

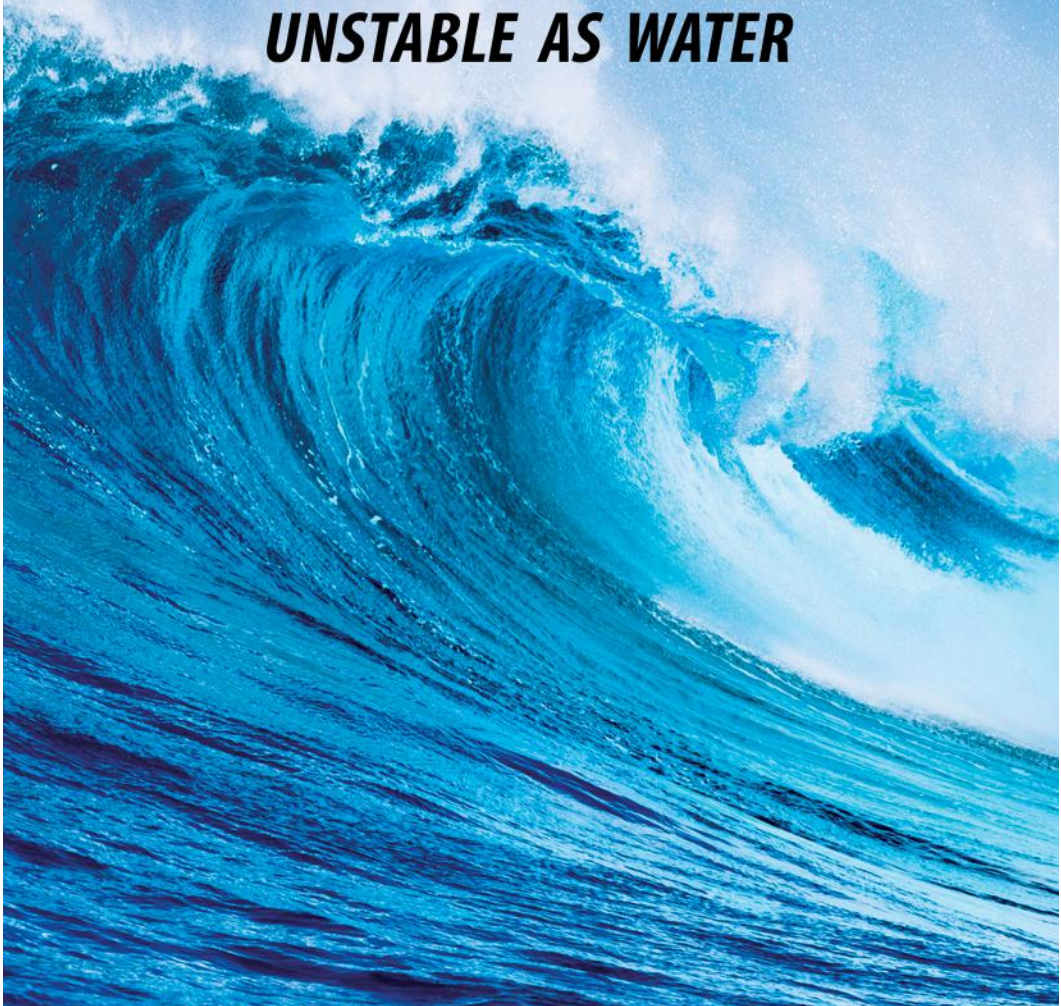


BETHEL AG CHURCH  
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

# ***THE TRIBE OF REUBEN***

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***UNSTABLE AS WATER***



# The Tribe of Reuben

<b>Meaning of Reuben:</b>	"See, a son!"
<b>His Family:</b>	First son of Jacob, born to Leah. His sons are Hanoch, and Pallu, and Hezron, and Carmi ( <b>Genesis 46:9</b> )
<b>Jacob's Blessing upon Reuben:</b>	<p>Jacob called his firstborn "<i>my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power.</i>" But Reuben had relations with Bilhah, Rachel's handmaiden (<b>Genesis 35:22</b>), so Jacob rebuked him saying that he is "unstable as water" and he will "no longer excel".</p> <p><i>"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel, because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch" (Genesis 49:3-4).</i></p>
<b>Moses' Blessing upon Reuben:</b>	<i>"Let Reuben live and not die, nor his people be few" (Deuteronomy 33:6).</i>
<b>Significant people from this tribe:</b>	No judge, prophet, ruler, or prince came from this tribe; nor any person of renown except Dathan and Abiram, who were noted for their rebellion against Moses.

