

Genesis 49-50

"God Meant It For Good"

A year later, we come to the *ending* of this book of "*Beginnings*". We've seen the beginning of *creation*, the beginning of *corruption* & we've followed the lineage of faith as God called a man by the name of Abraham & promised *to* him that He would make *of* him a great nation. & God promised Abraham that in him *all of the nations of the earth* would be blessed; that the *Messiah*, the Savior of the world would come forth from his lineage.

Of course that calling wasn't due to *Abraham's* greatness, it was of *God's* greatness. God places a call upon our lives not because we're so great, but because He's so great; it's not a display of our *goodness* but of His *grace*... Abraham *believed* God & it was accounted to Him for righteousness. He was justified by faith, even as you & I are justified before God by faith in J.C. We *believe* God when He says, "If you will believe upon the Lord J.C. you will be saved."

So we've followed the narrative of faith... & we've focused in on Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. But over the last several Ch's we've zoomed in on Jacob's journey & how the course of world history was changed through his son; Joseph.

& What a journey Joseph's has been! Time forbids that we should recall it all, but suffice it to say for now that God's good plan has prevailed even through the wicked intent of man... For 23 yrs Jacob thought that Joseph was dead, in reality his brothers had sold him off as a slave into Egypt. Long story short, famine brought them all together again. Joseph had (by God's providence) been put in power as the Prime Minister of Egypt & God had used him to prepare for the famine that would devastate all the land (even the land of Canaan) for 7 yrs. So God used the dry times, the difficult days to move the children of Israel to Egypt & the brothers repentance has brought about restoration & reconciliation & for the last 17 yrs Joseph has tended to & taken care of his family in the land of Goshen.

Ch 48 comes to a close w/Joseph, having been told that his father is sick, he takes his sons to go & see him one final time. Jacob blesses the boys & charges Joseph to bury him in the land of Canaan. Upon swearing to him that he would, Jacob now calls in the rest of Joseph's brothers for a final word...

Vs 1-2

When he says that he's going to tell them what shall befall them in "the last days", more literally he says, "in the days to come" or "in the end of the days". Most of these things have already happened, some of it points all the way into the millennial kingdom of Christ.

So here Jacob utters the 1st conscious prophetic word spoken by man in the bible. There have been prophecies announced by *God* (as early as Gen 3:15) & other *veiled* prophecies by men. But this is the 1st time a man steps up & steps out & says, "I'm going to give you a word from God." In respect to knowingly making prophetic utterance.

In Vs 2 he says, "Gather together & hear you sons of *Jacob*, & listen to *Israel* your father." He's openly acknowledging who *he* is (Jacob; supplanter/deceiver) & who God has *made him* (Israel, governed by God). How many of you realize that w/in us all (who *know* God/have been *called by God*) there are 2 natures w/in us? There is the man/woman we are & the man/woman God has made us & these 2 are at war w/one another. It's the battle that the bible acknowledges that exists between the flesh & the Spirit.

The old you is always trying to figure out a way to resurface, to get back into the action & be the center of your attention, your affection. The problem is that all you really want is to gratify/seek to satisfy your sin nature. The person whom God has *called* you to be (however) is one who walks in holiness, draws near *to* Him & walks *w/Him* in righteousness. **So there's a battle that rages on. The exhortation is to put to death the things of the flesh, to crucify the flesh (which is at enmity w/God) & walk after the Spirit which brings us into intimacy w/God. Sin separates us from God, we're to yield to the unction of the Holy Spirit w/in our lives. (1st up, Reuben)**

Vs 3-4

Here's what I want you to see. As the 1st born Reuben had claim to a double portion of the inheritance & to assume the role of the leader w/in his family. However due to sin in his life he forfeited that claim.

Back in Ch 35 we're told that after Rachel died Reuben went & lay w/his father's concubine (Bilhah). At that time Jacob heard of it, but for whatever reason evidently didn't confront Reuben on it, however *here* it catches up to him. Listen, the bible is clear, **"...be sure your sin will find you out."** Num 32:23 It's not a question of "if" it's only a question of "when". Here's what caught my attention; he still partook of the inheritance, but he forfeited *God's best* through sin.

