

The Issachar Ministry



"Issachar, who understood the times"
1 Chronicles 12:32

The Issachar Ministry: an appreciation

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June 2006

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The Bible text used in this publication is
The Literal Bible Translation of the Holy Bible by Jay P. Green Snr.

Issachar the Son

The name "Issachar" comes from a Hebrew word transliterated into English as *yissaskar*. Based upon the text of Gen. 30: 14-18 it means "he will bring a reward" (Strong's H3485)*

"And in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went out and found mandrakes in the field. And he brought them to his mother Leah. And Rachel said to Leah, Please give to me from the mandrakes of your son.

And she said to her, *is your taking my husband a little thing?* Will you also take my son's mandrakes? And Rachel said, So he shall be with you tonight, for your son's mandrakes.

And Jacob came in from the field at evening. And Leah went out to meet him. And she said, You must come in to me, for hiring I have hired you with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her during that night.

And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore a fifth son to Jacob.

And Leah said, God has given my hire; I gave my slave-girl to my husband. And she called his name Issachar."

We can see a Biblical principle at work here. Whatever the circumstances surrounding one's birth usually brings forth the destiny and calling of that person. This principle of course is NOT to be confused with astrology or other occult-like practices!

Nevertheless Issachar was born under quite strange circumstances. He was the product of his father Jacob, being "hired" by Leah, his first wife. You may recall that Jacob had two wives who were also sisters (see Gen. 29: 16-18).

There was much rivalry between these two, with Rachel being Jacob's first choice as his wife. But he had been deceived by his father-in-law Laban into marrying the older sister Leah first (Gen. 29: 18-30), and had to spend seven years "paying" for the right to marry his actual choice who was Rachel.

*This refers to Dr. Strong's famous *Concordance of Bible Words* containing both Hebrew and Greek words. The letter H signifies a Hebrew word, and G is for a Greek word. The number following each letter designates the root meaning of that word in the respective original language. All of Strong's words are linked to at least one "root" word on which are based all other words. The root words from which "Issachar" derives are H5375 (*nasa*) and H7939 (*sakar*).

When married, Leah bore Jacob four sons whilst Rachel had not yet conceived. So although Leah had Jacob's children, barren Rachel had his love. To be childless in that ancient world was a great disgrace, and Rachel bore the pain of that mockery every day from her sister Leah, even though it seems by this time Leah had stopped bearing other children. Whether Leah had stopped conceiving or just didn't have an opportunity to sleep with Jacob is conjecture, but probably the latter was the case.

Reuben, one of Leah's sons, who would've been four years old at the time, was returning to his mother with some mandrakes he had picked. Mandrakes were also known as "love-apples" in the ancient world because they were considered to be an aphrodisiac for the male, and a fruit that would increase fertility in the female.

When Rachel saw her nephew coming with the fruit she demanded them. Perhaps seeing the "love-apples" she saw it as a sign, and wanted them so she might conceive a child from Jacob. In taking the love-apples she was accused by Leah of both taking the fruit as well as Jacob's heart.

Such was Rachel's desire to have the mandrakes that she struck a bargain with her sister: "I keep the fruit, and you can have Jacob for the night". As desperate as she was to have children, Rachel actually initiates this bargain.

So now Rachel has the aphrodisiac but no husband in bed that night! And she is willing to hold onto the fruit for another night, and lets Jacob go to her sister. Perhaps she thought Leah might not conceive, and she, Rachel, would have an outcome after all when Jacob returned to her!

Whatever the scenario, it was a very strange mix-up and Issachar was born as the result. You can see that his conception came about through the tug-of-war between the sisters Leah and Rachel. And it is here that Issachar's destiny is being brought forth: he, and his tribal descendants after him, will forever be fought over. They will however possess something very special - we shall more of this in later chapters.

Back to Leah now: when she conceives from Jacob and Issachar is born, note what the chronicler of this book tells us:

"And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore a fifth son to Jacob."

Gen. 30: 17

The writer makes it patently clear that it was not the natural fruit of "love-apples" that brought about Issachar's conception, but the Lord who "listened to Leah". The chronicler was declaring that Issachar was born from God as

author of life, and it was by Him that Leah had received her fruitfulness, not the natural fruit of the "love-apples".

Leah saw in the birth of her fifth son a divine reward and his name aptly reflects this:

"And Leah said, God has given my hire; I gave my slave-girl to my husband. And she called his name Issachar."

Gen. 30:18

Near his moment of death, Jacob prophesies over his sons, and speaks of Issachar having to bear a double-burden:

"Issachar *is* a strong ass, crouching between the sheepfolds. And he saw a resting place that *it was* good, and that the land was pleasant. And he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a tribute slave."

Gen. 49: 14-15

This word was quite significant when we take into account the rivalry between the two sisters. Issachar the son, must have been a sore point between his mother Leah, and his aunt Rachel, all the rest of his days. Later the descendants of Issachar (the tribe named after him) would also have a prophetic word spoken over them by Moses (Deut. 33: 19).*

Some commentators have seen the role of these two women as the role played by the Gentiles and Israel.

"Rachel was first loved on the earth, but not possessed; but Leah the fruitful mother of children. Rachel had children also afterwards on the earth. Rachel, as representing the Jews, is the mother of Joseph, and later of Benjamin, that is, of a suffering Christ glorified among the Gentiles, while rejected of Israel; and of a reigning Christ, the son of his mother's sorrow, but of his father's right hand."

John Nelson Darby's commentary

Whether this is strictly correct or not, it does give us something to reflect upon.

*See page 11 for further insights.

Issachar in the spiritual

An important prophetic principle to grasp is that **whatever is in the natural, has its spiritual counterpart**. This is particular so in regard to the Tribes of Israel. There are "spiritual tribes" today which amazingly still carry the same characteristics within them as did their forebears, the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve tribes.

