

99-11-07a

Let's begin the portion of our worship this morning that's devoted to the study of the Word of God with a moment of prayer. Father, we thank you for the opportunity to gather and fellowship together through the study of your Word. We thank you for the provision that you have made for us in this age, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the completed canon of Scripture that provides the manna that sustains us during our wanderings through this life.

We thank you for the fact that you have a plan and purpose individually for each one of us and collectively as a church. We pray that as we spend time being built up and nourished in the faith that we will have a greater awareness and perception of our calling and the priorities that should prevail in our lives. We pray that as a result our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be glorified.

We pray it in his name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning as we continue our study of Genesis and we are wrapping up at least for the moment our review of the twelve tribes of Israel, I would like to turn to Ezekiel chapter 48 where as we saw Friday night on sort of our special on the twelve tribes of Israel, we saw that in Ezekiel 48 we have a description of the millennial state of things when the temple is rebuilt and is the center of worship.

There are specifications throughout the last several chapters of Ezekiel for the details of that temple. When you come to chapter 48 the twelve tribes are reviewed, their borders, the borders of the land that they will occupy and the kingdom is given. We reviewed that Friday night and toward the end of the chapter after the borders of Zebulun and Gad are given in verses 27 and 28, verse 29 says this is the land which you shall divide by lot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel and these are their portions says the Lord God.

And we noted that these are horizontal bands just like the lines going across a sheet of ruled notebook paper. They are equal in width from north or height I should say from north to south and they extend from the western boundary of the promised land which is generally the coast of the Mediterranean Sea over to the eastern border of the promised land which in the north goes as far over as Damascus extends across the Jordan Valley to the limits that are specified. And this of course is different than the assignments that were given in the days of Joshua.

It is more uniform, more perfect if you will and there is proximity to the central portion where the tabernacle, the capital city of Jerusalem, the land belonging to the prince which is the Lord Jesus Christ, all of these things that are located, the place of privilege are those territories nearest to that central portion. We saw that there are seven tribes north and five tribes south, seven and five both being highly significant numbers in the economy or the symbolic picture that God has given to Israel in the Old Testament. We

saw that Judah and Benjamin are the immediately bordering territories, Judah just to the north and Benjamin just to the south.

Reuben and Simeon respectively the northern and southern territories that bracket Judah and Benjamin. Then you have Ephraim and Manasseh to the north corresponding to Issachar in the south. Then you have Naphtali corresponding with Zebulun.

You have Asher corresponding with Gad. Then you have Dan as sort of the odd tribe up in the far north. As we look at Ezekiel chapter 48 and I'm probably fudging a little bit by using this for our scripture reading but I want to review it.

Normally our scripture reading will be a passage that has a self-contained thought that relates in some way to our study but this is actually another part of our study at the end of Ezekiel 48 beginning in verse 30. These are the exits of the city. This is the millennial Jerusalem.

This is not the new Jerusalem. It's the millennial capital city which is different. It exists on this earth.

It will be in the same place that it currently exists. The topography will be different. We know that at the close of the 70th week of Daniel, the end of the three and a half year great tribulation that is a part of that seven-year period we loosely refer to as the tribulation period.

When Jesus returns, the second coming at the end of that time when he descends to earth and stands on the Mount of Olives, that mountain will split and provide a way of escape for the encircled Israelites in the battle of Armageddon and Jesus Christ will deliver them with a great military victory at that time. He will purge the earth of unbelievers. The dead in Israel will rise.

I believe that those who are alive and remain who have survived the great tribulation through their obedience to the injunctions of the scriptures that talk about if you're on the housetop and you hear the alarm, don't even go inside to get your coat but flee to the hills. By doing so, I think that it will be along the same pattern as the rapture where those who are alive and remain will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye so that you begin the millennial kingdom with the church as the bride of Christ returning with him. Behold he cometh with clouds.

That's clouds of saints. That's us. And that the Israelite multitudes, the believers of the Old Testament age, the tribulational martyrs and the survivors who have lived to see the return of Christ will be transformed and issued their resurrection bodies.

This is the first resurrection. It talks about that in Revelation chapter 20. Blessed is he who has part in the first resurrection.

Over such the second death has no power. And in this period, there are questions that arise that we are not directly addressing in this study. Where do all the unbelievers come from for the Gog Magog rebellion? If you begin with all believers, most commentators account for the presence of unbelievers, the presence of unglorified bodies.

You have children, you have people giving birth, you have death. If a man dies at the age of 100, he will consider to have died in his youth. There will be capital punishment.

