

The fear of flying is a consistent fear among Americans. And the number one anxiety for passengers who do board commercial airliners... is turbulence... according to Patrick Smith (a commercial airline pilot who flies Boeing 757 and 767). ... In an article that he wrote in 2017 for Business Insider Magazine... he acknowledged: “*So much about it seems dangerous.*” But Smith argues that from the perspective of the pilot... turbulence is often a mere blip. Listen to what Smith writes:

*For all intents and purposes, a plane cannot be flipped upside-down, thrown into a tailspin, or otherwise flung from the sky by even the mightiest gust or air pocket. Conditions might be annoying and uncomfortable, but the plane is not going to crash. Turbulence is an aggravating nuisance for everybody, including the crew, but it's also, for lack of a better term, normal. From a pilot's perspective, it is ordinarily seen as a convenience issue, not a safety issue. When a flight changes altitude in search of smoother conditions, this is by and large in the interest of comfort.*

*The pilots aren't worried about the wings falling off; they're trying to keep their customers relaxed and everybody's coffee where it belongs.... In the worst of it, you probably imagine the pilots in a sweaty lather: the captain barking orders, hands tight on the wheel as the ship lists from one side to another. Nothing could be further from the truth.*

Actually, Smith concludes: “*While the passengers are fretting about the turbulence, the pilots are having a casual conversation about their morning orange juice...*”

What are the fears that tend to really knock you for a loop...? ... Mine are fears that primarily come from watching a lot of Cable News... and I bet you can guess what those fears are. ... Although on Friday... a friend's Facebook post directed me to a YouTube video... which cast me into a tizzy of concern... for a few minutes. ... It may be true... or the

presentation might be nothing more than “airline turbulence.” ... These are crazy times that we are living in... and the madness spreads so readily ... with instant media and communications. It is getting harder and harder to tell what is a real threat... and what is just wind that gives us a temporary... but frightening sense of insecurity.

On Friday... I was rescued from a tailspin of uneasiness... by the passage of Scripture that we come to today in Genesis. It is perfect for times like these. (LISTEN!) If you sometimes get caught-up in the concerns of the day... this will be a timely passage for you as well.

Today we come back to the deathbed scene of Jacob. In the previous chapter we saw him on that deathbed as he strengthened himself... sat upon the bed... and blessed the sons of Joseph. ... Now Jacob reflects on the character of his other sons... and uses that... as a basis for declaring what will happen to the sons and their descendants in the future.

I think that it was J.Vernon McGree who wrote: *“Anything that a man says on his deathbed is important... because generally... if he ever tells the truth... he tells it on his deathbed...”* ... This deathbed message is dramatic because it is prophetic. It tells what will happen to the twelve sons of Jacob when they become tribes.

Why? Why did God want the future of Israel predicted here?

**#1.** To encourage Jacob. Jacob was dying... and he had been a great believer who had truly trusted the promises of God. God loved Jacob with a special love... and He wanted to give assurance to Jacob that his faith was not in vain. ... And God wants to assure us – that our faith is not in vain.

**#2.** To warn Jacob's sons and their descendants of the weaknesses and traits in their nature. They needed to constantly guard against their weaknesses and strengthen themselves in *the LORD*. ... The same thing is needed for you and I. We need to strengthen ourselves in the Lord.

**#3.** To encourage Israel during their Egyptian bondage. Jacob's prophecy would offer great hope to true believers during their enslavement in Egypt, for the prophecy predicted that they would someday be freed and possess the promised land. ... Church(!) God wants you and I to know that (although we are in troubled times) victory is coming for us!

**#4.** To show people of all generations that we reap what we sow. God has and will continue to use Jacob's prophecy to teach this awesome truth: we reap exactly what we have sown. This is clearly seen in Jacob's sons: the blessing each received was based upon what he had sown upon earth. Some of these sons thought their sin went unnoticed. But it didn't and neither will ours.

After Jacob finishes his blessing and cursing... the sons can walk away with a '*who cares*' mentality. ... And the funny thing is... Such an attitude **was** reflected... when King Hezekiah was told of the trouble that shall come to the nation of Judah - *after his lifetime is complete*. Hezekiah responds,

**2 Kings 20:19 (ESV)**

*Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?"*

“Oh Good! I won’t be affected by it. It is only my descendants who will...”

Well... The full impact of Jacob's words... in our passage today... will come true in future generations... so what is the purpose to the sons? ... ..