For instance, those who belonged to the natural tribe of Issachar have their counterpart in the spiritual tribe of Issachar. In the natural the symbol of Issachar, which is a donkey, is regarded as a strong animal of burden; in the spiritual, Issacharites tend to have great inner strength, even if their natural appearance is otherwise.

This is a direct working out of the principle stated above. Issacharites were born to bear spiritual, and sometimes natural and emotional, burdens. Where another person would buckle under the pressure, an Issacharite still manages, by grace and his calling, to carry on. Believe me, I know this only too well!

Clearly the pivotal text about Issachar is found in 1 Chronicles 12: 32:

"And of the sons of Issachar, having understanding of the times, to know what Israel should do."

This was the text that jumped off the page at me way back in 1984. It was then that the "Issachar Ministry" was birthed in me spiritually.

Issacharites tend to be men and women of understanding; they want to know what's going on in the world - for this reason they devour news items on the TV, radio and papers. They tend to be researchers, love reading, and they want to know things, especially spiritual issues! They are insightful about many different things, though not necessarily masters of many! Nevertheless they do have a good range of general knowledge and a whole bag-full of spiritual knowledge, which is where they excel.

Bear in mind that this insightfulness is NOT a natural gift; it's something from the Father. Issacharites know this only too well and will testify that their insight is certainly not because they have a good academic mind (even if they do happen to be bright!).

But you can't always get them to reveal what they know, as they're often still digesting something they began to first understand some years back. They will digest the knowledge,

rummage through it, test it against Scripture, test it again, and then file it away. They have learnt not to cast their pearls before swine, and have come to the point where they discern who's really thirsting for the deeper things of the Lord - and who's just "interested".

Even when they do bring it out much later, they're likely to test it all over again. They want to be certain, and they are usually good discerners of spiritual issues.

Do they make mistakes? Of course they do, but they do check and double check, and probably put things through a Biblical sieve more so than many other believers. For this reason they are usually teachers of the Word, and love to impart what they have thoroughly digested and found to be true.

Those who belong to the spiritual tribe of Issachar gradually learn not to sow their seed, finance or energy into anything that is fleshy. They see knowledge, finance and time as being very precious, and tend to look for ministries to support that they instinctively know are about God's business and not man's.

Issacharites shun the limelight and shy away from promoting themselves on the stage of human recognition, but will seek out those with a truly teachable spirit. For this reason you don't find too many Issacharites on the religious merry-go-round of "churchy" conferences.

This doesn't mean they keep to themselves, but they are discerning where they should go, and to whom, and for what purpose. Once recognised however, they will give their all and can be very generous with their time.

Those who belong to the spiritual tribe of Issachar know the timing of things. However they need others around them who can also discern in this area, as an Issacharite will tend to want to go through the "season" step-by-step.

For example, my wife Colleen is prophetic. When the Lord shows her something she sees the end-of-the-matter. I however, don't see it quite that way, but I do accept what she gets. My calling causes me to work the issue through step-by-step with understanding, whereas Colleen, having once seen the end of the issue, relaxes and stands back, knowing the Lord will bring to pass what He's already shown her in the Spirit.

For this reason we've learnt to be patient with one another. Colleen sees what's going to happen; I believe her but must work it through giving it time to manifest. Colleen however doesn't give time to the issue as she knows the outcome already. Certainly she prays about it, but beyond that, she stands back and lets God work.

But my calling as an Issacharite causes me to work it through with wisdom and understanding. I understand that there are certain steps that must be walked through before the end of the matter arrives. By going through this process I'm actually enriched by the process as it gives me more insight!

I share this only to show how an Issacharite hungers for deeper understanding and desires knowledge of the ways of God more and more. It's both delightful and yet frustrating at the same time. Delightful because of the deeper understanding I get about the ways of the Lord; frustrating because I also realise there's so much more to understand and appreciate - and one life time isn't at all sufficient. So, thank the Lord for eternity!

Issachar as the Tribe

Traditionally, the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun were considered to have a symbiotic relationship, whereby Issachar would devote its time to the study and teaching, and Zebulun would financially support Issachar. In exchange, Zebulun would receive a share in the spiritual reward of Issachar's learning and insight.

In modern times, although the identity of Issachar and Zebulun are unknown, these terms are still used by those engaged in such a partnership. Thus you will often find an Issacharite has someone from the spiritual tribe of Zebulun as a close friend and ally. As we've already seen, the name of Issachar means "reward" or "to hire for payment" and was engraved upon the gemstone on the High Priest's breastplate. This particular gemstone means "to seek". This tribe willingly accepted what was before them and with what they had. The children of Issachar were mighty men in David's army and because of their ability to understand the times, all the brethren heeded their command.

Scripture tells us that the tribe was allotted territory which included the Valley of Jezreel, controlled by the fortified city of Megiddo. Many battles took place in the Valley of Jezreel. The mountain of Megiddo, or "Har-Megiddo" in Hebrew, has come down into English as "Armageddon"

The tribal numbers accredited to Issachar in Scripture are:

54,400 (Num 1: 29)

64,300 (Num 26: 25)

45,600 (1 Chron. 7: 1ff).

The territory they occupied was the fourth lot specified in Josh. 19: 17ff, immediately north of the half-tribe of Manasseh, west of the Jordan, and south of Zebulun and Naphtali. It probably extended from the River Jordan on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. It embraced sixteen cities and included the fertile plain of Esdraelon.

The first important event in which the tribe of Issachar figures is the battle of Deborah and Barak with Sisera in the plain of Esdraelon. In Judges 5: 15 it reads:

"And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; as was Issachar, so was Barak."

It may be, though it is by no means certain, that both Deborah and Barak belonged to Issachar, in whose territory the battle was fought and won.