Do you inflict capital punishment on someone in a glorified body? It doesn't seem like that would be the primary use for it, if at all. So who are these people who are committing crimes worthy of death, who are marrying and giving in marriage, which we are told does not happen with those who are like the angels? Where are the children coming from? Who are these people that appear to be in a perfect environment and yet in an unglorified state who worship? There is the need for sacrifice. This whole last portion of Ezekiel and the sacrifices in the temple, these are sin offerings.

There are things that need to be sanctified. So there are going to be impurities, there will be uncleanness, there will be sin that needs to be at least representatively atoned for through animal sacrifice in the millennium. The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting on the throne of his father David, will rule with a rod of iron.

He will dash in pieces the nations like a potter's vessel. Well, if everything is perfect and everyone is glorified, there would be no need for anybody to be shattered like a clay pot being struck by an iron rod. So there is obviously going to be some imperfection.

There is going to be the need for government, the need for justice, and all of this bespeaks the presence of those who are in an unglorified state. Where do they come from? Well, there are answers to that question, but that is not what we are talking about this morning. Suffice it to say that the temple does exist, the city does exist, it is in the millennial kingdom, and here in verse 30 we have a description of the gates of the city and its name.

These are the exits of the city. On the north side, measuring 4,500 cubits, the gates of the city shall be named after the tribes of Israel. This is, after all, the kingdom of God.

The capital of the kingdom of Israel. So they are named after the tribes. The three gates northward, one gate for Reuben, one gate for Judah, one gate for Levi.

On the east side, 4,500 cubits, three gates, one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate for Dan. On the south side, measuring 4,500 cubits, three gates, one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar, and one gate for Zebulun. On the west side, 4,500 cubits, with their three gates, one gate for Gad, one gate for Asher, one gate for Naphtali.

All the way around shall be 18,000 cubits. And the name of the city from that day shall

be, The Lord is there, which is Yahweh Shammah. So, the identity of the tribes, their association here is significant.

We note that the arrangement or the naming of the gates does not accord with the configuration that we saw in the wilderness, where the three tribes on each. You would think, well, if that's the place where the Lord is going to be, wouldn't it be symmetrical that they would be arranged in the same fashion that they were in the wilderness, but they are not. In the same way that their territorial assignments are not the same, we also have the gates.

You have tribes in groups of three, but they don't match. Why is that? Is there a rationale for this arrangement? The one thing that we notice is that in looking at the arrangement you had in the wilderness, which you should have a picture of, hopefully, in your notes, when it says on the north side, you have Reuben, Judah, and Levi. Reuben and Judah were the first and second tribes in the order of March.

They were the first two of the primary four tribes, and then you had Levi in the center. So, they, in this order, are grouped together, Reuben, Judah, and Levi. On the east side, we have Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan.

Joseph and Benjamin, in the form of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were grouped on the west side in the wilderness when they were gathering. But, again, the principal tribe, or the third in the order of March after the tabernacle, if you recall, was Ephraim, followed by Manasseh and Benjamin. So, that sort of makes sense that they are going to be grouped together.

Then you have Dan. Dan was the fourth principal tribe, the one on the north. So, in the ordering of the tribes on these gates, it seems to be following the principal tribes, or the ones that were most noteworthy in the wilderness.

So, for example, on my diagram in my notes, where we have the four groups of tribes with the tabernacle in the center, who is the first tribe? It's Judah. They are the ones who lead the march. Who is the second tribe? It's Reuben.

Then comes the tabernacle with the Levites. So, Levi might be 2.5. Then we have Ephraim as the principal tribe to the west, and then Dan, the principal tribe to the north. The tribes associated with Ephraim over there were Manasseh and Benjamin, which are the other Rachel tribes.

So, all the Rachelites, they always seem to be grouped together. So, instead of just saying Ephraim and Dan in this list of gate naming, they each get their own gate. So, in this section we have Reuben, Judah, and Levi.

Then we have Joseph and Benjamin, honored together, it would seem. And then Dan, which was the last of the principal tribes in the wilderness. Then on the south side, those

three gates, Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun.

And then on the west side, Gad, Asher, and Naphtali. And Simeon always seems to be getting the short end of the stick. He must have really done something terrible, which we'll find out as we go along.

But Simeon, along with Dan, is almost always dishonored in some way when you see these lists. And he's down there with the concubine tribes. And beyond that, the only other tribe that seems to be kind of on the outs, Issachar and Zebulun are Leah tribes, and they are in the third or the south side.

