interesting note regarding the giving of the birthright to Joseph. Judah, it appears, was blessed in spite of missing the birthright; although Judah would have been next in line, after Levi and Simeon were disqualified. Do you remember all of that?

Vs. 11-17 These are the sons of Gad.

It is too bad that this chapter is divided between today and tomorrow. Here, Ezra was dealing with the 2.5 tribes that were located on the east side of the Jordan, who they were and why they went into exile. Apparently, as of the writing of Chronicles, they were still in exile.

Acts 25

Vs. 1-5 The success of any Roman governor over Israel was in the hands of the Jews, so a wise governor was kind to them. Notice that one of the top things on the Jews' "list of favors" was Paul and trying to kill him. Maybe after two years those guys still hadn't eaten and really, really needed to kill Paul.

Vs. 6-12 We don't see all of the detail of who Paul interacted with these two years. The temptation would be to see this as wasted time, particularly because of Festus. In v. 9 it is clear there would be no real help from this conniving ruler. You could think that Paul should have appealed to be tried before Caesar much earlier, but the Lord had a plan in all of this. Apparently Paul had enough to do in ministry to stay content and busy. Only when Festus was ready to put Paul into the hands of his enemies, did Paul use his right to appeal to Caesar.

Vs. 13-27 Here is one of the purposes for Paul's stay. Notice v. 23; this was a gala event. Everyone was invited to hear Paul give his testimony. This would not only be hugely public and help in Paul's future release, but, as we'll see tomorrow, Paul was very persuasive.

Look at Festus' words in vs. 24-27. This is Festus saying "See how smart I am?" NOT! Had he been anything but a favor-seeking politician, he would have had the guts to let Paul go. God was using the guile of this crooked man to accomplish His own purpose. He forced Paul to play the "Caesar" card, again, accomplishing God's purpose. Now there was a big, public event.

So, when they would send Paul to Nero, the letter of accusation would say, "Dear Nero, we think he's innocent, but he wanted to talk to you."

Once again too, in Luke's writing, a Roman official is saying that there is nothing wrong with Paul or Christianity.

It is good for us to observe that in this portion of Paul's work in the harvest, it was chaotic and frustrating, but God was completely in control.

Psalm 5

I can imagine that as this hearing was being set up, Paul was praying something like this. Reading this psalm and the letters that follow, you get an idea of how well Paul knew the OT. Compare v. 9 to Romans 3:13, *Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips.* Paul definitely knew his psalms.

Vs. 1-3 What is interesting is that David was not only well acquainted with crying out to God, but v. 3 sounds like, "It's morning and here I am again, Lord." God was training David.

Vs. 4-6 Whatever David was facing from his enemies, it was deeply affecting him every day. David was reminding the Lord that the Lord can't tolerate such people.

Vs. 7-8 This is good for us to learn. Rather than stress and obsess over his enemies and keep thinking about what they said, etc., David focused all of his attention and trust on the Lord.

Vs. 9-10 This is a cry for justice.

Vs. 11-12 I wonder if Paul prayed something like this when he was taken in before Agrippa and Bernice and all the leaders and officials of Caesarea?

Proverbs 18:19

And unfortunately this is just as true among believers, as among those who don't understand the grace of God or our mission here for Christ. Or actually, maybe it is only true among believers who don't understand the grace of God or our mission here for Christ.

We are all bound to offend people. Among believers, it is the love of Christ that saves us and covers a multitude of sins, and offenses. Quarreling is just something we all need to get over for the sake of our Lord and the harvest.