The judge Tola, son of Puah, son of Dodo, was also a man of Issachar (Jdgs 10: 1). Jehoshaphat, son of Paruah (of Issachar) was one of Solomon's commissary officials (1 Kgs 4: 17). The second dynasty of the Northern Kingdom belonged to Issachar:

"And Baasha, the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar, slew Nadab the son of Jeroboam, and reigned in his stead." (1 Kgs 15: 27ff).

There are no other specific references to any descendants of Issachar who occupied prominent places in Israel's history, but according to the genealogical tables of the chronicler, some further importance is attached to the tribe.

The tribe of Issachar is particularly represented as one which consisted mostly of scholars, to which there is said to be an allusion in 1 Chronicles 12: 32. According to Raba, there was not to be found a Jewish student that was not a descendant either of Levi or of Issachar.

The passage of Jacob's blessing referring to Issachar (Gen 49: 14ff) is interpreted as an allusion to the study of the Law, with which the people of that tribe occupied themselves. The tribe of Issachar is also said to have been most influential in making proselytes.

Although Issachar was the ninth son of Jacob, yet the prince of this tribe was the second to bring the offering for the dedication of the altar (Nmbrs. 7: 18ff), because the tribe was well versed in the Law. They were honoured and revered for their scholarship and understanding of God's Word. The Midrash (a Jewish Bible commentary) finds in the details of the offering, various allusions to the Torah.

The tribe of Issachar advised the other tribes to bring six covered wagons and twelve oxen (Nmbrs 7: 3) on which to load the parts of the Tabernacle. The 200 chiefs of Issachar (1 Chron. 12: 32) were leaders of the Sanhedrin, whose decisions were implicitly accepted by their brethren. The wise men consulted by Ahasuerus were also people of Issachar. This all goes to show both the understanding that Issacharites possessed, and their prestige among the other tribes.

The tribe is represented as having been rich, and its members figure as persons who managed to unite both wealth and learning. It was because they studied the Torah under favourable conditions that they produced only 200 chiefs of the Sanhedrin, while the people of Naphtali for example, who studied the Torah under difficulties, produced 1,000 leaders.

Prophecies about Issachar

There were two prophecies spoken over Issachar. One was by Jacob to his son Issachar, as he did to all twelve sons, just prior to his death.

"Issachar is a strong ass, crouching between the sheepfolds. And he saw a resting place that *it was* good, and that the land was pleasant. And he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a tribute slave."

Gen. 49: 14-15

The other prophecy was spoken by Moses just prior to his death also, but in this case it was to the Tribe of Issachar, who sprang out of the loins of Issachar the son. In this case Moses spoke to Issachar's close ally, Zebulun, as well, linking the two in joint ministry.

"And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, O Zebulun, in your going out, and O Issachar, in your tents; to the mountain they call the peoples; there they shall offer righteous sacrifices for they shall suck the bounty of the seas, and treasures hidden in the sand."

Deut. 33: 18-19

In Jacob's prophecy we see the clear calling on Issachar's life: to bear his own burdens plus those of others. This is interesting when we see that many Issacharites are scholars and teachers of the Word. They bear the double burden of seeking to understand the Word for themselves, and of attempting to impart it to their students. Any teacher, whether secular or spiritual, will readily see this point. True teachers always carry within themselves the burden of duty to understand as much as they can personally, coupled with the burden of trying to pass that knowledge onto others.

For this very reason an Issacharite is also seeking for rest-time and a pleasant place to lay down. The double burden weighs heavily upon him and he longs for rest, but he always knows in the background there's another burden waiting to be picked up.

Even though in the natural the son of Jacob was conceived through being bought (Gen. 30: 14-18) he himself will not be bought. He refuses to be bought with either gold or accolades. Money and fame cannot buy his knowledge, loyalty or ministry - he is NOT FOR SALE this time!

This is one reason why the religious church hates the Issacharites; they cannot be bought at any price. They would rather live in poverty and seclusion rather than compromise their identity in God.

Moses' prophecy over the tribe is quite remarkable when taken into deep consideration. Here we find Zebulun and Issachar linked; the former rejoices in going out, the latter by staying at home.

Now this doesn't necessarily mean that only those who belong to the spiritual tribe of Zebulun "go out" and that Issacharites are "stay-at-home" types. It has more to do with calling than anything. Those who belong to the spiritual tribe of Zebulun find it easier to get on and get out doing business, because they are often entrepreneurs at heart. They are good at making wealth and dealing it out, hence the Jewish tradition that says they are to support their spiritual bother Issachar, while he "stays at home" and studies the things of God.

The Issacharite would prefer to be in the Word, delving into its treasures, writing about it, preparing a new teaching, etc. But when he knows the Spirit is urging him to go out, he's ready. Once out there on the road, teaching and sharing about the treasures he's found in the Word, he's totally at home, content and delighted that others want to know as well. He will not be found at the big conferences, but in the secluded villages of Asia or the small homes of some city suburb; generally unnoticed, not recognised or acclaimed, but totally happy in his lot.

The prophecy goes on to say that together Zebulun and Issachar "shall call people unto the mountain". This means they complement one another very well, and are engaged in the same business of drawing others to the mountain of the Lord, that is, to His presence and purposes.

The prophecy goes on to say that "they shall suck the bounty of the seas, and treasures hidden in the sand." This refers to the harvest that Zebulun and Issachar will jointly bring in. "Seas" in Scripture usually refers to the nations, to the people of the world. These two tribes will bring in a harvest from the lands of the earth, not of wealth or produce, but of souls.

This will not occur through what we popularly call "witnessing" or "evangelism", rather it shall come through the opening up of the Word in truth. Issachar in particular will bring understanding and insight of the Word of God through the wise knowledge he has stored up within himself over the years. The unraveling of truths and the disclosing of God's ways by Issachar will reap a mighty harvest of those who want more than the popular teaching that marks today's church meetings.

Often the treasures hidden in the sands cannot be easily found; they require diligence, a keenness of eye, and a stick-ability of purpose to bring them forth. Today, those who belong to the spiritual tribe of Issachar, still carry within them these two prophecies of Jacob and Moses.