And so the ones that are listed last there, Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, are all concubine tribes. Two Zilphas and one Bilhah. The other Bilhah tribe that we were keeping track of, of course, is Dan.

So the order is different, yet the grouping is the same. It's symmetrical. There are three to a side.

In terms of numbers, the groupings are the same, but the names are different. If we turn to Revelation and look at the lists of tribes there, we find that there is another ordering of the tribes when we have the listing of the sealed in Israel, or the 144,000 witnesses in chapter 7. John says in Revelation 7.4, I heard the number of those who were sealed. 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.

Of the tribe of Judah, 12,000. Of the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 were sealed. Of the tribe of Gad, and we have this list.

So we have Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin. Dan is not mentioned in this listing, and yet in verse 4 it says 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed. Often in the listing of the twelve tribes, Levi is left out because of their special attachment to the priestly function, and the two tribes of Joseph are mentioned separately.

But here Levi is included, and the two tribes of Joseph are combined under Joseph in verse 8. So we end up with twelve tribes listed, and yet Dan is missing. So how does this happen? Well when you look in verse 6, we have Manasseh listed separately. So Manasseh in a way gets double counted because you have Manasseh in verse 6, and then you have Joseph down in verse 8. So the tribe of Joseph down in verse 8 is probably a reference to Ephraim, because obviously the two tribes of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, Manasseh has already been listed, so this would basically, either you have a whole lot of Manassehites to where you have 12,000 listed separately, and then a combined group down in verse 8, or this would be primarily Ephraim listed under the name of Joseph down in verse 8. But Dan is completely left out of the picture.

If you think about why this might be, it is helpful for us to remember our dispensational

theology, remembering that God has divided human history into time periods where he deals in specific ways with his people. We know that the clock for Israel stopped running seven years short of the full time allotted to Israel. When Daniel gave his prophecy of the 70 weeks over there in Daniel chapter 7, 8, and 9 and along in there, when you count forward from the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, there were to be 69 weeks, and then comes the Messiah, the Prince, and he is cut off but not for himself, and then he goes on and talks about that 70th week.

Well, nothing has happened from the time of Christ forward that satisfies Daniel's description of that 70th week, where you have the abomination on the wing of the temple and all that. None of that has ever happened, and we see that at the day of Pentecost, it is just like we do before church with the clock up here on the mantel. It ticks and makes an annoying background for our tapes, and so we stop the clock.

We stop the pendulum swinging and the clock sticks at just a couple minutes after 10. Well, the clock for Israel has stopped with seven years left to run. So when we leave at the rapture, that clock, God will tap the pendulum and that clock will resume and the final seven years of the age of Israel will run.

And this helps us understand quite a lot of what we see in the prophetic scriptures related to that period, because we are back in the age of Israel. Believers in that time, and it will start out initially where all of the believers who are on the earth at the rapture will leave, and for a brief period of time you don't have any believers on the earth, because anyone who has expressed faith in Christ is church and has left. And how do you arrive with 144,000 witnesses? Well, there is an idea floating around quite commonly that says when the church leaves, the Holy Spirit leaves.

The difficulty with that is how does anyone get evangelized with no Holy Spirit? Well, they don't. And this is an interpretation, and I think it is faulty, because you end up with 144,000 minimum believers who are witnesses to God, and that doesn't happen without divine power. The plan of God is not executed in human strength, and people don't bring themselves to Christ.

God the Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. That is His ministry. These 144,000 in Revelation 7 come from somewhere, and God the Holy Spirit evangelizes them and enables them for their ministry during that tribulation period.

So the Holy Spirit has not left. That, although it is quite a common teaching and belief, makes no sense, because you have to say these people somehow come to God and come to faith and are entered into the roles of the Old Testament saints, which is the period they are living in. They are heirs to the Old Testament promises, the Old Testament covenants.

They are one with all of the Old Testament Israelites who have preceded them in death. And many of these are going to die and be gathered to their fathers, as it were. Theirs are the souls under the altar saying, How long, O Lord, here in Revelation? And God says, Yet a little while, and justice will be served, and so forth.

But they are Old Testament saints, heirs to the Old Testament promises. The Old Testament economy will pertain. They will join the program promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, all of the great Old Testament saints.

So, when this list is given, what was the status of Israel at the time that the clock stopped, when the pendulum stopped ticking for Israel? The tribe of Dan was by far the most degenerate. They were the ones that led the entire northern kingdom into the Assyrian crisis and the Assyrian captivity back in 721 B.C., thereabouts, when the northern kingdom went out. That's when you have the people who were not carried into captivity intermarrying, and that's where you get your Sumerians and so forth.