## What disqualified Reuben from inheriting the blessings of his birthright?

Apparently, when Reuben was a young man, he "*went and lay with Bilhah (Rachel's maidservant) his father's wife; and Jacob heard about it*" (**Genesis 35:22**). This despicable act was similar to what the apostle Paul addressed in **1 Corinthians 5:1** as "*sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!*"

Perhaps Reuben's act was spurred by his jealous resentment of Rachel because his father had loved her more than Leah, Reuben's mother. If that was the case, he was taking his anger out on Bilhah by humiliating her when Rachel was no longer around as a protector or witness. Of course, Reuben's deliberate disregard for morality is also significant.



## Why does Jacob say that Reuben is “excellent in his strength but unstable as waters”?

Jacob desired that his eldest son Reuben would be a strong leader and prove himself to be a man who was consistent but he became unstable as water. He had it all in him to be excellent but lost it all by the instability in his character.

Reuben became just like Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. Reuben could not restrain himself morally. He resembles turbulent waters. And Jacob’s blessing became a curse in that he would no longer excel.

Jacob did not disown him as a son, but **1 Chronicles 5:1** tells us that Reuben “*was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph.*” For the remainder of his life, Reuben bore the shame and regret of having lost the prestige and power of being the firstborn son.

So Reuben’s birthright was given to Joseph and Reuben’s leadership role was given to the tribe of Judah. “*For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him comes the chief ruler [prince]; but the Birthright is Joseph’s,*” **1 Chronicles 5:2**.

You can see the tribe of Reuben’s instability throughout the book of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The tribe of Reuben chose not to settle in the Promised Land, and instead asked Moses for some of the territory that they conquered east of the Jordan River. They didn’t cross the river of Jordan but settled in early as a sign of their impatience. Moses agreed to this on the condition that they would assist the other tribes to conquer Canaan (**Numbers 32:28-32**). They did so once, but during the period of Judges they seemed indecisive and did not assist the other tribes in battle (**Judges 5:16**), and the tribe fell into scriptural obscurity.

1. Reuben	R
2. Simeon	S
3. Judah	J
4. Zebulun	Z
5. Issachar	I
6. Dan	D
7. Gad	G
8. Asher	A
9. Naphtali	N
10. Ephraim	E
11. Manasseh	M
12. Benjamin	B



Settlement of all the Tribes of Israel in the Promised Land - except Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Manasseh who did not cross Jordan into the Promised Land.

During the time of Moses, Reuben's descendants (Dathan and Abiram) took part in Korah's revolt against Moses as described in **Numbers 16:1-3**. In spite of Jacob's demotion of Reuben, the Reubenites may have harbored a jealous feeling that they should have had more authority with Reuben being the firstborn son of Jacob.

## What's the history of the tribe of Reuben?

After settling on the east side of the Promised Land, it seems the tribe of Reuben had lost its significance. The demise of the tribe of Reuben is found in

**I Chronicles 5:24-26:**

*"These were the heads of their families; Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah and Jahdiel. They were brave warriors, famous men, and heads of their families. **But they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers** and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. **So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, who took the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh into exile. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara and the river of Gozan, where they are to this day.**"*

## What does the Bible have to say about the sin of instability?

THE WORD "UNSTABLE" OCCURS FOUR TIMES IN THE BIBLE – each reference clearly illustrates the root causes of instability:

A. **Genesis 49:4** The prophetic word that came to Reuben was that he was '**unstable** as waters', and that he would not excel = because he was disrespectful to his father. There is nothing that will make a man or woman unstable more quickly than **DISRESPECT**.

B. **James 1:8** "*He is a double-minded man, **unstable** in all his ways.*" Double-minded Gr dipsuchos = having two souls. Why double minded? Because he **DOUBTED** God's Word, lacked faith and therefore lacked wisdom.