The Issacharite will bear the burden of teaching and impartation of truth, and he will stay at home studying the Word for all its worth. He will then go out and reap a harvest, not by evangelising, but by deep insightful teaching. He will be keen to suck the bounty and dig for treasures. He is of Issachar and it's in his spiritual DNA to do this - he can do none other!

The Banners of the Twelve Tribes

Neither the Mosaic law, nor the Old Testament in general, gives us any idea as to the form or character of the tribal banner of Issachar. However, according to rabbinical tradition, the banner of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man (or of a man's head), that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described in Ezekiel's vision were represented on these four banners.

Jewish tradition says the four banners (or "standards") under which Israel encamped in the wilderness (to the east, Judah; to the north, Dan; to the west, Ephraim; to the south, Reuben) were respectively a lion, an eagle, an ox, and a man, while in the midst was the tabernacle containing the Shekinah symbol of the Divine Presence.

The Talmud saw in these four creatures the four primary forms of life in God's creation. It also noted that the twelve tribes of Israel camped under these four banners; some with Reuben (symbolized by a man), others with Dan (symbolized by an eagle), others with Ephraim (symbolized by the calf, or ox), and the rest with Judah (symbolized by a lion).

The Jewish writers tell us that the banner of each tribe took the colour of the stone which represented it on the High Priest's breastplate, and that there was engraved upon each a particular figure - a lion for Judah, a young ox for Ephraim, a man for Reuben, and an eagle for Dan.

No further information is provided about the size, colour or representation on these banners. Jewish tradition, however, does provide a clue to the way in which later generations of Jews viewed the banners. The Aramaic paraphrase of the Torah, called *Targum Jonathan*, and the ancient commentary on Numbers, called *Bemidbar Rabbah*, suggest that each tribe was assigned a colour corresponding to the colour of its respective stone in the High Priest's breastplate. For example, the colour of Dan would be blue because a sapphire is blue. The four banners therefore, were composed of the colours of the three tribes of each triad, making a full complement of twelve.

As we've already seen, convention holds that each of the four banners depicted a living being; the lion, man, ox and eagle. The tradition may well have been influenced by the cherubim in Ezekiel's vision who also had four faces (Ezek. 1: 10; see also Rev. 4: 7f). But it should be emphasized that there's no solid biblical or historical basis for these descriptions of the banners.

Tradition itself however, does provide the most logical suggestion for their descriptions, particularly in the case of Judah and Ephraim (see Gen. 49: 9 and Deut. 33: 17). This holds that the banners contained the very symbols Scripture reveals in association with the four living creatures (Ezek. 1: 10; 10: 14; Rev. 4: 7f).

In opposition to this view, some writers have noted the adverse reaction of the Jews of New Testament times to the images on the Roman military banners. Every tribe had its particular banner, probably with the name of the tribe embroidered with large letters. It isn't at all clear whether or not the Jews would've allowed images on their banners.

To some it seems highly improbable that the figures of animals would've been on banners, as the Jewish writers assert, for when Vitellius wished to march through Judea, the Jewish leaders asked him to march by another route, as the law of the land didn't permit images (such as were on the Roman standards) to be brought into it. Even during the time of Augustus, we know that Roman legionaries would leave their standards in the Judean port city of Caesarea, so that the images on them wouldn't offend the Jewish population.

In response to this proposed difficulty between the two views, the following points may be observed:

1. Jewish writers and rabbinical tradition maintain the banners *did* have images of animals upon them. Of all people least likely to suggest that animal images were upon the banners (due to Exo. 20: 4), it is the *Jews themselves* who give us this tradition.
2. The opposition of the Jews of Josephus' day to the Roman banners may have been due to the *particular images* they contained, not the mere fact that they did contain images.
3. The Israelites were instructed to decorate the tabernacle, and later the temple, with various images, including lions, oxen, and cherubim (Exo. 26: 1; 36: 8 and 35; 1 Kgs. 6: 32; 1 Kgs. 7: 29; 2 Kgs. 16: 17; 2 Chron. 4: 3-4 and 15). If these images were so offensive to the Jews that they dare not have them upon their banners, how is it that cherubim (of which some have four faces) appear in the tabernacle along with lions and oxen in the temple?

If Jewish opposition to unbiblical images upon the Roman standards is seen in light of the biblical symbolism allowed within the tabernacle and temple, the view that their ensigns could not have contained insignia of the four faces is less convincing, especially in the light of Jewish tradition itself.

As a passing thought, it may well have been possible that Adam and Eve would've seen cherubim when they were driven out of Eden (Gen. 3: 24). Perhaps their knowledge of the faces of these incredible angelic beings, though not recorded in Scripture until Ezekiel's time, was preserved by tradition handed down from Adam. Just a thought!

The historian Jerome Prado provides additional background correlating the images with the camps. In his commentary on Ezekiel he gives the following minute description according to rabbinical tradition:

"The different leaders of the tribes had their own standards, with the crests of their ancestors depicted upon them. On the east, above the tent of Naasson the first-born of Judah, there shone a standard of a green colour, this colour having been adopted by him because it was in a green stone, viz., an emerald, that the name of his forefather Judah was engraved on the breastplate of the high priest (Exo. 25:15ff.), and on this standard there was depicted a lion, the crest and hieroglyphic of his ancestor Judah, whom Jacob had compared to a lion, saying, 'Judah is a lion's whelp.'

