

CHAPTER 5

This chapter gives us some account of the two tribes and a half that were seated on the other side Jordan.

I. Of Reuben (v. 1-10).

II. Of Gad (v. 11-17).

III. Of the half-tribe of Manasseh (v. 23, 24).

IV. Concerning all three acting in conjunction we are told,

1. How they conquered the Hagarites (v. 18-22).
2. How they were, at length, themselves conquered, and made captives, by the king of Assyria, because they had forsaken God (v. 25, 26).

<330>1 CHRONICLES 5:1-17

GENEALOGIES

We have here an extract out of the genealogies,

I. Of the tribe of Reuben, where we have,

1. The reason why this tribe is thus postponed. It is confessed that Reuben was the first-born of Israel, and, upon that account, might challenge the precedence; but he forfeited his birthright by defiling his father's concubine, and was, for that, sentenced *not to excel*, <440>Genesis 49:4. Sin lessens men, thrusts them down from their excellency. Seventh-commandment sins especially leave an indelible stain upon men's names and families, a reproach which time will not wipe away. Reuben's seed, to the last, bear the disgrace of Reuben's sin. Yet, though that tribe was degraded, it was not discarded or disinherited. The sullyng of the honour of an Israelite is not the losing of his happiness. Reuben loses his birthright, yet it does not devolve upon Simeon the next in order; for it was typical, and therefore must attend, not the course of nature, but the choice of grace. The advantages of the birthright were dominion and a double portion. Reuben having forfeited these, it was thought too much that both should be transferred to any one, and therefore they were divided.

(1.) Joseph had the double portion; for two tribes descended from him, Ephraim and Manasseh, each of whom had a child's part (for so Jacob by faith blessed them, ^{<3812>}Hebrews 11:21; ^{<0485>}Genesis 48:15, 22), and each of those tribes was as considerable, and made as good a figure, as any one of the twelve, except Judah. But,

(2.) Judah had the dominion; on him the dying patriarch entailed the sceptre, ^{<0490>}Genesis 49:10 Of him came the chief ruler, David first, and, in the fulness of time, Messiah the Prince, ^{<3382>}Micah 5:2. This honour was secured to Judah, though the birthright was Joseph's; and, having this, he needed not envy Joseph the double portion.

2. The genealogy of the princes of this tribe, the chief family of it (many, no doubt, being omitted), to Beerah, who was head of this clan when the king of Assyria carried them captive, v. 4-6. Perhaps he is mentioned as prince of the Reubenites at that time because he did not do his part to prevent the captivity.

3. The enlargement of the coasts of this tribe. They increasing, and their cattle being multiplied, they crowded out their neighbours the Hagarites, and extended their conquests, though not to the river Euphrates, yet to the wilderness which abutted upon that river, v. 9, 10. Thus God did for his people as he promised them: he cast out the enemy from before them by little and little, and gave them their land as they had occasion for it, ^{<0233>}Exodus 23:30.

II. Of the tribe of Gad. Some great families of that tribe are here named (v. 12), seven that were the children of Abihail, whose pedigree is carried upwards from the son to the father (v. 14, 15), as that 5:4, 5, is brought downwards from father to son. These genealogies were perfected in the days of Jotham king of Judah, but were begun some years before, in the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. What particular reason there was for taking these accounts then does not appear; but it was just before they were carried away captive by the Assyrians, as appears ^{<1259>}2 Kings 15:29, 31. When the judgments of God were ready to break out against them for their wretched degeneracy and apostasy then were they priding themselves in their genealogies, that they were the children of the covenant; as the Jews, in our Saviour's time, who, when they were ripe for ruin, boasted, *We have Abraham to our father*. Or there might be a special providence in it, and a favourable intimation that though they were, for the present, cast

out, they were not cast off for ever. What we design to call for hereafter we keep an inventory of.

~~1358~~ 1 CHRONICLES 5:18-26

THE DEFEAT OF THE HAGARITES

The heads of the half-tribe of Manasseh, that were seated on the other side Jordan, are named here, v. 23, 24. Their lot, at first, was Bashan only; but afterwards they increased so much in wealth and power that they spread far north, even unto Hermon. Two things only are here recorded concerning these tribes on the other side Jordan, in which they were all concerned. They all shared,

I. In a glorious victory over the Hagarites, so the Ishmaelites were now called, to remind them that they were *the sons of the bond-woman*, that was *cast out*. We are not told when this victory was obtained: whether it be the same with that of the Reubenites (which is said 5:10 to be *in the days of Saul*), or whether that success of one of these tribes animated and excited the other two to join with them in another expedition, is not certain. It seems, though in Saul's time the common interests of the kingdom were weak and low, some of the tribes that acted separately did well for themselves. We are here told,

1. What a brave army these frontier-tribes brought into the field against the Hagarites, 44,000 men and upwards, all strong, and brave, and skilful in war, so many effective men, that knew how to manage their weapons, v. 18. How much more considerable might Israel have been than they were in the time of the judges if all the tribes had acted in conjunction!

2. What course they took to engage God for them: They *cried to God*, and *put their trust in him*, v. 20. Now they acted as Israelites indeed.

(1.) As the seed of believing Abraham, they *put their trust in God*. Though they had a powerful army, they relied not on that, but on the divine power. They depended on the commission they had from God to wage war with their neighbours for the enlarging of their coasts, if there was occasion, even with those that were very far off, besides the devoted nations. See

^{<4315>}Deuteronomy 20:15. They depended on God's providence to give them success.

(2.) As the seed of praying Jacob, *they cried unto God*, especially in the battle, when perhaps, at first, they were in danger of being overpowered. See the like done, ^{<4434>}2 Chronicles 13:14. In distress, God expects we should cry to him; he distains upon us for this tribute, this rent. In our spiritual conflicts, we must look up to heaven for strength; and it is the believing prayer that will be the prevailing prayer.

3. We are told what success they had: *God was entreated of them*, though need drove them to him; so ready is he to hear and answer prayer. They were helped against their enemies; for God never yet failed any that trusted in him. And then they routed the enemy's army, though far superior in number to theirs, slew many (v. 22), took 100,000 prisoners, enriched themselves greatly with the spoil, and settled themselves in their country (v. 21, 22), and all this *because the war was of God*, undertaken in his fear and carried on in a dependence upon him. If the battle be the Lord's, there is reason to hope it will be successful. Then we may expect to prosper in any enterprise, and then only, when we take God along with us.

II. They shared, at length, in an inglorious captivity. Had they kept close to God and their duty, they would have continued to enjoy both their ancient lot and their new conquests; but they *transgressed against the God of their fathers*, v. 25. They lay upon the borders, and conversed most with the neighbouring nations, by which means they learned their idolatrous usages and transmitted the infection to the other tribes; for this God had a controversy with them. He was *a husband to them*, and no marvel that his jealousy burnt like fire when they *went a whoring after other gods*. Justly is a bill of divorce given to the adulteress. *God stirred up the spirit of the kings of Assyria*, first one and then another, against them, served his own purposes by the designs of those ambitious monarchs, employed them to chastise these revolvers first, and, when that humbled them not, then wholly to *root them out*, v. 26. These tribes were first placed, and they were first displaced. They would have the best land, not considering that it lay most exposed. But those who are governed more by sense than by reason or faith in their choices may expect to fare accordingly.