

Chapter 1 -- Reuben and the Sardius

The very first stone is the *sardius (124)*: (odem /o'-dem/) redness; a red gem (also known as sardine).¹ Sardius is the sixth foundation stone in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:20).

Symbols in the stone

The stone is *red* which is symbolic of blood, sacrifice, blood atonement, the passing over of God's destructive judgment (see Ex. 12:3-28; Josh. 2:18-21); it also represents royalty, prosperity, prestige, and valiance (Lam. 4:5; Dan. 5:7,16,29; Nah. 2:3).

Symbols in the order of the stone

The cardinal number *one* is symbolic of God and unity (Jn. 17:21-23; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Jn. 5:7) while the ordinal number *first* represents beginning (Gen. 1:1).²

Facts about Reuben

- ▶ He was Jacob's firstborn.
- ▶ His name means "Behold, a son"
- ▶ Leah knew she was despised and realized the birth of her son was because of God's compassion for her. Since the Lord blessed her with a son, this meant that Jacob would love her (Gen. 29:31, 32).
- ▶ He lost out on the birthright privileges that usually fall to the firstborn son because he laid with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22; 1 Chron. 5:1,2).
- ▶ Reuben was responsible for saving Joseph's life when his brothers wanted to kill him (Gen. 37:21-22).

Observation: In the same way Leah proclaimed "Behold, a son," others should be able to look at a Christian's life (public and private) to behold the Son of the living God in us. Jacob was pleased Leah bore him a son just as God is pleased when his Son dwells in us.

Jacob's prophecy over Reuben

"Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:" (Gen. 49:3)

Firstborn sons were considered very special in biblical times and were given special responsibilities and privileges. The word figuratively implies anything that is considered most

¹ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books...* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 199?), Hebrew Dictionary, p. 8.

² Kevin J. Conner, *Interpreting the Symbols and Types* (Portland, OR: Bible Temple Publishing, 1992), p. 5.

excellent, with Jesus being the ultimate example (Rom. 8:29; Col 1:18; Rev. 1:5).³ Since Christ is the firstborn, he is God's might, the beginning of God's strength, the excellency of his dignity, and excellency of his power.

God's might: Since Christ is God, he is mighty to carry out his will anywhere in the earth and in the heavens.

Beginning of God's strength: Jesus is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of our faith.

Excellency of dignity: *Dignity* means exaltation in rank or character. Christ displays this as head of the church and the preeminent ruler of the universe.

Excellency of power: He displayed power over all of the devil's works, including sickness, sin, death, and hell. The miracles he performed and that have been performed by his followers in his name manifest his limitless power.

Christians are the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23) and should manifest God's might, his strength, and the excellency of his dignity and power in what we say, think, and do.

“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.” (Gen. 49:4)

Jacob placed a curse on Reuben because he slept with one of his father's concubines. We should be the opposite of Reuben in this case. God expects us to be stable in our devotion and obedience to him so we can excel in receiving heavenly rewards. This curse also points out the fact that sexual sins can hinder blessings. Unfortunately, in today's congregations it is taken much too lightly.

Moses' prophecy about Reuben

“Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.” (Deut. 33:6)

A blessing that the tribe of Reuben will not become extinct and that their offspring will continually multiply.

Application: Those who are the sons of the living God are blessed with eternal life. Indeed, Christ promised us that since he is the resurrection and the life, those of us who live and believe in him will never die (Jn. 11:26). This, of course, refers to our soul and spirit dwelling in God's presence forever. It is also God's desire that as many people as possible be saved. He does not want the number of his children to be few so it is up to us to preach the gospel and live by it before men consistently.

“How then shall they (the lost) call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). Furthermore, Christians must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1 Pet. 3:15)

³ Herbert Lockyer, Sr., ed., *Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), p. 385.

In summary, Reuben and the sardius stone represent the following: the beginning of our new life in Christ; unity; royalty; prosperity; prestige; valiance; reflection of God's character in us; the Lord's might, strength, dignity and power in us; spiritual stability; excelling in godly things; eternal life; the multiplication of the number of believers by preaching the gospel.