Towards the south, above the tent of Elisur the son of Reuben, there floated a red standard, having the colour of the sardus, on which the name of his father, viz., Reuben, was engraved upon the breastplate of the high priest. The symbol depicted upon this standard was a human head, because Reuben was the first-born, and head of the family. On the west, above the tent of Elishamah the son of Ephraim, there was a golden flag, on which the head of a calf was depicted, because it was through the vision of the calves or oxen that his ancestor Joseph had predicted and provided for the famine in Egypt (Gen. chpt. 41); and hence Moses, when blessing the tribe of Joseph, i.e., Ephraim (Deut. 33:17), said, 'his glory is that of the first-born of a bull.' The golden splendour of the standard of Ephraim resembled that of the chrysolite, in which the name of Ephraim was engraved upon the breastplate. Towards the north, above the tent of Ahiezer the son of Dan, there floated a motley standard of white and red, like the jaspis (or, as some say, a carbuncle), in which the name of Dan was engraved upon the breastplate. The crest upon this was an eagle, the great doe to serpents, which had been chosen by the leader in the place of a serpent, because his forefather Jacob had compared Dan to a serpent, saying, 'Dan is a serpent in the way, an adder (*cerastes*, a horned snake) in the path;' but Ahiezer substituted the eagle, the destroyer of serpents as he shrank from carrying an adder upon his flag."

In relation to the eagle being associated with the tribe of Dan, it should be noted that *Dan* means *judge* (Gen. 30: 6; 49: 16) and the symbolism of the eagle is often connected with judgment (Deut. 28: 49; Job 9: 26; Prov. 30: 17; Jer. 4: 13; 48: 40; 49: 22; Lam. 4: 19; Ezek. 17: 3; Hos. 8: 1; Hab. 1:8; Mt. 24: 28; Lk. 17: 37).

Issachar's symbol

The widely accepted symbol of the tribe is a donkey, or ass. This comes from Jacob's words over his son, Issachar, as recorded in Genesis 49: 14-15.

"Issachar *is* a strong ass, crouching between the sheepfolds. And he saw a resting place that *it* was good, and that the land was pleasant. And he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a tribute slave."

Those who belonged to the natural tribe of Issachar have their counterpart today in the spiritual tribe of Issachar. In the natural the donkey is a strong animal of burden; in the spiritual, Issacharites tend to have great inner strength, even though for some their natural appearance might be otherwise.

This inner strength is part of the characteristic of the spiritual tribe of Issachar and enables them to bear burdens well.

I must point out that in the Middle East, whilst a donkey is certainly regarded as a beast of burden, it does NOT have the image of being stupid, as it's often portrayed in the West.

Rather donkeys, while certainly being stubborn, are regarded as being wise in the East. In the West we would tend to say that the animal symbol for wisdom would be an owl. But we need to remember that we should look through Middle Eastern eyes when reading into Scripture what symbols mean, and not rely on Western cultural views.

Jacob's prophecy over his son Issachar included the words "...a strong ass crouching between two burdens" (Gen. 49: 14). The word "crouching" means "to lay down, to get low." There is a connotation here in regard to an Issacharite bending in humility to receive the appointed burden he is to bear.

On Issachar's banner there was probably the image of a donkey bearing two burdens, either standing, or more likely in a crouching position. This is important to consider, as an Issacharite needs to be vigilant in remaining humble. As soon as an Issacharite exalts himself, or even allows others to lift him up, he's in danger of becoming proud. This sounds the death knell for him. He must remain humble, and even out of sight, which is what the crouching alludes to.

In losing his humility and lowly position, he also loses something of his identity. It is this especially that an Issacharite must guard against. His strength actually lies partly in being hidden away, therefore anything that attacks this will tend to bring him down. It isn't reversible of course, but it will take him off track if he's not alert and discerning.

This is why Issachar needs spiritual understanding, so that he can be alert and insightful about the circumstances of life. He's then able to apply that knowledge in a realistic and practical way. This is what true wisdom is all about: the application of learnt spiritual truths.



Issachar's gemstone

Depending on what translation of Scripture you read, Issachar either had the Topaz or the Amethyst as its gemstone on the High Priest's breastplate. Here I have opted for the topaz, based on the King James version, and that used in this booklet, the "Literal Version of the Bible" (by Jay P. Green Snr.)



The second stone on the High Priest's breastplate was the TOPAZ which was the gemstone designated for Issachar according to Exodus 28.17-21.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD : The Hebrew word is "Pitedah" which simply means "the yellow one". Legend says that shipwrecked sailors in the Red Sea were stranded on an island (known as St. John's Isle) and found quantities of the stone, and named both the island and the stone "Topazos" (which in Greek means "sought and found").

THE TOPAZ STONE IN THE NATURAL : It has a hardness factor of 8 (out of a possible 10), and can weigh up to 100 kilograms, and though it's known mostly as a yellow stone, it can vary from white to grey, and even through to green or pink.

It belongs to the silicate group of minerals, and crystal-like. Today the rarest and most valuable colour is the golden-yellow.

THE STONE'S PROPHETIC MEANING : According to legend and tradition it's a gem that's supposed to bring beauty, wisdom and long life.

We find the stone mentioned in Job 28: 19-20 and is there likened to "wisdom". One of the truths about Issachar is that the tribe was renowned for its wisdom and understanding (see 1 Chronicles 12:32).

Just as wisdom needs to be sought for, and when found, serves as one of the greatest rewards (Proverbs 4: 5-9), so it is fitting to be Issachar's gemstone because one of the meanings of his name is "reward".

It's a stone that speaks of spiritual balance and wisdom. This is interesting because one of the traditional symbols for Issachar is a donkey bearing (or balancing) two burdens, and Issachar the tribe was particularly known for its bearing of wisdom.

ITS PLACE IN THE NEW JERUSALEM : On the foundation stone of the Heavenly City as recorded in Revelation 21: 18-20, the topaz features as the ninth stone, which also happens to be the same as Issachar's birth position, being the ninth child of Jacob.

OTHER INSIGHTS : In Jewish thought the month associated with the tribe of Issachar is Iyar (our April to May). It happens to be the second month of the Sacred Calendar of the Jews, just as Issachar is the second tribe represented on the breastplate.

Iyar is the month linked to "introspection for the sake of self improvement". It's appropriate then that Issachar's gemstone is topaz meaning "sought and found". Iyar is also called Ziv in Scripture, its meaning being "radiance".

