

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #98

Genesis 49:1-4

Genesis 49 is called in most Bibles “The Blessings of Jacob.” To be sure there are some blessings contained in the chapter, but there are also some cursings. W. H. Griffith Thomas observed: “The chapter is usually described as the Blessing of Jacob, but it is obviously quite inaccurate to describe it in this way, since the predictions about several of the sons are characterized by the very reverse of blessing. The chapter is rather to be understood as a prediction of the results of character. It consists at once of a review of the past and a foresight of the future in the light of that past.” (*Genesis*, p. 468),

Genesis 49 is the story of the final grade each son of Israel gets for his work in life. Jacob is about to die and he is giving each son his final grade. These pronouncements are prophetic, they are personal and they are eternal.

THE BELIEVER’S EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY REWARDS ARE DETERMINED BY HIS EARTHLY ACTIONS .

Once one comes into the family of God, one has a new life. Once one has this new life, he can commit himself to remaining faithful to God or commit himself to not remain faithful to God.

ACTION #1 - All the sons are called to face their individual judgment. 49:1-2

Mr. John Phillips said: “So we see Jacob’s sons gathered about his bed. We view the scene as the judgment seat of Jacob, and it prefigures the judgment seat of Christ. Lives are brought up for review and rebukes and rewards are meted out. What has been sowed must be reaped. Hidden things are exposed and judged; open things are praised and punished. There is a place in a Kingdom at stake for each one, and each one is weighed in light of that.” (*Exploring Genesis*, p. 361).

Observation #1 - This judgment was given when all sons were gathered together. 49:1-2

All of Jacob’s children were “gathered together” (49:2) to hear the assessment of each other’s judgment. The entire family was at the bedside of Jacob. No one was left out, no one was left untouched by judgment and no one was left unrewarded.

When it comes time for judgment, we shall be known as we were known. The whole family of God will see it.

Observation #2 - This judgment was given to all sons concerning the last days. 49:1b

Here is the first place in the Bible where these words referring to the last days are used. The Hebrew word “days to come” refers to the extreme latter part, which often has to do with God’s futuristic prophetic program (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 34).

These words refer to many things in the Bible: **1)** To the end of power for Gentile nations (Daniel 2:28); **2)** To the end of the Church Age (II Tim. 3:1); **3)** To the final resurrection for both believer and unbeliever (John 6:36; 12:48); **4)** To the first coming of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:20; Hebrews 1:2); **5)** To God's final program and status for Israel, which features her rebellion, the Tribulation and the re-gathering of the nation and the second coming of Jesus Christ (Hosea 3:5).

Obviously, this phrase is connected to the last things pertaining to Israel. Jacob is pronouncing the way it will be when each tribe is judged by Jesus Christ at His second coming. These judgments are a picture of the way it will be when Israel enters her millennial kingdom. **The complete fulfillment of these prophecies will occur after the Tribulation, during the millennium.**

ACTION #2 - Some sons will lose reward because of instability and immorality. 49:3-4

The first son to be named for judgment was Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob. Reuben represents the first to come into the family. He had all of the potential and power to become a magnificent son. But he did not use his strength and might to become this; he dedicated himself to his own ambitions and lusts and became an embarrassing son.

The words of **verse 3** poetically describe Jacob's firstborn. He had position being the first born, he had power, he had preeminence in might, in strength and in dignity. He potentially had it all. But **verse 4** makes it clear that the way Reuben looked was not the way it really was. He was not unmovable, he was unstable; he was not spiritually dignified, he was sinfully defiled.

Pathetic Quality #1 - He was unstable. 49:4a

The word "uncontrolled" is an interesting word. In the original it refers to unstable water that leaps and surges. This particular word was often used to describe "boiling" water. Reuben had a character that was unstable - boiling one minute and cold the next. He could leap and surge into the things of God and then simmer down and forget them. As a result he lost his rewards.

Pathetic Quality #2 - He was immoral. 49:4b

Some forty years before this judgment, Reuben had committed terrible immorality with his father's concubine, Bilhah (35:22). In all of that time, Reuben never dealt with his sin. There is no record of him confessing it to God or making things right with his father. Reuben apparently tried to sweep this under the carpet, thinking it had all been forgotten. But it hadn't and on this judgment day his sin was fully exposed and punished.

Once one gets into God's family, sexual immorality takes on a new dimension of eternal significance. For the believer, the sin of sexual immorality is at a very unique level (I Corinthians 6:17-18). Reuben-types still have time to change. If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. Deal with sin as a child of God. Confess it and claim God's cleansing grace. But we may all know this beyond any shadow of doubt - if we refuse to judge ourselves, we will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ.