

Genesis 48-49 - The Blessings.

I. Joseph's Sons.

Jacob vividly remembered the outstanding encounter with the LORD at Bethel; he adopts Joseph's sons as his own, remembered Rachel's death, blesses the younger more than the older and prays upon them...the son of the right hand received a greater proportion of the blessing.

"Jacob's testimony was a testimony of grace, not personal merit. He was not saying how faithful he was to God, but how faithful God was to him."

This is truly a passing of the torch to Joseph. Israel was the last of the three great patriarchs to pass from the scene. Jacob battled for control of a portion of land from the Amorites, and he deeded the land to Joseph and his descendants. The descendants of Joseph would take this land some 400 years later.

Jacob, in what amounts to his last significant act as a patriarch and as the heir to Isaac and Abraham, will one-by-one pronounce a "blessing" upon each son regarding what God will do with these tribes in the future.

i. Reuben: **You shall not excel.**

As the firstborn of the family Reuben had claim to the inheritance rights of the firstborn, but he forfeited it through pride and immorality. Reuben's immorality with his father's concubine Bilhah is recorded in Genesis 35:22.

ii. Simeon and Levi: **I will scatter them in Israel.**

The second-born son Simeon and the third-born son Levi received the same "blessing" for the same evil deed. They were **instruments of cruelty** when they wiped out all the men of Shechem in retaliation for the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 34:25-29).

iii. Judah: **The scepter shall not depart from Judah.**

Judah wasn't a completely exemplary character. But he did shine when he interceded and offered himself as a substitute for Joseph (Genesis 44:18-34). Judah will have among his brethren. He inherited the leadership aspect of the firstborn's inheritance. In Revelation 5:5, Jesus is called *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*.

iv. Zebulun: **A haven for ships.**

Jacob now skipped the birth order, moving to the tenth-born and ninth-born sons. The tribe of Zebulun was noted for its faithfulness to David, supplying the largest number of soldiers to David's army of any single tribe: *of Zebulun there were fifty thousand who went out to battle, expert in war with all weapons of war, stouthearted men who could keep ranks* (1 Chronicles 12:33).

v. Issachar: **A strong donkey.**

Issachar was a large tribe - third in size according to the Numbers 26 census. Because of their size and abundance, they were often targets of oppressive foreign armies who put them into servitude. Thus, they **became a band of slaves**.

vi. Dan: **A serpent by the way.**

The tribe of Dan did **judge his people**. They supplied one of the most prominent of the Judges, Samson (Judges 13:2).

But Dan was a troublesome tribe. They introduced idolatry into Israel (Judges 18:30). Jeroboam set up one of his idolatrous golden calves in Dan (1 Kings 12:26-30) and later Dan became a center of idol worship in Israel (Amos 8:14).

vii. Gad: **He shall triumph at last.**

The tribe of Gad supplied many fine troops for David (1 Chronicles 12:14).

viii. Asher: **He shall yield royal dainties.**

In Deuteronomy 33:24, Moses again took up this prophecy regarding Asher: *Asher is most blessed of sons; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil.*

ix. Naphtali: **He gives goodly words.**

Naphtali's land was in a key portion near the Sea of Galilee, the region where Jesus did much of His teaching and ministry. It is fittingly said of him that **he gives goodly words**.

x. Joseph: **A fruitful bough.**

This is more of an accounting of his life and a personal blessing. In a sense, Joseph's tribes were already blessed when his sons received their blessing in Genesis 48.

Though Joseph was **shot at** and **hated**, he was still **fruitful**. This is God's hands were on Joseph's hands, giving him strength and skill to work the bow expertly. God was there, even when Joseph did not know it.

xi. Benjamin: **a ravenous wolf**.

This was the tribe with a reputation for fierceness and cruelty. To see the great extent of this, look at Ehud (Judges 3:15-23), Saul (1 Samuel 9:1, 14:47-52), and Paul (Acts 8:1-3). The cruelty of the tribe in general is seen in Judges 19 and 20.

And was gathered to his people: There are said to be three basic attitudes towards death. Among the ancient Greeks, they held to what can be called the *death-accepting* view. Our modern world is sold out to a *death-denying* approach. The Biblical approach is the *death-defying* attitude.

Psalm 1:1 - *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful...*

Psalm 84:4 - *Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You.*

Psalm 106:3 - *Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!*

Psalm 119:2 - *Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!*

Jeremiah 17:7 - *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.*

James 1:12 - *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Matthew 5:3-11

Ephesians 1:3 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

Numbers 6:24-26 - *“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”’*