The Hebrew letter associated with the month of Iyar is Vav being a letter linked directly to the account of creation : "And God said let there be light". So it's a letter associated with "light" hence the alternate name of the month Ziv meaning "radiance".

The meaning of the letter Vav is "connection". Appropriately the two characteristics of Issachar is "Balance and Wisdom". There needs to be a connection between these two in order for wisdom to be effective.

And just as Topaz means "sought and found" so there needs to be a connection between our "seeking" and "finding". Many seek the deeper things of God but never persevere to the "finding" stage.

In all things pertaining to Issachar there needs to be a "connection".



The Issachar Anointing

"The Issachar Anointing" is a term coined by some prophetic ministries. It usually refers to the ability to discern and understand prophetic times and seasons (see 1 Chronicles 12: 32 for example).

Over the past 18 years I have also come to see that this particular anointing deals with Wisdom and Maturity. I base this on my own experience as one who "belongs to the spiritual tribe of Issachar", and on what Scripture says about Issachar both as a son of Jacob and a tribe of Israel.

I am convinced that wisdom and its accompaniment "discernment", will be needed as we approach the End Times. "Wisdom" is an end-time characteristic. It is the third in the sequence of divine revelation. The first being Knowledge. The second being Understanding. The third being Wisdom.

We can all gain knowledge. But what is required is an understanding of that knowledge. More than that, we need wisdom to apply this knowledge and understanding to daily life.

Wisdom is actually applied spiritual knowledge. It is this that we are particularly called to walk in as mature believers.

This combination of discernment coupled with applied spiritual knowledge (wisdom) is what I call "the Issachar Anointing". The practical outworking of this will mean that as the End Times come closer and closer to fulfilment we will see the Lord release an "anointing" on those who are of a willing heart, to receive increased discernment (and the wisdom that accompanies it) to assist the Last Days church to come to maturity of both soul and spirit.

Nothing is more needed in these days than correct discernment and maturity. The maturity we are talking about needs to be both in the spirit and soul realm. This is one of the major issues that the church of the 21st century will have to face.

As the End of the Age approaches it will not necessarily be the "anointing" that will carry us through the trials ahead, but the fruit of maturity deposited within us. In fact though many talk of "the anointing" these days, there's a danger we can become so transfixed by wanting the experience that we'll miss the point, and find our souls become weak. We can see this by briefly comparing the lives of two men from the Old Testament period. First there was Samson who had the "anointing" of great physical strength but lacked inner maturity, and was therefore able to give vent to his anger, lust, etc.

Now compare him with Joseph, and we see that Joseph had an anointing but was also instructed by the Spirit in maturity, and hence became a ruler and preserver of his people Israel.

In this brief comparison we have an indication that the outward appearance of one's "calling" or "ministry" is not so as important as the inner maturity that should guide the outward work.

Now let's note this text which is commonly referred to by many ministries as if it applies to the anointing of the Holy Spirit present in a meeting, or even upon someone's life.

"And it shall be in that day, his burden shall turn away from on your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing."

Isaiah 10: 27

The text is generally used to say that where there's some kind of bondage, problem or "yoke" over a person's life, the presence of the Holy Spirit's anointing will break it off the person and set them free. However it doesn't refer to that kind of "anointing" at all, and is translated as "fat" or "grease" in the original Hebrew^③. In Biblical typology "fat" refers to the energy that lies within our inward parts^④.

So prophetically speaking this refers to the "inner fat" of the maturity of the inner man (=spirit, or "soul" in the OT). So this actually means that the yoke is destroyed by our inner maturity not by any special "anointing", even though the latter may be a blessing to us in many ways. Makes you think!

Others may have their own definition, but as one who has been "in this ministry" for nearly 20 years I can safely say from a Biblical perspective that wisdom and discernment (beyond that which the church currently regards as such) is "the Issachar Anointing".



③ Strong's number H8081

④ See for example Psa 17: 10 and Psa 92: 14 and Psa 119: 70. For further insights regarding Biblical Typology and the meanings of symbols in Scripture, see my booklet of the same title which has extensive examples.

Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom

TRUTHS FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs (in Hebrew it's called *The Proverbs of Solomon*) is a book of truths of a King. It's representative of the truths found by one who was a king by divine decree. Because we too are called to reign with Christ, we should take notice of the many principles and truths that are contained in that book.

Solomon instructs us in his writings to understand the three fold sequence of having knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Knowledge is the *acquisition* of facts.

Understanding is the *interpreting* of the facts.

Wisdom is the *application* of these facts.

We can have much knowledge, but unless we apply it, we will never be wise!

"A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel."

Prov. 1: 5

I believe that the Book of Proverbs is an End Time book for the final age of the Church. Why? Because it instructs us to seek for wisdom! "Wisdom" is an End Time characteristic of the Last Days Church.

In these End Times we will need to speak great truths, preach solid doctrine, prophesy extraordinary words, and teach deep revelations. All these require the use of words. How can we be pure in this calling unless we are controlling our tongues? So all of these need to be tempered and delivered with wisdom!



"Knowledge" in the Greek language of the New Testament has three meanings that are important for us to consider.

This is first found in the Book of Proverbs.

"To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding."

Prov. 1: 2

This threefold sequence of Knowing, Perceiving and Receiving must be understood and applied by the Church if it's going to come into "full Sonship", into maturity.



The three Greek words found in the New Testament, for "know" and "knowledge" are as follows:

The first word is **GNOSIS**.

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

2 Pet. 3: 18

According to Strongs Dictionary (G1108) the word **gnosis** means, "knowing the act". By implication it means "knowledge" or science. Its more accurate meaning is "to know by experience." See also John 8: 22 and 17: 3

So we see that there is a type of knowledge that can only been "known" through "knowing the act" or by experiencing what we know. This is a profound concept and should really challenge our superficial concepts about "knowing" something!



