

## Standing at Dad's Deathbed Part 1

*Jacob blesses his sons before he dies*

**Text:** Genesis 47:27-49:12

### Introduction:

1. Death draws near for Jacob in this section of Genesis and he calls his sons to give them a final Patriarchal prophecy and blessing. Jacob first has an audience with Joseph and his two sons (Chap. 48), then he summons all his sons to his deathbed for his final words (Chap. 49).
2. Jacob's prophecy makes a fascinating study. It contains shrewd insight into the individual character of each of his sons who would form the heads of Israel's twelve tribes as well as prophetic insights for their futures. "Jacob's words were a revelation of human character and conduct as well as of divine purposes." (Wiersbe)
3. We will consider Jacob's final words over two messages with a simple two-point outline:
  - The Prophecy concerning Joseph's Sons (Gen. 48)
  - The Prophecy concerning Jacob's Sons (Gen. 49)

### I. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JOSEPH'S SONS (47:27-48:22)

#### A. The Context of Jacob's Final Words (47:27-31)

Take note of:

1. The Summary of Jacob's Life in Egypt (Vs. 27-28)
  - a. Jacob and his family flourished in Goshen under Joseph's watch care (Vs. 27).
  - b. God gave Jacob 17 years in Egypt and a total of 147 years in his life (Vs. 28).
2. The Season of Jacob's Death in Egypt (Vs. 29-31)
  - a. The time of Jacob's death was drawing near (Vs. 29a). Note the words "must die". This was God's appointed time for Jacob. God is the one who sets our appointment with death (Heb. 9:27). There is "a time to die" (Ecc. 3:2). Are you ready to die? Death holds no fear for the born again, blood washed believer.
  - b. Jacob summons Joseph and asks him to make a solemn oath that he would bury him in Canaan, not Egypt (Vs. 29b-31). Jacob's heart was in Canaan, the promised land. Jacob's desire to be buried there demonstrated faith in God's promises concerning the land. Jacob knew that while his seed would sojourn in Egypt for a time, God would eventually take them back to the land He had promised them.

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### B. The Content of Jacob's Final Words (48:1-22)

It is interesting to note what was on Jacob's heart during his final moments on earth. Jacob spoke of:

1. The promises of God (Vs. 1-6)
  - a. Jacob refers right back to his first Personal encounter with God Almighty at Luz (Bethel) (Gen. 28) which had marked the beginning of his walk of faith.
  - b. Jacob recalls that God's promises about the seed and the soil. God would multiply Jacob's seed and give the promised land to his seed for "an everlasting possession". The land of Israel is Israel's forever!
  - c. God had been faithful to his promise and had multiplied Jacob's seed, including through Joseph (Vs. 5-6).
2. The pain of the past (Vs. 7). Jacob recalls Rachel's death and burial.
3. The prophecy for the future (Vs. 8-22)
  - a. The priority of the prophecy (Vs. 13-14, 17-19). Here we have another example of the younger being put before the elder. It is worth noting again how often God bypassed the oldest son in favour of a younger: Isaac instead of Ishmael, Jacob instead of Esau, Joseph instead of Reuben and now Esphraim instead of Manasseh. The point is that God's choice is for spiritual reasons, not chronological.
  - b. The Person of the prophecy (Vs. 15-16a). Jacob evokes the blessing of Almighty God over Joseph's sons. The character of Jacob's God gave the blessing its value. Jacob's God was:
    - i. The unchangeable God (Vs. 15a). He was the God of Abraham and Isaac his father.
    - ii. The faithful God (Vs. 15b-16a). Jacob had experienced the faithfulness of God in his life. God had sustained and preserved Jacob throughout his earthly pilgrimage. Jacob was confident that such a good and gracious God would not fail to bless his children and grandchildren.
    - iii. Note: The word 'Angel' means "messenger" and is capitalized in this context. It appears to be a reference to the Christophany. "The word 'redeem' (Heb. *goel*) is used here for the first time in the Bible, and it is significant that it occurs as a description of the work of the great Angel of Jehovah, none other than the preincarnate Christ. The God of his fathers had surely provided for Jacob and protected him marvellously through the years, just as He had promised when he first spoke to him (Gen. 28:15)." (Morris)
  - c. The particulars of the prophecy (Vs. 16b, 20-21)

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- i. The blessing of reputation (Vs. 16b)
  - ii. The blessing of multiplication (Vs. 16c)
  - iii. The blessing of abundance (Vs. 20-21)
  - iv. Note: Joseph's faithful, godly life brought a multitude of blessings into the lives of his sons. Imagine how different things would have been if Joseph had given up in the walk of faith. Prov. 20:7 "The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him."
- d. The postlude to the prophecy (Vs. 22). Jacob bequeaths an extra portion of land to Joseph. In light of all that Joseph had been through at the hands of his brothers, this was more than fair!