Listen, if you know J.C. you're going to heaven, you'll partake of the inheritance. But if there's some willful sin in your life that you won't deal w/& repent of you'll forfeit what God *could've* done *through* you & *would've* done *for* you due to your lack of self control & unwillingness to turn from your sin.

Jacob exposes the “Achilles heel” in Reuben in Vs 4. Immorality is where it surfaced but the root of that was no self control “unstable as water, you shall not excel”. Water is unstable, when it gets hot it boils over, when the wind blows it churns & moves in whatever direction the pressure is applied.

There are *all kinds of ways* that a lack of self control can hurt you. Again for Reuben it showed up in sexual immorality (sex outside of marriage/adultery). The bible is clear that we’re to *flee* sexual immorality, write it down, look it up 1 Cor 6:18-20. We might think of Samson, the potential that was locked up w/in him, the things that God could’ve done *through* him... As much as God *did* do, Samson forfeited all that God *could* do because of his lack of self control, he was ruined by immorality in his life.

But again sexual immorality is just one area in which a lack of self control can surface. It may be in alcohol; it may be in your emotions, you may disillusion people & drive them away from you because of your bad attitude, you can’t control your anger. It could be something seemingly simple such as your finances. *You lack self control so you spend, drive up debt; you have no problem spending but you have all kinds of problems saving, you’re lacking self control...* Again, *this is why we’re to yield ourselves to the word of God & the desire of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What does the bible say? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*¹ Self-control is something that the Holy Spirit is seeking to develop in our lives. & It’s a key ingredient because it’s the fundamental, foundational attribute of *faithfulness*. & The bible is clear that the one ingredient that’s *required* of stewards is *faithfulness* (1 Cor 4:2). & If we can’t learn to be faithful w/small things how can God ever entrust to us larger things? Again write it down & look it up, Luke 16:10-12.

Never underestimate the value, the critical importance of self-control/stability. Reuben becomes an example of how the 1st can be last (Matt 19:30). His sin not only affected him, in played into his entire family... History shows us that no prophet, judge, or “Bible hero” of any kind ever came from the tribe of Reuben. He did not excel.

Vs 5-7

The 2nd & 3rd born also forfeiting the birthright, the covenant blessing because of sin. Their sin wasn’t immorality, it was unbridled cruelty & anger. These 2 seemed to have a bond, but it wasn’t a good one. Rather than encourage one another unto good works they seemed to feed on one another’s tendency toward anger/cruelty.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ga 5:22-23]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Some friends/brothers are good for one another, others are always digging themselves deeper into some sort of trouble. That was Simeon & Levi. When Dinah (their sister) was raped, rather than deal w/the offender they just killed the entire city.

Now the bible speaks of a “godly anger”, but that wasn’t what they exemplified. How do we know that? Well, not only because of how they handled the situation (which makes it evident) but we’re told here that their anger was rooted in what? *Self-will*. Not in “God’s will” or “God’s righteousness”, but in “self-will”, typically what makes the difference between a godly anger & an ungodly anger is “self will”.

James speaks to the ungodly nature of unbridled anger & he tells us, *“let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*² Paul tells us (Eph 4) to “put away” all bitterness/wrath/anger & evil speaking. We’re to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God in Christ has forgiven us.

Because of their self-centered anger Jacob says that they will be divided in the land, scattered in Israel. Simeon was absorbed into Judah’s territory & Levi was scattered into 48 cities receiving no land of their own. But as to where it was a curse for Simeon, it wound up being a blessing for Levi because they became the priestly tribe. They remained faithful during the rebellion of the “golden calf incident” in the wilderness so by God’s grace they became priests in Israel.

It’s the grace of God that can transform sinners into a kingdom of priests, amen? At one time you were an immoral person, or a drunkard, or a covetous/deceitful individual, but by God’s grace you’ve become of a kingdom of priests unto Him, those who will stand in the gap representing God to man, & man to God.

Vs 8-12

The covenant blessing passing over Reuben, Simeon & Levi falls to Judah. We might have anticipated Messiah coming through Joseph, but the promise was given to Judah. He would be the one whom his brothers would bow down to (of course ultimately this will be fulfilled in Christ who came *through* Judah).

It was foreshadowed in David, it was through Judah that kings would come to rule in Israel, but ultimately this points to the King of kings, J.C. It’s to *Him* that every knee will bow & every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

Now is seeing these references to the lion you see where the title comes from.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Jas 1:19-20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This is where Jesus gets the title, “The Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev 5:5). Vs 10 specifically prophesies of the coming of the Messiah through the line of Judah...

When it speaks of the scepter & the law giver it's a reference to kings, those in authority (even in their subjugation to other world powers Israel had a limited right to self rule), but when Rome came along & took that from them around 7 A.D. (stripped them of their right to exercise capital punishment) Rabbis wailed in the streets believing that the prophesy had failed. The scepter had departed & Shiloh (the one who's right it is) hadn't come. However J.C. was already on the scene at that time being around 12yrs old, already wowing the teachers in the temple. So as soon as Jesus came, God closed the door to any other possibility being the Messiah.

But this reference to “Shiloh”, different people have translated it different ways. Some say it means, “The one who's right it is”, pointing to Jesus' right to rule the earth. Others say it means “rest” (Jesus said, Come to Me, all you who labor & are heavy laden & I will give you rest). Others say it's rooted in “Shalom” or “peace”, Jesus being the Prince of peace. So, though folks may *disagree* on the meaning, they *all seem to agree* that it points to Jesus. “To Him shall be the obedience of the people”, this would point to His millennial kingdom, a time of peace & prosperity (tying the donkey to the choice vine). A choice vine will be used as a hitching post, prosperity will abound.

Vs 13-15

Issachar became a large tribe & were often the targets of oppressive foreign armies who put them into servitude, they became a band of slaves.

Vs 16-18

The name “Dan” means “judge”. One of the most prominent judges (Samson [whom we've spoken of]) came from the tribe of Dan. (Judges 13).

However we read here that Dan shall be a “serpent by the way”. It was Dan (Judges 18:30) who introduced idolatry into Israel. It was in the northern area of Dan that Jeroboam set up one of his idolatrous golden calves & told them not to go to Jerusalem but to worship there.

Others think that this alludes to the possibility that the Antichrist will actually come from the tribe of Dan. They combine this along w/Daniel 11:37 & Jer 8:16 along w/the fact that Dan is left out of the listing of tribes regarding the 144,000 preserved in Rev 7:5-8 & deduct that A.C. may come from Dan (a serpent by the way).

Then in Vs 18 Jacob pauses from addressing his sons & makes this statement, “I have waited for your salvation O Lord.” It’s interesting that the word “salvation” is the word “yashuwah” or “Joshua”, translated into the Greek as “Jesus”. As his hour drew near that he should die, knowingly or not, Jacob cried out for Jesus.

Vs 19-21

Evidently Naphtali could craft words in a beautiful poetic fashion. Having said that, the Living Word, J.C. performed much of His ministry there in Capernaum, around the Sea of Galilee which is in the Regions of Zebulun & Naphtali. Beautiful words indeed given in Naphtali.

Vs 22-26

Joseph is a fruitful bough (vine/branch), wherever he went, whatever he did he was fruitful. Whether it was working for his dad, Potiphar, the prison guard or Pharaoh, Joseph was bringing forth fruit. Jesus said, *“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*³ Wherever you’re at, whatever is going on in your life. God would have us to bear fruit for the glory of His name.

Notice, *“his branches run over the wall”* the fruit in his life isn’t limited to his life, it was far reaching, blessing the lives of others. Now the archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him & hated him... The arrows of envy/hatred were shot at him, the arrows of false accusation, the arrows of injustice, of oversight (the butler forgot about him, left him in prison). (Btw if you’re a fruitful person you can expect the archers to fire your way. The enemy will seek to do damage to you, to destroy you because you’re fruitful for J.C.)

But (notice) *“his bow remained in strength”*. That is, he didn’t retaliate in like manner, he turned the other cheek, he didn’t return evil for evil but he overcame evil w/good. When he became the 2nd most powerful man on the planet he could’ve exacted his revenge, had his brothers slain, executed Potiphar’s wife, thrown the baker back in prison, but he didn’t do that.

Why not? “The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob”. Translation, the way he handled it wasn’t natural, it was supernatural. He didn’t retaliate according to the natural order because he subjected himself to the rule of God in his life. He didn’t act according to the flesh (as we highlighted in Vs 2) but he yielded himself to the Spirit. God was giving him strength to keep from firing back.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [In 15:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So to w/you & so to w/me, we want to react in the flesh, but we're to respond to the Spirit. Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil w/good.

