

CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 49:1 – 50:26

Read Gen 49:1-28

Nearing death, Jacob blessed his 12 sons, speaking about the future of the 12 tribes that would descend from them and form the nation of Israel. We will focus this evening on the tribes of Judah and Joseph. Additional thoughts about the remaining tribes may be found on the attached page

1. Why were the first 3 sons of Jacob were disqualified from receiving blessing from their father? (v.3-7)

- disqualified because of their sins (see attached sheet)
- Reuben slept with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah (Gen. 35:22); as a result lost the right of the firstborn (given to Joseph)
- Simeon & Levi massacred the inhabitants of Shechem after Dinah was defiled (Genesis 34:25-31)

2. Why did Judah, who sold Joseph into slavery and who impregnated his own daughter-in-law because he thought she was a prostitute, receive a favorable blessing?

- Unlike his older brothers, Judah repented of his sins and his repentance had a real change in his life
- his encounter with Tamar exposed his sin, and he ultimately seems to have changed his ways (Gen 38:26)
- this change was evidenced when he agreed to protect his father's favored son Benjamin, despite Jacob's favoritism (Gen 43:8) and much more strongly so when he offered himself in Benjamin's place when tested by Joseph (Gen 44:33).

3. Look again at the blessing of Judah (v.8-12). What is being referred to in the following parts of the blessing?

-v.8 – "...your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you."

- Judah would be exalted among the tribes of Israel; would be victorious over enemies
- this found fulfillment, for example, in the many victories by the tribe of Judah
 - e.g. they were the first to battle the Canaanites (Judges 1)
 - e.g. in the battles fought by King David – a descendant of Judah

-v.9-10 – "...lion...scepter...ruler's staff...obedience of nations is his."

- the imagery of a lion is often representative of a king, further enforced by the instruments of a king – the scepter and the ruling staff
- this would naturally find fulfillment in King David, and his descendants → many nations did indeed bow to them
- the ultimate fulfillment of this is in the ultimate King: the Messiah, Jesus Christ
 - He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), and nations will indeed obey him (e.g. Phil. 4:10-11)

-v.11 – "He will tether his donkey to a choice vine...he will wash his garments in wine..."

- ancient Jewish and Christian commentators both viewed this text as Messianic
- this described the abundance of the Messianic reign, where choice grapes are so abundant that donkeys are tied to choice grape vines without concern that they will eat them; also, wine is as common as water
- this was how Jesus announced His arrival – the turning of water into wine at Cana (John 2:11 - This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee.)

4. Examine the prophecy regarding Joseph (v.22-26). How do v. 22-25 recount the story of his life? What does v.26 say about the future of his descendants?

- even though many were against him to attack him, he remained steadfast and prospered because God was with him
- God Almighty was with him when He saved Joseph from being murdered by his brothers, protected him in Potiphar's house, gave him wisdom in prison to gain favour with the Pharaoh's attendant, and told him what was to come in order to save countless from the devastating famine
- Jacob pronounced God's blessing on Joseph's descendants – these had already been great but would be even greater (v.26)
- God was the One who had blessed him in so many different ways (v.25) and would continue to bless them (v.26)

5. What do the names of God that Jacob uses in v.24-25 tell us about God? How were these attributes of God a comfort to Jacob and Joseph, and how can they be a comfort to us today?

Names of God:

- Mighty One of Jacob – speaks of the power of God, and how He had acted on behalf of Jacob → His transcendence (Mighty One) and immanence (a personal God, the God of Jacob)
- the Shepherd – speaks of the care and provision of God; also, His protection and guidance
- the Rock of Israel – the One in whom Israel's security and stability are found; speaks also of the steadfastness of His promises
- your father's God – the same God who had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac & Jacob
- the Almighty – i.e. El Shaddai – again, speaking of God's power & sovereignty, but also a reminder of the name by which He identified Himself when making the covenant of circumcision with Abraham (Gen. 17:1)
- these names remind Joseph (and us) of who God is and His power and His faithfulness to Jacob's family → still the same today, since God does not change