Won't they treat it like King Hezekiah did...? “Who cares?” ... Perhaps... but Jacob expects his sons to learn and continue learning from it.

And this is a fair question for you and I. ... Why should we care...? Why do we need to know the material contained in Jacob’s blessing and cursing to his sons...? ... Let me give four reasons:

**FIRST** – Just as Jacob’s sons needed to accept God’s will for their lives... we do too. (LISTEN! Please hear me now...) The most important deeds of our lives are those which reflect our attitude toward the will of God for our lives. Do you complain to Him... as though He is treating you unfair...? Accept His will for your life... and start blooming where He has planted you.

**SECOND** - God can and will use our life for the ultimate teaching of others. One of our biggest “take-aways” from this passage is: You will be an example one way or another. ... What kind of an example are you setting for those who look up to you...? How do you want to be remembered...? (And how are you doing with that?)

**THIRD** - Our past affects our present... and our future. Jacob blessed each of his sons and then made a prediction about each one's future. The way the men had lived played an important part in Jacob's blessing and prophecy.

**FOURTH** - In the daily cares of life... we lose sight of the wonder of God. Such passages of Scripture as this help us to recapture that wonder. We should spend a moment in meditating on the grandeur of God... as we see God's future for Israel (through a large overview)... which is now history to us! This serves as a strong reminder of God's complete control.

### **Genesis 49:1-4**

As the first born... Reuben bore the potential for excellence... and the opportunity for leadership. ... By all earthly rights... he was to excel in honor and authority over the family after Jacob's death. ... But Reuben did not have the inward discipline and character to manifest that opportunity.

Reuben's privileges were great. He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He had position... prestige... and power. ... But privileges will be lost when character is lacking. He was as unstable as water!

This refers to Reuben's uncontrolled passion... It is the picture of "turbulent boiling water that spews everywhere." ... Passion must be controlled if privileges are to profit us.

Reuben... from the record of Scripture... was never a strong personality. He was not decisive in leading his brothers to live godly and righteous lives. He feared antagonizing his siblings... by standing up for what was right. ... This was clearly seen in the selling of Joseph into slavery. ... He did not take over the situation and demand the release of Joseph. Reuben proved to be weak and unstable in leadership. And apparently... this trait was to carry over into his descendants. ... The history of Israel shows that the tribe never did excel: the prophecy was proven to be precisely true.

When Korah and his men rebelled against Moses... insinuating rebellion among 250 leaders... Korah's men who helped him lead the rebellion were Reubenites. ... In Judges 5... when Deborah and Barak called all the tribes to go fight Sisera... one tribe is said to have been indecisive and did not bother (Judges 5:15) – The Reubenites! ... Then in Numbers 32... the tribe noticed the wonderful pastureland for their flocks on the East side of the Jordan... so they did not cross the Jordan river into the Promised Land with the other tribes. ... In Joshua 22... we see how they showed a lack of godly discipline by helping to erect a false place of worship. ... (LISTEN!) The tribe was never important in the history of Israel and never produced a leader of any stature whatsoever for the nation.

The first three sons of Jacob were a source of grief to him. And next we come upon the two sons who followed Reuben in birth order. They were brothers by relation... and brothers by behavior.

### **Genesis 49:5-7**

Simeon and Levi were guilty of anger and violence in their unrestrained massacre of the Shechemites (Gen. 34). ... It was right to avenge the raping of their sister Dinah... but it wasn't necessary to wipe out innocent people... just to gratify their own desire for revenge. ... This was not righteous indignation but a loss of temper.

The attitude and conclusions of Simeon and Levi were not attitudes that contribute to ending a problem... but attitudes that would only enlarge a problem. ... They took delight in abusing animals when destroying

Shechem. ... These two boys were scoundrels. ... Jacob really denounced them severely.

We humans are often prone to this kind of solution. It is only as we are submitted to God that we can clearly discern solutions instead of enlarging conflicts. ... Here... the two brothers learn what God thinks of their action. ... (LISTEN!) We must be careful that none of our actions are based only in revenge.

God does not cut them off from any part in the promised inheritance... instead He divides and scatters them. ... Accordingly they are divided from one another. The tribe of Simon got swallowed up by the Tribe of Judah. Simon became the weakest of all the tribes... by the time Israel finished their 40 year wilderness wandering (Numbers 26:14.) ... And Levi received forty-eight towns in the various districts of the Promised Land... in which his descendants were far separated from one another.