C. **2 Peter 2:13,14** "*These spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing **unstable souls**.*" Enticed into immorality ... enticed into sin. Because **ENTERTAINING immorality** leads to instability, confusion, deception, and ultimately, to a very bad fall.

D. **2 Peter 3:15,16** "*As our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and **unstable people** twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*" i.e. Not having a full **BALANCED view** of the Word of God.

## What does the Bible recommend to achieve spiritual stability, so we don't make the mistake of Reuben or his tribe?

An alarming number of Christians seem to lack spiritual stability. Many are *"tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes"* (**Ephesians 4:14**). Others lack moral purity. Many are driven by their emotions rather than sound thinking.

First and foremost, the Word of God instructs us to build our lives upon the Rock. As Christians, we are assured that this Rock is none other than Jesus, and we believe that those who trust in Him will never be disappointed (**Romans 9:33**). Those who build upon Him and His Word will be kept safe in the coming storms.

Lord Jesus says in **Matthew 7:24-25**, *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."*

1. Despite our inconsistencies, the power for spiritual stability is ours in Christ as we allow the knowledge of His Will to control our lives. Paul describes the working of that power in **Colossians 1:10 - 11**. *"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"*.

There the Greek words translated "strengthened" and "power" speak of inherent power that gives one the ability to stand firm in Christ. The phrase "according to" indicates that the power for spiritual stability is proportional to God's abundant supply—and that supply is inexhaustible!

The literal Greek says you are being *"empowered with all power according to the might of his glory"*. That thought is similar to **Philippians 2:12-13**, where Paul says that the power for working out your salvation comes from God, *"who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"*.

2. In **Colossians 1:11** the result of God's enabling is the attaining of *"all endurance and patience"*. *"Endurance"* speaks of perseverance regarding people; *"patience"* speaks of perseverance regarding things or circumstances. When you endure and are patient, you are spiritually stable. Your responses are biblical, thoughtful, and calculated—not worldly, emotional, or uncontrolled. You bear up under trials because you understand God's purposes and trust His promises.

## What are the enemies of spiritual stability?

### Misplaced Priorities

Whatever we've made first in our lives—our priority—becomes our foundation from which everything else is built (and/or prioritized). If we decide to make our priority/foundation the weak, shallow, and temporary things of this world, we will set ourselves up for failure. But, if we make Jesus and His kingdom the foundation, everything else in our lives will fall into their proper place (**Matthew 6:33**).

### Impatience

We make decisions and don't wait on God because we don't like where we're at. We must station ourselves and wait for God's direction in our lives (**Habakkuk 2:1**). We must exercise restraint and wait on God until He tells us to move. Let's learn to wait quietly, patiently, and expectantly (**Psalms 37:7; 65:5**).

### Distractions

Distractions are temporary loss of focus in our spiritual walk with God. We are directed in Scripture to always look to Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith (**Hebrews 12:2**). While a distraction is a temporary loss of focus, it can also do a whole lot of damage. We must intentionally fight distractions by focusing our spiritual mind, by reading God's Word, by fasting, and by praying.

In conclusion, Apostle Paul said, "*be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might*" (**Ephesians 6:10**). That is only possible when you trust God and rely on the infinite power that is yours in Christ.

### Conclusion:

Even though it seems that the history of the tribe of Reuben is a record of failures in fulfilling the purposes of God, the name of Reuben will not, "*not die but live*" and will be written on one of the pearly gates in heaven. (**Revelation 21:12, Ezekiel 48:31**). Our God has a way of saving His remnants from each of these tribes who are faithful to Him.

Many of us today may struggle with the character of Reuben, "*unsteady as water*", with no power in ourselves to do any good. Many of us may have fallen into sin and curse due to our poor choices.

But Jesus, His finished work on the cross and His powerful blood stands out in the pages of our lives as a 'game changer', as the only Hope for our future stories. No stain of sin, no curse, no mistake is beyond God's redemption. Only if you surrender your life, -your all- to Jesus at the cross, He is willing to cleanse you, to make you new, and to lead you into a beautiful destiny!