The second word is **EPIGINOSKO**.

"Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him, and He vanished from their sight."

Luke 24: 31

According to Strongs Dictionary (G1921) the word epiginosko means "to know upon some mark, to recognise, to become fully acquainted with, to acknowledge; to have knowledge, to take knowledge, to perceive."

Its more accurate meaning is to know "fully" through revealed knowledge.

So in this type of knowledge we discover there is an understanding that passes beyond knowing something just from experience.

Here we are told that we can know a truth fully by becoming intimately acquainted with it, just as the disciples at Emmaus did with the risen Jesus - even though it was only momentarily.



The third word is EIDO.

"None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother saying, "Know the LORD" for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

Heb. 8: 11

According to Strongs (G1492) the verb **eido** means (either literally or figuratively) "to see". By implication the word means "to know; be aware, known knowledge, look on, be sure, behold, consider, perceive, see, tell, understand."

The more accurate meaning is "**to know absolutely**." What a truth! We can actually "know" knowledge to such a degree that we know it absolutely!

So we see that there are three important stages in the development of "knowledge". We should be diligent in applying these truths and insights so that we don't simply remain at a very superficial level of understanding.



So, first we come to **know by experience**. Most people stop at this point in their Christian growth.

Then as we mature we come **to know more fully** by revealed knowledge.

Finally we come **to know absolutely**. To "know knowledge" as it were!

I have laboured this point about the degrees of knowledge because it relates to the calling and anointing of those who possess an Issachar-spirit, as it were. It also raises the principal that as preachers and teachers we should never speak out what we have not yet entered into ourselves. (See Proverbs 5: 15).

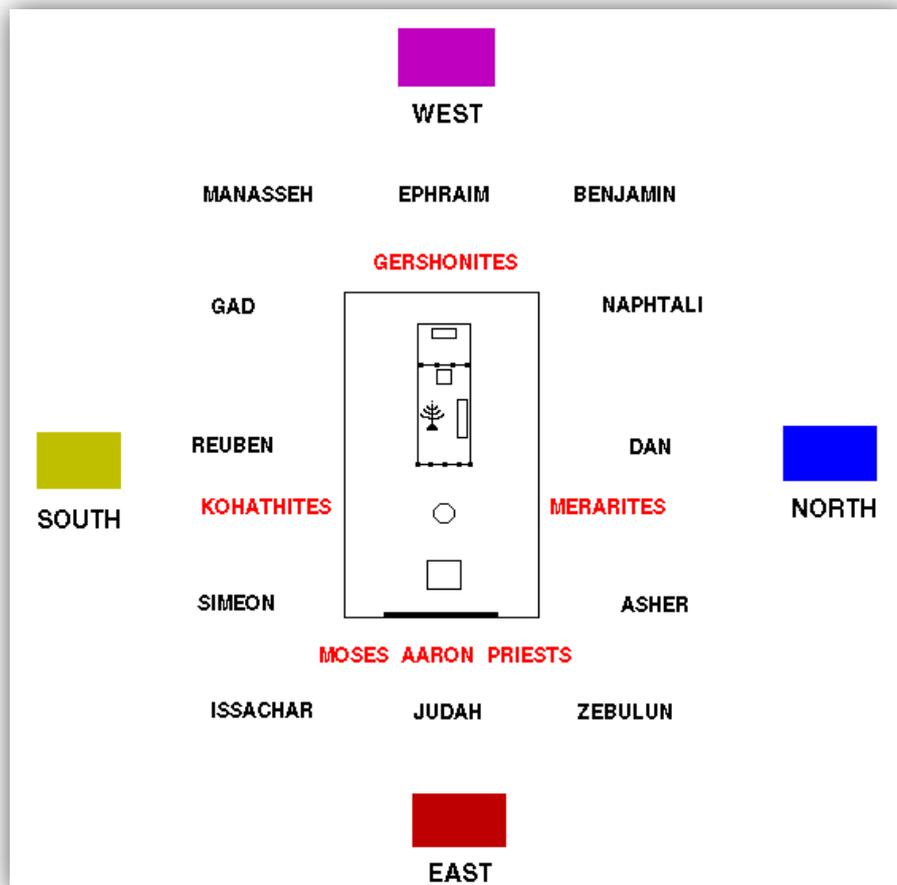
How many times have you sat under some teaching that might've been sound, helpful and even relevant, yet somehow lacked power? This kind of teaching comes when the preacher has come across some knowledge of truth in a book or at a conference, but hasn't yet had a personal encounter with that truth.

In his zeal to share the new found revelation it's presented as important and even current - but in fact the preacher himself has never experienced it for himself. So it becomes "stale water" and does not accomplish very much except perhaps to impart information to us.

Our soul and mind benefits, but not our spirit man. The calling that rests upon an Issacharite, is to acquire the relevant spiritual knowledge, to digest it well, and in due time to present it as fully as possible.



Encampment of the Twelve Tribes



Overview of information about Issachar

Issachar/Yissachar (Hebrew: יִשָּׂכָר; Modern *Yissaḥar* Tiberian *Yiśśākār*; meaning "Reward; recompense") according to the Book of Genesis, was a son of Jacob and Leah (the fifth son of Leah, and ninth son of Jacob), and the founder of the Tribe of Issachar.

The text of the Torah gives two different etymologies for the name of *Issachar*, which textual scholars attribute to different sources - one to the Yahwist and the other to the Elohist; the first being that it derives from *ish sakar*, meaning *man of hire*, in reference to Leah's hire of Jacob's sexual favours for the price of some mandrakes; the second being that it derives from *yesh sakar*, meaning *there is a reward*, in reference to Leah's opinion that the birth of Issachar was a divine reward for giving her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob as a concubine.

In the Biblical account, Leah's status as the first wife of Jacob, is regarded by biblical scholars as indicating that the authors saw the tribe of Issachar as being one of the original Israelite groups.