Well, the tribe of Dan was way up there to the north. They were the closest to Tyre and Sidon and the Phoenicians and Assyrians and everything else, and they were the farthest from God. When the clock resumes, apparently that tribe is not even represented.

God fills that in with Levi and the two tribes of Joseph, so that there are that perfect number of twelve times twelve, twelve being the number of Israel. So, that's my best hypothesis as to why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned and the two tribes of Joseph are, along with Levi. It is a continuation of the status of things before the clock stopped ticking for Israel.

Now, another interesting list is one that we find at the end of Revelation, when we see the description of the eternal kingdom of the Father, and this is not so much a listing of the tribes per se, but if you turn to Revelation 21, verse 9, this is the beginning of the description of the New Jerusalem. One of the seven angels, who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came to me and talked with me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

This is not the same as the Millennial Jerusalem with the gates that we just saw back in Ezekiel, chapter 48. This city descends out of heaven. It has the glory of God.

Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also, she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This helps us understand that there has been a controversy, and I won't go into all the gory details, but in recent years, I would say the last fifteen years or so, there has been what some would call a development, and others would call a great apostasy, rising up in the ranks of careful students of the word of God, and those who have been, I think, closest to the mark. It has been called conservative evangelicalism, it has been called premillennial pre-tribulation, or premill, pre-trib, represented by Dallas Seminary, Western Conservative Baptist, and other seminaries.

But this dispensational theology, those who understand that God has worked in different ways, the age of the church, the age of Israel, the age of the patriarchs, the pre-flood age, and so forth, however you want to divide those up, five dispensations, seven dispensations, whatever, that's not as important as the fact that in this recent theological movement, it has been influenced, I think, by political correctness. And the theology that you would find in your Schofield notes, in an old Schofield Bible, or the theology that you would find if you read Lewis Barry Chafer, in his Systematic Theology, that talks about the state of things in the millennial kingdom, this has come into disfavor, because you have the church as the bride of Christ, what Schofield referred to as the heavenly people, who, because Jesus told the disciples in the upper room, after John 13, 34, I go to prepare a place for you, so that where I am, there you may be also. Rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

This is separate and distinct from the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, the land promises, the kingdom promises, the kingship promises, all of the things that were promised in the Old Testament to Israel, it's a different covenant, different promises. Well, in delineating that distinction, if you spend the time to read your Schofield notes, or your Lewis Barry Chafer Systematic Theology, they would use the terms the heavenly people and the earthly people, because the heritage, Paul talked about the fact that the church has been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. And so, for a shorthand way of referring to this, they would say, well, the church, the bride of Christ, these are the heavenly people of God, while in the Millennial Kingdom, Israel is the earthly people.

Their earthly promises of land, and the descendant of David on the throne, and so forth, are being fulfilled on the earth. Well, this came into disfavor. How this is anti-Semitic, some people would say.

This is wrong, I won't go into all the details, but if you want to read about it, you can find the books by Darrell Bach or Craig Blazing. They were the forerunners and progenitors at Dallas Seminary of this new dispensationalism. There's a book called Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, which is a paperback.

If you're interested in such things, you can check that out. That's Craig Blazing's book,

and Darrell Bach has written some articles on it as well. Darrell Blazing and Bach are the two shining lights at the head of this parade.

The long and the short of this is that they think it is a bad thing, and that it is somehow an expression of cloistered, narrow-minded dogmatism and 100-year-old bad interpretation of the Bible, to see that there's a distinction between Israel and the Church in the Millennial Kingdom. So they go back and reinterpret a lot of the passages and redo the theology to say that, well, there's not a distinction between Israel and the Church in the Millennium. That when Jesus ascended on high at circa 30 AD, he went and was seated and is now seated on the throne of his father, David.

He is already enthroned. And they mix together and say that this is all one thing, and we're going to be mixed in with Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, and that there is no earthly and heavenly people. We all are heirs of the same.

The Old Testament promises and covenants were expanded to include the Church, that they are not separate and distinct. Well, I don't have time to go into a big digression into that, but let me just tell you that this passage we are looking at, this is where the great reunion of the people of God takes place. Look at the gates of the city.

Look at the walls of the city in which those gates are fixed. You have the gates named for the twelve tribes. You have the foundations of the walls.

