

## Studies in Genesis – Chapter 49

### Introduction:

1. Chapter 48 consisted of two main parts:
  - a. Joseph and his two sons visited Jacob, his dying father, Genesis 48:1-7.
  - b. Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, whom he adopted, Genesis 48:8-22.
2. In Chapter 49 an account is given of Jacob giving both blessings and prophecies regarding his 12 natural sons, the sons by Leah and Rachel, and their handmaids, Zilpah and Bilhah.
  - a. This chapter might be titled "The Last Words of a Dying man."
  - b. This chapter has also been called a "prophetic treasure."
3. Observe:
  - a. This chapter contains the first literal prophecies spoken by a human being. He told his sons to "*gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days,*" and "*listen to Israel your father,*" vs. 1,2.
  - b. Much of the language used in this chapter is filled with poetic imagery, being figurative in nature.

### Discussion:

#### I. Outline of Genesis, Chapter 49.

- A. Jacob Blessed his Twelve Natural Sons, Genesis 49:1-28.
- B. Jacob Specified Where He Wanted to be Buried, Genesis 49:29-32.
- C. Jacob Died, Genesis 49:33.

#### II. A Closer Look at Genesis, Chapter 49.

- A. Jacob Blessed His Twelve Natural Sons, Genesis 49:1-28.
  1. Words to Reuben, his "*firstborn*," Genesis 49:3; 29:32.
    - a. "*My might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and..of power,* v. 3.
    - b. "*Unstable as water,*" v. 3, which always conforms to the contours of the vessel which contains it.
    - c. "*You shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed,*" v. 4; Genesis 35:22.
    - d. No judge, king, or prophet came from the tribe of Reuben; his descendants also chose to dwell on the east side of the Jordan river, Numbers 32:1-5.
  2. Words to Simeon and Levi, Genesis 49:5-8, second and third sons of Leah, Genesis 29:33,34.
    - a. "*Instruments of cruelty,*" Genesis 49:5; cf. Genesis 34:25,26.
    - b. Jacob disclaimed any participation in their crime, Genesis 49:6.
    - c. The prophecy consisted of three parts:
      - (1) Denunciation, Genesis 49:7.
      - (2) "*I will divide them in Jacob,*" v. 7.
      - (3) "*And scatter them in Israel,* v. 7.
    - d. **Note:** Simeon's territory lay within the territory of Judah, and Levi received no allotted land inheritance; Levi received 48 cities scattered throughout the land, Joshua 14:4; Numbers 35:2-8.
  3. Words to Judah, Genesis 49:8-12, the fourth son of Leah, Genesis 29:35.
    - a. "*You are he whom your brothers shall praise,*" v. 8; his name meant "*praise,*" Genesis 29:35.
    - b. Judah was likened to a lion, v. 9; cf. Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5.
    - c. "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah...*" v. 10. Later, the kings of the Southern kingdom would come from the tribe of Judah.
    - d. "*Until Shiloh comes,*" v. 10. "*Shiloh,*" almost universally, is regarded as the Messiah, and means "*rest,*" Matthew 11:28, and "*peace,*" Isaiah 9:6.
    - e. Concerning Shiloh (**note the symbolism shifts from Judah to Shiloh**):
      - (1) "*Shall be the obedience of the people,*" v. 10.
      - (2) "*He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes,*" v. 11; imagery depicting the blood-stained garments of a victorious warrior. Cf. Revelation 19:13-16.
  4. Words concerning Zebulun, Genesis 49:13, the sixth son of Leah, Genesis 30:19,20.
    - a. He shall "*dwell by the haven of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships,*" v. 13.
      - (1) Its boundaries extended westward toward the Mediterranean Sea and whose borders adjoined Sidon, cf. Joshua 19:10-16. Its ports became a "*haven for ships,*" v. 13.
      - (2) After Joseph and Mary, with Jesus, returned from Egypt, they took refuge in Galilee, the region which had been allotted to Zebulun, Matthew 2:19-23.
  5. Words concerning Issachar, Genesis 49:14,15, the fifth son of Leah, Genesis 30:17,18.

