

# **Elder Vernon Johnson**

## **Numbers**

### **Twelve and Seventy**

#### **Twelve Princes of Israel**

When the children of Israel came into the wilderness God appointed twelve princes to be over and representative of the twelve tribes of Israel: Num. 1:4 "And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers. 5 And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: of the tribe of Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur. 6 Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 7 Of Judah; Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 8 Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar. 9 Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon. 10 Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 11 Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni. 12 Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 13 Of Asher; Pagiel the son of Ocran. 14 Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 15 Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan. 16 These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel."

The men that were appointed of God to be princes of the twelve tribes of Israel, were also described as being the "head of the house of his fathers," and the "renowned of the congregation." As the princes of the twelve tribes they were the representatives of all the members of those tribes.

There authority as the chief representative of the tribes of their fathers including the ability to make covenants on behalf of the twelve tribes: Josh. 9:15 "And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them. 16 And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them." Because of this, the people murmured against the princes: Josh. 18 "And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes. 19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them."

The princes also served as the chief representative of their tribe when it came to dividing up the land of Canaan: Num 34:18 "And ye shall take one prince of every

tribe, to divide the land by inheritance." In addition, when issues arose within the congregation, the twelve princes were responsible for settling those issues for the whole congregation: when the children of Israel had heard that the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had built an altar on the other side of Jordan, they sent "Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel." Through the discussions of the princes they were able to resolve the issue to everyone's satisfaction (Josh. 10:22-34).

The twelve princes offered on behalf of their tribes at the dedication of the altar: Num. 7:1 "And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them; 2 That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered: 3 And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle."

The twelve princes of the twelve tribes of Israel represented all of the members of those twelve tribes. This principle of representation points us to the great "Prince of Peace" who represented all the elect family of God. Jesus Christ as the representative of the Lord's people offered on behalf of the elect: Heb 10:14 "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The Lord Jesus Christ made a covenant with God that was binding upon his elect people: Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

The princes of the twelve tribes numbered the twelve tribes. Likewise, the Prince of Peace has chosen and numbered the elect: Eph. 1:4 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

The princes of the twelve tribes divided up the inheritance of the children of Israel. The Prince of Peace has given an inheritance to all the elect: Eph. 1:11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." This inheritance is a joint inheritance: Rom. 8:16 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our

spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

The twelve princes of Israel were the twelve chief captains of the armies of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Prince of Peace is the captain of the Lord's host of elect children: Heb 2:10 "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Like as the twelve princes who resolved issues and controversies among the twelve tribes of Israel, so the Prince of Peace has resolved all our issues and controversies and questions by his word: 2 Tim. 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."