The separation has a symbolic message. As a teacher must separate two volatile personalities to maintain order... so Simeon and Levi were separated in the land to demonstrate the danger of passion not placed in submission to the will of God. ... You know... we can often rationalize passion... by giving it high sounding motivation. ... It is important to recognize the passion that is uncontrollable... and to discern its tendency to lead to rebellion against God.

However... the curse of being scattered... was turned into a blessing because of the actions of the sons of Levi in supporting Moses in the incident of the golden calf (Exod. 32). They actually went throughout the

camp of Israel and put to death by the sword those who were participating in the idolatry. ... They did this without regard for whether those involved were their brothers... companions... or neighbors. ... Apparently the tribe of Levi was a very loyal and courageous people... so God took their judgment and changed it into a blessing. ... God appointed the tribe of Levi to become the great teachers of the nation.

Faithful actions in honor of God... (demonstrating that we accept His will for our lives)... can even turn a curse into a blessing. ... The tribe of Levi produced more great leaders than any other tribe except Judah. They produced... Moses ... Aaron ... Phinehas ... Eli ... Ezra ... and John the Baptist.

Next we come to Judah and the tribe that bears his name. ... Judah had made some mistakes... but he had also made some things right with his father and his family.... So Jacob's estimation of Judah had gradually risen higher... especially since Judah had put his own life on the line for Benjamin.

### **Genesis 49:8-12**

**↑ END OF PART ONE ↑**

The name Judah and the Hebrew word for "praise" are very similar. The phrase "*Your brothers shall praise you...*" indicates a very special coming together of the brothers through the nation. It is almost a miracle. All the tribes shall be united in praise to Judah... and be glad in it. The joy of Israel in praise to Judah is extremely significant.



The united twelve tribes occurred and saw its peak in the reign of David. ... But the uniting of the nation is primarily to be seen symbolically through the hope of Messiah... the One Who will renew Israel's glory... and re-establish the throne of David. ... He is going to unify the nation forever... and again bring Israel to praise the tribe of Judah. ... But not only shall ***Israel*** unite in praise to the great son of Judah... the whole earth shall praise Him.

In Jacob's blessing... Judah is described as a young lion. ... We have to will note the majesty and authority in the picture. The lion catches his prey... and eats it. ... He lies down to sleep... and who would dare rouse him? ... He has no fear... as he is in total control... even when he sleeps. ... It is the character of grand rulership.

In Revelation 5:5... the Lion ***is*** roused... the sealed book is opened... and the Lion re-takes ownership of the earth. ... (You see...) this Lion shall one day be full grown... and roused up to judge the whole world.

Please look again at verse 10 with me...

### **Genesis 49:10**

I am reading from the English Standard Version (or ESV.) The translators tried to make this verse more understandable to us... but in their doing so... they diminished a lot of the Hebrew imagery of this verse. Many translations follow the Hebrew wording more closely and have this verse say: The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet – UNTILL SHILOH comes. Boy! Do I wish the ESV translators kept that. What they have here is correct. "Shiloh" most literally means "he whose right it is." "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah...*

*until He Whose right it is - comes...*” And the ESV translators tried to smooth all of that out into the English language for us. But that is only ONE of the meanings of “Shioh.” There are other meanings... which prophetically point to Jesus Christ. “Shiloh” comes from the same Hebrew root that “Shalom” comes from. Shiloh has the meaning of “rest and tranquility.” Christ is the One who will bring rest.

Remember that when the Lord Jesus walked here on earth... He turned from those who had rejected Him... and He said to the populace... "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened... and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). That is Shiloh – The Shiloh that Jacob is prophesying about. ... And the scepter is a sign for royalty and authority.

So the description that Jacob gives here... certainly goes beyond Jacob’s son (Judah's) time... and speaks of the blessings of the Kingdom Age... when the Messiah shall reign over Israel.

Nobody in Old Testament times would use a choice vine for a hitching post for his donkey... because such an act would certainly ruin the vine and probably cause the loss of the animal. ... Nor would any man's wife waste their precious wine... by washing clothes in it! ... This is the language of hyperbole. ... It describes a land so wealthy... and a people so prosperous... that they can do these outrageous things... and not have to worry about the consequences. ... Jesus’ miracle of changing water into wine (in John 2:1-12)... was an announcement that Messiah had come... and a foretaste of things to come.