In other words, if you think about a wall with a gate, think about drawing a series of arches, where you draw an arch and then draw a little horizontal line, draw another arch, draw another horizontal line, draw an arch, draw a horizontal line, and then draw your line across the top for the top of the wall. You've got a wall that touches the ground in certain places, and then you have gaps in the wall where the wall does not touch the ground, and these are the gates. These are the arches.

Well, the places where the wall touches the ground, the foundation of the wall, these are named for the apostles. The gaps, the gates, are named for the tribes. So, it's all part of one fabric.

The walls represent the unity of Israel and the church. Where you have a gap, you've got a tribe name. Where you have the wall touching the ground, you have an apostle name.

Twelve tribes, twelve apostles. So, this is in the New Jerusalem. This is in the kingdom of the Father.

Remember when Jesus was talking to the disciples, and he said, you will be pillars in the temple of God. And the pillars, this is what touches the ground. In between pillars, you have gaps.

So, all of this takes place in the New Jerusalem. And if people could keep their

interpretation of Scripture and their theology straight, they would see that that thousand year period of time is a period where there is still a distinction between Israel and the church. We are heirs of the new covenant, founded on new and better promises.

The new covenant to Israel, if you go back and look at it in Ezekiel, when he talks about, I will take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. If you read the passages, it specifically says, I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. And it's very specific.

Read the context. It's specifically to Israel. People that subscribe to this bongo theology that I've been talking about, go back and try to shoehorn the church into that.

Well, we are not the house of Israel, and we are not the house of Judah. And if you just look at the plain meaning of Scripture, you can't make the church a part of that. But what we want to notice here is, now, you'll notice that there's no ordering.

It doesn't say, and this here is the order. The three gates on the north are going to be named for these three tribes, or these three apostles. It just says their names are going to be inscribed.

But now the order is no longer significant, because you're in the eternal future kingdom of the Father. And the loose ends have all been tied up. The symbolic need to order the tribes and to apportion them allotments and so forth, isn't there anymore.

Now it is just a memorial. And the sides of the city are apparently equal. And there is no precedence.

There's no distinction at that point. There's no precedence. There's no first born, last shall be first, and so forth, distinction apparently between Israel and the church, like there is in the millennial kingdom, where the priorities and the reversal motif that goes throughout the Scripture is emphasized.

Here, it appears to be an equal footing. So this reminds us that in the earlier listings, where there is a distinction, and certain tribes are set to the east, south, and west, there's a reason for it. There's a reason why they are specified.

There's a reason why the 144,000 are given the names, and why Dan is left out. God is making a point. There is a symbolic value.

The location, the position, the assignments, the functions of the tribes have a meaning. It is sometimes difficult to discern, and I will confess to you that I don't feel like I have had the time to do that justice. I hope to have a good grip on that by the time we get to the end of Genesis and see the blessings on the tribes that Jacob gives.

And we'll come back to this at that time. So if it seems a little unsatisfactory, like, well,

why are they on the north, or why are they on the east, bear with me, and hopefully we'll have that puzzled out by the end of our study of Genesis. But there are conclusions that we can draw from what we have seen.

God assigns us places in his plan, and it is significant. It has a meaning. There is a reason why the overcomers are given the rewards that they are given in Revelation 2 and 3. To him that overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, Jesus says, or to partake of the hidden manna, or I will give to him a white stone.

I will give to him a name that is known only to me and to him. I will grant him to walk with me in white. I will grant the right to the tree of life.

And these are privileges that are designed to be a motivation and an encouragement to persist and to endure and to ask and seek and knock and press forward to the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. There is something worthwhile, something that reflects the glory of God, something that has meaning and eternal value in pursuing these things. And there will be distinctions.

There will be distinctions certainly in the millennial kingdom. Jesus says there will be people who are greatest in the kingdom and those who are least in the kingdom. It isn't one for all and all for one in a big democracy in a socialist state.

There will be classes. There will be levels of privilege. Some will have the privilege of the personal presence of Jesus Christ.

And you know who it is that is going to get that, are the people who desire it the most. People who are apathetic and indifferent to understanding the Lord Jesus and his purposes and his obedience and his reflection of the glory and the full deity of the Father in this life are not going to have the privilege of availing themselves of those things in the next. Those of us who by faith and patience inherit the promises will be the ones who value the promise.

It is like, in a very crude simile, it is like the awards that are given in school. You may have seen in high school kids who took their studies seriously, who pounded their way through social studies and history and accounting and some of the less glamorous subjects. At the awards assembly at the end of the school year, they would go up and get the little medallion.