In classical rabbinical literature, it is stated that Issachar was born on the fourth of Ab, and lived 122 years. According to the midrashic Book of Jasher, Issachar married *Aridah*, the younger daughter of Jobab, a son of Joktan; the Torah states that Issachar had four sons, who were born in Canaan and migrated with him to Egypt, with their descendants remaining there until the Exodus.

The midrashic *Book of Jasher* portrays Issachar as somewhat cowardly, or at least pragmatic, with him taking a feeble part in military campaigns involving his brothers, and generally residing in strongly fortified cities, opening the gates whenever challenged.

The Talmud argues that Issachar's description in the Blessing of Jacob - *Issachar is a strong ass lying down between the sheepfolds: and he saw that settled life was good, and the land was pleasant; he put his shoulder to the burden, and became a slave under forced labour* - is a reference to the religious scholarship of the tribe of Issachar. Issacharites are often studious types.

Issachar was the ninth son of Jacob and fifth of Leah; the eponymous ancestor of one of the twelve tribes. Issachar is always mentioned together with Zebulun (Exo 1:3; 1 Chron. 2:1); their territories adjoined, and they are mentioned together in the Blessings of Jacob (Gen 49:13-14) and Moses (Deut 33:18-19).

Issachar is mentioned favourably in the Song of Deborah as one of the tribes taking part in the victorious campaign against the Canaanites which was conducted within its domain – Mount Tabor and the River Kishon. This victory broke the Canaanite domination of the area and Issachar gained an important position among the tribes. The tribe of Issachar produced one of the minor Judges, Tola son of Puah (Judg 10:1). According to one important tradition, during the time of David the tribe gained a reputation for its wise men (1 Chron. 12:32).



In Solomon's arrangement of administrative districts, Issachar's territory formed an independent province (1 Kgs 4:17). According to Joshua 19:17-23, Issachar's tribal territory lay between Mount Gilboa and the hills of Lower Galilee, at the eastern end of the Valley of Jezreel (Mount Tabor was included in this territory).

Sixteen cities and their associated villages were assigned to the tribe. These are mentioned in Josh 19:17 ff, but the only indications of boundaries are Tabor in the North and Jordan in the East. We gather elsewhere that the territory of this tribe marched on the North with Zebulun and Naphtali (19:11,33); on the West with Manasseh and possibly Asher (17:10); and on the South with Manasseh (17:11). It does not seem to have had any point of contact with the sea.



Baasha, king of Israel, also came from Issachar (1 Kgs 15:27), and Jezreel, an Israelite royal residence, was situated in its territory (1 Kgs 18:45). The tribe is mentioned once more, when it went to Jerusalem to take part in the Passover feast, at the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:18). The seventh son of Obed-Edom; a Levite gatekeeper of the Temple during the time of David, was also named Issachar.



At Sinai the tribe numbered 54,000 men of war over 20 years of age (Nmbrs 1:29). At the end of the wanderings the numbers had grown to 64,300 (Nmbrs 26:25). In the days of David, the Chronicler puts the figures at 87,000 (1 Chron 7:5). As we have seen earlier, the place of Issachar in the desert-march was with the standard of the tribe of Judah (along with Zebulun) on the East side of the tabernacle (Nmbrs 2:5), this group forming the van of the host (10:14 f).

The ancient rabbis say that this standard was of 3 colours, sardine, topaz and carbuncle, on which were inscribed the names of the 3 tribes, bearing the figure of a lion's whelp (Targum, pseudo. Jon. on Nmbrs 2:3).

- ◆ The captain of the tribe was Nethanel ben-Zuar (Nmbrs 1:8). Later this place was held by Igal ben-Joseph, the tribal representative among the spies (Nmbrs 13:7).
- ◆ The prince chosen from Issachar to assist in the division of the land was Paltiel ben-Azzan (34:26).
- ◆ The position of Issachar at the ceremony near Shechem was on Mt. Gerizim, "to bless the people" (Deut 27:12).



“Issachar” as found in the Concordance

Gen 30:18; 35:23; 46:13; 49:14.

Exo 1:3.

Num 1:8, 28-29; 2:5; 7:18; 10:15; 13:7; 26:23, 25; 34:26.

Deut 27:12; 33:18.

Josh 17:10-11; 19:17, 23; 21:6, 28.

Judg 5:15; 10:1.

1 Kgs 4:17; 15:27.

1 Chron 2:1; 6:62, 72; 7:1, 5; 12:32,40; 26: 5; 27:18.

2 Chron 30:18.

Ezek 48:25-26,33.

Rev 7:7



Map of the land portions for the 12 tribes



The 12 tribes were assigned territories following the conquests of land under Moses and Joshua. Moses assigned territories to Reuben, Gad and a portion of Manasseh on land east of the Jordan, which they had specially requested (Numbers 32:5).

Joshua later assigned territories to Judah, Ephraim and the rest of Manasseh on land west of the Jordan which they had conquered. The tribe of Manasseh thus came to be divided into two parts by the Jordan, each part referred to as a half-tribe (*chatzi-shevet*) of Manasseh, the part lying east of the Jordan being referred to as the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead.

Following the conquest of the remainder of Canaan, Joshua then assigned territories to Asher, Benjamin, Dan, Issachar, Naphtali, Simeon and Zebulun. The land of Judah was considered too large for that tribe alone and Simeon was assigned a portion within the land of Judah instead of its own territory in the newly conquered land.

Because the Levites and Kohanim (the descendants of Aaron) priests played a special religious role of service at the Tabernacle to the people they were not given their own territories, but were instead assigned cities to live in within the other territories.

Dan was assigned territory lying between Ephraim and Manasseh but was later displaced and subsequently settled in territory to the north of Naphtali.



The Issachar Ministry is an Apostolic and Prophetic
teaching ministry helping to equip the End Time Church
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understood the times