During the Kingdom Age... when the Messiah reigns... people will enjoy health and beauty... because the devastating enemies of human life will have been removed. ... The reign of the lion of the tribe of Judah will be a festive and joyful event for all.

Christians are often prone to mourning the woeful conditions on the earth... and seeing only hopelessness and despair. ... In a time when humans are often in despair with the evil conditions of the world... we are left without explanation for the inhumanity that exists... the desire for hope is universal. So let this prompt you to take a moment and reflect on God's great plan... and know that there is a lion of the tribe of Judah whose kingdom shall prosper by His great strength. ... [ P A U S E ]

But for now... let's move on... to the next two tribes. ... Zebulun and Issachar are often mentioned together throughout the Old Testament.

### **Genesis 49:13-15**

Zebulun is seen as one who sets his eyes to the sea. ... Zebulun was to be enriched by seaborne trade. While not directly on the Mediterranean coast... the tribe of Zebulun was assigned land close enough to the sea... to make the transport of goods profitable for the people of their tribe. Zebulun was located on an important route that carried merchandise from the coast to the Sea of Galilee and to Damascus.

Issachar is a strong donkey whose strength gets used... only as beast of burden. ... Issachar's blessing is a condemnation. ... It pictures one who is "*strong*" becoming a "*servant for payment.*" ... Issachar was strong... but he became bound. ... He was willing to sacrifice freedom and

independence... in order to enjoy creature comforts. A sure way to destroy yourself.

The people of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar were turned to material wealth. They enjoyed the abundance of the land and the treasures that derived from sea trade. ... They worshipped at the altar of material gain.

The portrait of Zebulun and Issachar speaks volumes to a culture like ours. Issachar is a donkey... a beast of burden. He values his possessions and his ease so much that it cost him his liberty. He will give away the control of his life in order that he may suck up the treasures of the land. (Doesn't this sound like a people who willingly bind themselves to the debt of credit cards and loans... so they can enjoy immediate pleasures...?)

This is the picture of a group of people who lost understanding of priority. ... Being so in love with material gain and ease... and thinking they knew about value... they lost sense of that which is truly valuable. ... American Christians are always vulnerable to valuing a life of materialism and ease above a spiritual relationship with God.

### **Genesis 49:16-18**

**↑ END OF PART TWO ↑**

The reader may sense a note of great tragedy in this pronouncement. Jacob cries out at the end of his statement about Dan 'I wait for your salvation'. ... In addition... the tribe is connected with the image of a viper (or snake.) ... Somehow... there would be a digression in the tribe... from being those who bring justice to people... to those who act as the viper.

One of the most famous Judges in the Bible... (Samson)... was a Danite. He did not seem to care much at all about justice.

But the viper imagery recalls the creature in the Garden... who first tempted Eve to sin... by telling her she could be as God (Genesis 3:5). Here is the first indication of the corruption of the nation's worship. Dan shall be at the heart of the corruption of the worship for Israel.

In Judges 18... the children of Dan accepted an idol as a part of worship... and they built a center of worship for it. ... Then later... in the history of the nation... Jeroboam... (the first king of the Northern Kingdom)... institutionalized idolatrous worship. He set up a calf of gold to be worshipped at Dan. So... Dan was central to the pollution of the entire worship life of the nation. ... Jacob's cry for the salvation of God... may be a prophetic view of the horror of corrupted worship in the nation.

In the book of Revelation... there is a listing of the tribes of Israel... stating the number from each tribe that shall be protected in the last days. Dan is not included among them (Revelation 7:4-8). The prophet Amos (in Amos 8:14) tells us that their elimination is connected to their corrupting the nation's worship.

Jacob's comments about Dan speaks to us about the seriousness of God concerning the worship of his people. ... It should give every Christian reason to ponder the seriousness of worship in his/her life. (LISTEN!)... In an age which tends to trivialize worship... and look upon it as merely a means of self-gratification... or a way to feel good... instead of a holy

moment in which to approach God - a look at the tribe of Dan... may be very enlightening.

This may be a good time to consider the way that we approach worship. In what way do we value it? Is it more a focus on ourselves trying to get God to pay attention to us... or is it a moment when our hearts are hungry to have him teach us about him? ... Let us pray that we would not make the mistake of Dan... and pervert worship to be a primary focus on us.