I don't know what you are supposed to do with those. I don't think anybody ever found a good use for them. But they would give you a little bronze thing or they would give you a little certificate.

You were the best student in social studies. You were the best student in American history. Well, a lot of kids couldn't care less about that particular achievement.

Part of it might have been sour grapes. Well, they weren't anywhere near in contention for it, so they devalued it anyway and didn't care. But some people just didn't like it.

It had no significance. It had no meaning. Well, you could hand somebody a certificate and they would say, well, what's this good for? What am I supposed to do with this? Kids in my class, I went to a country high school and there were a lot of people in 4-H.

They would raise a bull and take it down to the county fair and get a ribbon. I had no interest in raising a cow and taking it to the fair and getting a ribbon. So I thought, well, that's fine for them, but that's not an area that interests me.

Maybe you'd go visit their house and see their little 4-H ribbon or their county fair third place best bull thing or whatever. I thought, well, it didn't impress me. It didn't do anything for me.

It didn't make me want to have one because I didn't care anything about being in 4-H. Well, the rewards for the overcomers will be meaningful because of the giver. I have, in fact, I just used a bread tie to affix something to my lamp up in my study.

I have a thing made out of colored pipe cleaner looking things. Well, anybody else in the world, with one or two possible exceptions, that saw that would think, well, what is that and assign it no value. It means something to me because it's something my daughter made and she made it for me and it contains a little message.

It's meaningful to me because of who gave it to me and I know what she was thinking when she made it. So it has value. A white rock, there are thousands of them on the beach, but if the Lord Jesus Christ gives you a white rock, it's going to have as much significance to you as you assign to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A new name, a nickname. People complain that a lot of times you get a nickname you don't really care for in high school or in college or somewhere in life. If the Lord Jesus Christ gives you what amounts to a nickname, a name that's just used.

There are married couples that give each other little names. It's probably embarrassing. Some of those names I understand.

We don't really mess around with nicknames, but I understand there are people who call each other pooky or weird names. It's meaningful within the context of that relationship. A husband who has a pet name for his wife or vice versa, it's meaningful.

It's a reflection and probably recalls some early episode in their courtship or in their marriage. It's meaningful because the relationship is meaningful. When Jesus Christ gives us a new name, it's going to be meaningful because of the relationship.

This is something, if we value the Lord God, if we value the Lord Jesus Christ, these

things are something that will change our priorities and change our daily life much more powerfully than someone saying, you ought to be more loving, you ought to be more patient, you ought to be more kind, you ought to be more long-suffering. To realize that this is an opportunity to reflect the glory of God, the opportunity to please Him, to be useful to Him, to be a part on the positive side of accomplishing His purpose. The way these tribes were that were faithful, that stuck with the worship of God when their brothers were going into abominable practices.

God appreciates that and God rewards it. That's one of the main principles when you see the way these tribes are organized, the way they have a position of honor or not so much a position of honor. You also see wonderful exceptions where someone may come from a tribe that had its beginnings with a concubine and yet they become a notable individual.

You see this in the period of the judges and later in the history of Israel. We want to review that and see that in each period of the history of Israel, God deals with them by tribes and their status, their standing, means something. It means that God is paying attention.

God knows what's going on in Dan. God knows what's going on in Judah. God knows the level of response they had when the anointed king designated by God comes to Hebron.

How enthusiastic are they? How many men do they bring? What is their attitude toward making David king over all Israel? That's listed out tribe by tribe. The census at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings and at the end of the second generation at the end of the wilderness wanderings in Numbers chapter 1 and in Numbers chapter 26 I think it is or toward the end of Numbers chapter 19 and following along in there. The first set of census taking at the beginning, that's the first generation.

The second census at the end of Numbers, that's the second generation. Did that tribe flourish or did they dwindle? God is paying attention and God will judge. We have a great opportunity and we have a great responsibility.

If we don't bring anything else out of this extended digression into the history of the tribes, that's one thing we ought to remember. Anytime you think about the twelve tribes, think about the fact that there are different kinds of soil. There are different levels of faithfulness among servants who have been given talents.

There are 30-fold, 60-fold and 100-fold fields. What do we want to be? What's our goal in living out this life and redeeming the time? This should be an encouragement to us to go for the gusto. It reminds me of that beer commercial.

You only go around once in life so why not grab for the gusto? Do we really want to look back on this life with regret in the eternal future or look back and realize that to the

extent that we were able, we pursued the plan of God. We availed ourselves of the grace of God at every opportunity. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll continue our study of the life of Jacob in Genesis chapter 30.