## II. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JACOB'S SONS (49:1-12)

Having pronounced a special blessing on Joseph and his sons, Jacob now summons the rest of his sons to his bedside to deliver his final message before he passes through the door of death. There is a poetic and prophetic tone in Jacob's words.

### A. Reuben (Vs. 3-4)

1. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, "the beginning of his strength". Normally this meant a position of responsibility and privilege within the family in the patriarchal system.
2. Sadly, however, Reuben forfeited his birthright for a moment of unclean pleasure with his father's concubine Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). How sin robs us of true and lasting blessings! Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate. Don't exchange lasting blessings for temporary lusts!
3. Jacob prophesied that the tribe of Reuben would not excel. This was literally fulfilled in Israel's history. The tribe of Reuben never produced any great leaders in the nation and is little spoken of in the record of Scripture. In the later journeys to the promised land, the Reubenites were the first tribe to ask for a place to settle, not waiting to cross the Jordan with the others (Num. 32). Dathan and Abiram were Reubenites who gave leadership in the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16:1), which led to the deaths of thousands of people.

### B. Simeon and Levi (Vs. 5-7)

1. Simeon and Levi are grouped together because they were of the same character – "Simeon and Levi are brethren". Sadly, these two brothers were united for evil rather than good.
2. Simeon and Levi are noted for their anger and cruelty. Jacob is clearly referring back to Simeon and Levi's leading role in the unjust slaughter of the Shechemites (Gen. 34). Beware of where anger

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can take you! In the case of Simeon and Levi, their diabolical rage led them to murder.

3. Jacob makes it clear that he had no part in their wicked deed (Vs. 6).
4. As a consequence, Simeon and Levi would be divided as tribes (Vs. 7). God would see to it that their evil alliance was broken. This was literally fulfilled in Israel's history:
  - a. Simeon had his territory within Judah's (Josh. 19:1, 9).
  - b. The Levites were not assigned a particular territory but were given 48 cities to dwell in throughout the land (Josh. 21). Levi was scattered throughout Israel.
  - c. Thankfully the Levites would go on to take the priestly function for the nation. Moses, a giant of the faith, was a descendant of Levi.

### C. Judah (Vs. 8-12)

Jacob had a lot more to say about Judah than the first three sons!

Judah would be:

1. A praiseworthy tribe (Vs. 8a)
  - a. The name 'Judah' means praise. In the early part of his life, Judah did not live up to the meaning of his name. There was little that was praiseworthy in Judah's life for a time. But through the restoring grace of God, Judah's life changed.
  - b. We still praise God today for the tribe of Judah because the Lord Jesus, our Saviour, came through the line of Judah.
2. A powerful tribe (Vs. 8b)
  - a. Judah would become a tribe known for its military might.
  - b. The picture is reinforced in verse 9 where Judah is described as a lion.
3. A princely tribe (Vs. 9-10)
  - a. The symbol of Judah (Vs. 9)
    - i. Judah is spoken of in terms of a lion. The lion is the king of the beasts and Judah would be the dominant, ruling tribe within Israel. "In physical strength Judah is compared to the lion, the king of beasts. At first, he is the lion's whelp, the young lion, giving promise of future vigour; then the full-grown lion, exulting in his irresistible force, seizing and overmastering the prey, and after reaping the fruits of his victory, ascending to his mountain lair and reposing in undisturbed security." (Barnes)
    - ii. Ultimately this was a prophecy of the coming King of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 5:5 harks back to this ancient prophecy "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, **the Lion of the tribe of Juda**, the

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Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

- iii. Note: Satan, the roaring lion, is no match for Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah.
- b. The sceptre of Judah (Vs. 10a)
  - i. From the time of David, the sceptre did not depart from Judah. Israel's greatest kings were from Judah.
  - ii. A time frame is specified in Jacob's prophecy. This would continue until the arrival of the Messiah.
- c. The Saviour from Judah (Vs. 10b)
  - i. Messiah is called "Shiloh" in this verse. The word literally means "tranquil, peaceable". The form of the word is related to the word for "peace" (shalom) and probably means "The One Who Brings Peace". (Morris) Jesus Christ is "the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6).
  - ii. The people would be "gathered" unto him. This was literally fulfilled in the multitudes of people who flocked to Christ during his earthly ministry.
  - iii. "Once the tribe of Judah, under King David, attained the leadership over the nation, the sceptre never departed from Judah until after Christ came. This fact, incidentally, confirms that the Messiah did come, and that He must have come sometime before A.D. 70, since the sceptre passed from Judah about that time." (Henry Morris)
4. A prosperous tribe (Vs. 11-12)
  - a. The wine (pure grape juice) and milk speaks of fruitfulness, blessing and prosperity. Judah would be a prosperous tribe.
  - b. The figure seems to also anticipate the future kingdom age.

*To be continued next message...*

**Conclusion:** Are you ready to die? What kind of legacy will you leave behind to your children? Are you trading real, lasting blessings for temporary pleasures?