- a. *“Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens...and became a band of slaves.”*
    - (1) Donkeys are strong, but when wearied or overloaded, will lie down with the burdens on their backs. Issachar was valiant in battle, Judges 5:15; I Chronicles 7:1-7.
    - (2) Issachar received a *“pleasant”* land, Genesis 49:15, but apparently chose to become *“a band of slaves”* and remain in the land lest they be removed from it.
  6. Words concerning Dan, Genesis 49:16-18, the first son of Rachel’s handmaid, Bilhah, Genesis 30:1-6.
    - a. *“Dan shall judge his people...shall be a viper by the way,”* v. 17
      - (1) The name Dan literally means *“judge,”* Genesis 30:6. Samson was of the tribe of Dan, Judges 13:1-24, and he became a judge and judged Israel twenty years, Judges 16:31.
      - (2) It seems that Dan was the first tribe to embrace idolatry, Judges 18:29-31, and this may have contributed to their falling *“backwards.”*
  7. Words concerning Gad, Genesis 49:19, the first son of Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid, Genesis 30:9-11.
    - a. *“A troop shall tramp upon him,”* v. 19; his name means *“troop,”* Genesis 30:11. Gad chose to dwell on the east side of the Jordan, Numbers 32, which made them more subject to attacks. The tribes east of the Jordan were the first taken into captivity, I Chronicles 5:26.
  8. Words concerning Asher, Genesis 49:20, the second son of Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid, Genesis 30:11,12.
    - a. *“Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.”* *“The territory allotted to Asher (Joshua 19:24-41) is among the most fertile in Palestine,”* DeHoff.
  9. Words concerning Naphtali, Genesis 49:21, the second son of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid, Genesis 30:8.
    - a. *“Naphtali is a dear let loose; he uses beautiful words,”* v. 21.
  10. Words concerning Joseph, Genesis 49:22-26, the first born son of Jacob’s wife, Rachel, Genesis 30:23,24.
    - a. *“A fruitful bough,”* though bitterly persecuted, vs. 22,23.
    - b. *“His hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob,”* v. 24.
    - c. Abundant blessings would be *“on the head of Joseph,”* vs. 25-26. The largest portion of the land was allotted to Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.
  11. Words concerning Benjamin, Genesis 49:27, the second son of Jacob’s wife, Rachel, Genesis 35:16-18.
    - a. *“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil,”* v. 27.
      - (1) Benjamin, the smallest of the tribes, yet like a wolf was fierce and ready to take weapons for God, Psalm 68:24,27.
      - (2) Notable Benjamites included: Ehud, Judges 3:1-22), King Saul, I Samuel 9:21; Mordecai and Esther, Esther 2:5,7, and the apostle Paul, Philippians 3:5.
- Note:** *“All these are the twelve tribes of Israel...,”* v. 28, the first time that expression occurs in the Bible.
- B. Jacob Specified where he wanted to be buried, Genesis 49:29-33.
    1. In the cave of Machpelah where Abraham and Sarah were buried, where Isaac and Rebekah were buried, and where Leah was buried.
  - C. Jacob died, v. 33.
    1. *“When Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into his bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people,”* v. 33. .
    2. He probably had been sitting on the side of his bed, and leaning *“on the top of his staff,”* Hebrews 11:21. Having completed the blessings, *“he drew his feet into his bed and breathed his last.”* A great way to die!

### III. Practical Application.

- A. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,* 2 Timothy 3:16.
  1. There is no other way to account for the accuracy of the prophetic words of Jacob than that he was inspired of God.
- B. Past Actions Affect a Person’s future well being, Galatians 6:7.
  1. This was evidenced in the sons of Jacob, and their families.
- C. People who start out bad can finish up well. Evidenced by Jacob!
- D. *“Shiloh,”* Genesis 49:10, has come! He offers to you *“rest”* and *“peace.”*

### Conclusion:

--Bobby Witherington, January 15, 2012