Btw time forbids us but you could do an entire study simply on the 5 titles that Jacob ascribes to God right here. "The Mighty God of Jacob, The Shepherd, The Stone of Israel, the God of your father, the Almighty." Jacob had come to understand a depth of who God is personally.

Vs 27

Benjamin was a tribe known for its fierceness. Ehud came from Benjamin, Saul, Paul the apostle was from Benjamin. For a snapshot of their fierceness you might read Judges 19-20.

Vs 28-33

Why was it so important to Jacob to be buried in Canaan? Because God had promised him that land & Jacob believed in the resurrection. That God would fulfill His promise & he wanted to be there when he was raised in the resurrection to receive the promise of God.

You see when it says that he was gathered to his people; it's not saying that he was put in a grave by his family but that he was gathered to the people of faith. Meaning that though they were no longer on this earth, they were still very much alive. God isn't the God of the dead, but of the living. When you cease to be on this planet you will be gathered to *your* people. Who those people are is predicated upon who *you* are right now. If you believe on the Lord J.C. you'll be gathered to the family of faith in His presence. If you don't than you'll be assembled in isolation to the unbelieving in outer darkness (hell). Jacob was gathered to the family of faith.

Ch 50

Vs 1-3

To give you an idea of the stature of Jacob, Pharaohs were mourned 72 days. Being Joseph's father, he was highly regarded in Egypt.

Vs 4-15

They were worried that maybe he was being kind to them for their father's sake but now that he's gone Joseph might deal w/them in a vicious kind of way.

Vs 16-18

I suppose it's possible that Jacob said this, but it seems made up to me... They were worried about what Joseph might do so they invoke their father to appeal to his mercy.

Joseph was grieved that they still didn't get it. If he wanted to harm them he'd have done it. But his heart is compassionate toward them, not vindictive.

Vs 19-21

They were expecting condemnation, Joseph gave them comfort. He says, "Am I in the place of God?" In other words, "If God wants to punish you for what you've done to me He's able to do that. I trust in Him." David recognized this same principle when he refused to exact revenge upon Saul for seeking to destroy his life. It's the principle we've spoken of again & again, that God is able to bring His good plan even out of the evil intent of others.

It's not our job to seek vengeance or retribution, God is well able to take care of that department. He's the One who can repay accurately & appropriately, but He also retains the right to show mercy... I'm so glad that God didn't destroy me the 1st time I did something wrong to someone else. Remember that judgment is w/out mercy to the one who shows no mercy but mercy triumphs over judgment.

Joseph didn't minimize or romanticize their intent. He said it plainly, "You meant evil against me." But he was able to see the overruling, overarching hand of God in & through it all. "God meant it for good." He didn't the *text* of Rom 8:28 but he understood its *truth*. Today many of have the *text* but we don't understand its *truth*...

God meant it for good, to save many people alive. Ultimately everything that happened to Joseph preserved the coming of Jesus. The nation of Israel was saved through his affliction... Listen, we may not always understand "why", but because we know "Who" we need not worry. God will use everything that He allows into our lives for our eternal good & His eternal glory.

Vs 22-26

The book of Genesis begins w/creation, it ends w/a coffin. The wages of sin is death. However the hope of the resurrection lies in view. If Joseph didn't believe in the resurrection he wouldn't bother to have his bones brought into the Promised Land when Israel was led out of Egypt.

Vs 24 declares the entire theme of the scripture, "God will surely visit you..." The hope of J.C. defeating death & granting us everlasting life through faith in Him... Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word. We thank You for the hope that You've given us in Your Son J.C. who is the resurrection & the life & by believing in Him we realize that we'll never taste death, we'll only pass from this place into Your presence, Lord we believe it. God give us the strength to walk in Your ways, to walk in the Spirit & crucify our flesh. Be glorified in our lives.

God wants to be glorified in your life. That can't happen until you *give to Him* your life. Christ has come, & men took Him & crucified Him. They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good to bring salvation to as many as would call upon Him & believe (turning from their sin & trusting) in Him. Salvation is waiting for you today, give your heart/life to Jesus.