

Issachar: Children of Understanding Of the Times

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW

Undershepherd

Personal Life Coach

www.set-apart-ministries.org

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This newspaper continues to become a larger and louder voice, not only in Wisconsin but around the country and internationally. The messages that come through this vehicle are more clearly Scripturally focused than many other resources, as one of few remaining Christian newspapers. They are rarely “politically correct” and rarely do anything to keep the proverbial frog in the kettle unaware of the imminent danger. They are messages that show an awareness of the times, like the men of Issachar, who knew the issues of their day. Some receive it with gladness while others may view it as “too contentious!”

For those of us who share a Biblical worldview, the events of our day present a challenge. Although we might prefer to remain in our own cloister or “echo-chamber” and hear only that which magnifies our God and King, as we understand Him, we also know that we are to be IN the world, but not OF it.

We know that there is an ongoing need for both introductory and deeper study of the Word, so that those who name the Name of Messiah Yeshua grow and solidify their faith. Over many years of clinically working with individuals and families, including many in leadership in various church denominations, I am a witness to the struggle here. There were always those who genuinely appeared to be walking in faith but recognizing their personal fears/issues and the need to address them well. All too often, I have seen that even those who lead, struggle with and sometimes even seemed to have very little depth of confidence and faith in Messiah. Of course, one doesn't come for help until there IS a major problem, and hardly anyone can remain entirely at ease, but I am not talking about that. I am referring to the many times where there seemed to be either just a superficial simplistic “faith” in practice and sometimes no faith was in evidence beyond form with no substance. So when the inevitable crises come, there is not enough faith and joy strength to hold! Not only reading the Word but learning how to understand and apply it is crucial in how we walk after Him. It is very rare for this ability to walk in the light, in confidence in Messiah to be GROWN while under such major duress. Usually, it is the daily trials and tribulations we face that help us hone our understanding and move out of our fleshly focus into focusing on His ways and His plan. If we resist that, and keep our soulish focus, demands, desires and hope as our guiding light, we will not be able to stand in trouble.

As we see the growing chaos in the world, we also see the pressing need to recognize the challenges to expressions of our faith in the public square and feel the urgent need make sure that the proverbial frog stays alert and alive. That seems to require more commentary in order to help others apply Scriptural truth to current situations. Yet, we don't want to forget those who are just coming into faith! This month, I am going to lean toward the commentary side, with a “flavor” of discipleship and coaching!

We also know that as times get more stressful, that the divide between those who seek our Elohim and those who do not is becoming wider and more clear. We here at SAM view this as a mercy of our God, in

that He is allowing things to become more clear so that the choices and consequences also become more clear for those who really are just newly entering into awareness.

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of prophecy in this book, because the time is near. Let the unrighteous continue to be unrighteous, and the vile continue to be vile; let the righteous continue to practice righteousness, and the holy continue to be holy. "Behold, I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to what he has done.... Rev. 22:10-12 Berean Study Bible

As of old, we do have responsibility to those coming along behind us in faith to model and teach His Word, commands and how we understand they are to apply in these circumstances. Yes, I know many people now say quite boldly that it is all outmoded and no longer relevant. Are we alert enough to even recognize the schemes? Do we stand firm or do we buckle? If our faith doesn't apply while in crisis, would our faithful God tell us it does?

Last month, I wrote that we need to make some serious choices as to how we will choose to respond to the escalating violence. Those who want America to become a lesser nation in favor of Marxism and point blank communism seem to have no limits to what they will harm to achieve that goal...as well as being well funded and directed. Always with prayer undergirding all we do, we also need to respond with wisdom. Not our own wisdom, but the unique wisdom, in Hebrew it is "*chokmah*" that comes from our Abba alone. That wisdom then is paired with understanding ("*binah*") and ultimately leads to wise counsel, which is "*etzah*," after the straight, tall strength of a tree. These are the first of the seven spirits resting on the Branch from the stump of Jesse, who is our Yeshua, Jesus of Nazareth! Is His Spirit resting on you?

They are also paired with the observance of His Feasts, Passover, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits. These spring feasts are about His first coming, when He was our Passover Lamb and Sinbearer; and picture the need for us to come out of the world and into His house, under the shed blood on the doorposts of our lives. He has asked us to become set apart, holy, for His purposes in our lives. When we have truly done that and declared it so, we are poised to receive His Spirit (as signified at Shavuot, called Pentecost) and thus ready to be empowered to walk into and through the Fall Feasts, which are all about His second coming as our Conquering King. HalleluYah! May it be soon and in our day!

The twelve tribes individual and corporate lives are a witness, testimony and guide for us in our day as those who have been grafted into His family by faith. (If ever one is struggling with how to handle an issue, it can often be helpful to examine the lives of people in the Bible for insight on how to proceed.)

As we try to remain in our calm, confident faith as the world swirls further out of control, in the days that we were told would be so difficult that men's hearts would fail them for what is coming on the earth, there is one tribe that may provide encouragement.

And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment. 1 Chr. 12:32 KJV

Note that they had positions of authority and command. And according to Judges 5:15 ...the princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak as well. They understood what was going on and though they were fewest in number, they wielded great influence by virtue of their strategic

understanding. That means having a grasp of all that is going on, the big picture, not just a simplistic one-dimensional view!

I have expressed concern in the past that far too many people of faith do not understand the basic principles of the Hegelian Dialectic that is going on. In that way, it is easy to fall for the apparent “good” of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is NOT the same thing as the good of the Tree of Life, which is of our God. The sly subtle schemes of the adversary require the same kind of strategic understanding that Issachar possessed. Mathew Henry said men of Issachar “knew how to rule, and the rest knew how to obey.”

Along with recognizing the manipulation of events to lead people to prearranged conclusions, may I also point out this summary of concepts that we must deal with in a post-modern world.

'Spirituality without Christianity
Many search for meaning, but often look elsewhere than the Christian faith
Environment without a Creator
Caring about the natural world, but not recognising the hand of God in creation
Words without meaning
If you say something means this and I say it means that, it doesn't matter - we're both right!
And we don't disagree
Individuality without belonging
I'm my own person; I don't have to belong to you or any organisation or do what you say
The present without a future
It's what we do now that's important; never mind tomorrow - it may never come
Behaviour without consequences
I can do what I like, and I will; I'm not responsible for the results
Image without reality
What you think of me is more important than what I am really like
Single issues without the big picture
I'm focusing on what matters to me; I don't care how it fits in with everything else'

Brierley P. *12 things about Society that impact the Church*. London: Christian Research, 2001

It is nearly two decades since these elements were listed here but surely we can see how far they have penetrated into our society and even our churches.

It is exciting to see how many people are openly coming forth to pray in humility for our nation; and also preparing to use their time, resources, and even their very lives to stand for what is righteous. Are they the modern “Issachars?” How can you join them?