### **Genesis 49:19-21**

All three tribes disappeared after the fall of the Northern Kingdom... and there isn't a whole lot of historical perspective... that we have about them.

Gad is prophesied to be regularly stunned by their enemies. ... This tribe (along with the Reubenites) chose to dwell in the land on the east of Jordan. We do know that Gad was regularly attacked... and were constantly be fending off enemies. ... But they became effective warriors (1 Chronicles 12:14-15).

What appears good in this world is not always good. The land looked good to the tribe of Gad... but it was lurking with enemies that were going to be constantly attacking the people. ... There are places on this earth—with their bright lights... pleasures... possessions... power... position... and fame—that appear good and appeal to us... as ideal places to live. But if we are not careful... they may be filled with enemies... enemies that will steal our souls and destroy us. We always need God's will and not ours.

Asher shall dwell in a part of the land that produces great abundance. Their inheritance in the promised land was the lowlands of Carmel (one of the

best parts... for producing great harvests.) This part of the land provided much of the food for King Solomon (1 Kings 5:11).

Naphtali would be like a doe or deer let loose. The picture seems to be that of a tribe let loose, bouncing over the hills, full of joy, singing the songs of victory and freedom. It suggests a free-spirited people... who were not bound to tradition.

The longest blessing was reserved for Joseph. Jacob could not help but speak much of Joseph... his favorite and best son.

### **Genesis 49:22-26**

Joseph would be fruitful... as seen three ways. **First**... the **energy** for his fruitfulness was the well. Joseph was fruitful because he lived closed to the well of God. ... **Second**... the **extent** of his fruitfulness was branches going over the wall. ... **Third**... the **evidence** of his fruitfulness was everywhere — as a son in Canaan... a slave in Potiphar's house... a prisoner in prison... or government official in the palace.

Jacob used the image of "archers" to describe the suffering that Joseph experienced at the hands of his brothers and his master in Egypt. In Scripture... shooting arrows is used 6-7 times as an image of telling lies and speaking hateful words. ... Indeed... the archers shot mercilessly at the innocent young Joseph. ... But Joseph didn't shoot back!

Joseph had many enemies but he overcame them because his strength was in God. ... But the reference to bows and arrows goes beyond the image of lies; it also reminds us of the military skill of the men of Ephraim.

Victory in battle was experienced by Joshua... Deborah... and Samuel - all from the tribe of Ephraim.

### **Genesis 49:27**

Benjamin was the war-like tribe that was the heritage of Saul... first king of Israel. ... Benjamin will have battlefield ability... but will they always battle on the right side? ... In the New Testament... Saul... (who would become the great Apostle Paul)... was a Benjaminite.

We see their character in the division of the nation... after Solomon's death. ... Ten tribes secede... and begin the Northern Kingdom. They rebelled and established their own kingdom... apart from the line of Judah. But Benjamin does not secede. ... They remained with Judah.

The characteristic of Benjamin that Jacob noted was both good and bad depending on the choice that Benjamin makes. The lesson for us is to make sure that we do not glory in any particular attribute, but to stay alert to the importance of making right choices.

It would be a good moment if we reflect on the way we make choices in our lives. Do we focus on the nature of God... and what would honor him? Do we focus on ourselves and what would honor us? ... Do we refuse to glory in any ability or talent that we have... understanding that it came from God... and that he can take it away from us?

### **Genesis 49:28**

As I indicated at the beginning of our time together... In the eyes of God... the things we are afraid of are insignificant. Fears don't just make us



scared... they can inhibit us from living out our calling. God commands us not to be afraid because nothing exists outside of God's control.

In horror movies, the monster is scariest before you actually see it. For one local woman, that principle extended into the interior of her home.

Washington County Sherriff's Office responded in April to a 911 call from a woman who reported hearing a burglar locked in her bathroom. She saw shadows shifting under the door, and after officers appeared on scene, they heard a persistent rustling under the same door.

So, after issuing several commands to come out, and having brought in a K-9 unit for backup, they finally opened the door. "With guns drawn, deputies open the door to encounter the suspect ... an automated robot vacuum," the sheriff's office said. "We entered the bathroom and saw a very thorough vacuuming job being done by a Roomba vacuum cleaner."

In the eyes of God... the things we are afraid of are insignificant. Fears don't just make us scared... they can inhibit us from living out our calling. You and I are on the right side of history! ... God commands us not to be afraid because nothing exists outside of God's sovereign control.