Read Genesis 49:29 – 50:26

1. What did Jacob's instruction regarding his burial tell us about his faith? (see also Gen. 47:29-31)

- Jacob was determined to be buried in the land God had promised to him, to Isaac and to Abraham
- therefore gave very specific instructions on where he was to be buried – “the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought... from Ephron the Hittite” (v. 30)
- this was where Abraham / Sarah were buried, as well as Isaac, Rebekah and Leah
- Jacob identified with those men and women of faith, who took their final resting place in the land God promised to them
- while desire to be buried with ancestors was part of the culture of the day, Jacob's request also showed his faith in God's promise to give him the land
- e.g. Joseph's promise to do so in Gen. 47 resulted in Jacob worshipping God

2. Upon Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers sought his assurance of forgiveness. How did Joseph respond? How did he reassure them of his forgiveness? (cf. Romans 12:19-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:15) Why was he able to respond as he did?

- Joseph wept – perhaps because his brothers had so misjudged him and his motives
- spoke kindly to them and promised to provide for them
- reminded them that God was the only one who could judge fairly and that he was not the one to take vengeance against his brothers
- a reminder that vengeance belongs to the Lord (Rom 12:19) and that God's people are instead called to be kind, even to their enemies (Rom 12:20, 1 Thess 5:15)
- he also reminded them that God was in control of the situation
- though they had meant it for evil, He had intended it for good, for the saving of many lives (v. 20)
- Joseph's description of God is One who is completely sovereign of everything; God does good even through ordinary events and EVEN through the sins of people

3. How did Joseph's instruction regarding his burial differ from his father Jacob's? What does this tell us about his faith? (cf. Hebrews 11:22) How does his example of faith speak to us today?

- he did not instruct his people to bury him in the cave of his fathers in Canaan, as Jacob did
- instead, he identified with the children of Israel who would leave Egypt at a later time
- was very certain of every promise that God made to them, as God had always been with him through his life
- thus, he knew and reminded his people that God would one day visit them one day in the future to take them out of Egypt (v. 24-25)
- this was promised to Abraham in Gen. 15:13-16 – that his descendants would be mistreated as slaves for 400 years, then brought out with great possessions
- seeing this deliverance, Joseph prophesied regarding the Exodus (Heb. 11:22) and instructed the people to bring his body out with them – in faith that God would indeed deliver His people
- incidentally, Joseph died at age 110 (v. 26) – considered the perfect age for death by the Egyptians – another testimony to them that this was someone who was truly blessed by God
- his example of faith in this episode speaks to us today, e.g. by reminding us that God's promises will never fail – thus, we can commit and stake our lives and our futures entirely on Him, as Joseph did
- saw so clearly that God would deliver Israel from Egypt that he was willing to identify with God's people in their suffering and wait 400 years to be buried rather than insisting on the trip right away
- his body would be a tangible reminder through their hardships that God would come to their aid and bring them out

Aliens and Strangers

As we draw our study of the book of Genesis to a close, we are reminded once again of the life of faith that God commends, as exemplified in the life of Joseph. Though his brothers attacked him and sold him into slavery with bitterness and malice in their hearts, Joseph remained steadfast in faith. While suffering unjustly in Egypt, he entrusted himself to God and continued to do what was good and right. And God was with him to bless him, causing him to prosper in all he did, and making him like “a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall” (Gen. 50:22). After he rose to power, Joseph continued in faith, choosing names for his sons that were reminders of God's faithfulness to him (Gen. 41:51-52). It was this same faith that enabled him to forgive his brothers for the wrong they had done him, for he saw that though they had intended it for evil, the God whom he trusted intended it for good, for the saving of many lives. By faith, Hebrews 11:22 says, “Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones,” so sure was he of God's promise to deliver His people from Egypt (Gen. 15:13-14).

And so, Joseph persevered in faith. In death as in life, he staked everything on the promises of God, and received blessings “greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills” (Gen. 50:26). Great as his blessings were, however, they only point to the greater blessing that has now come to us who have faith in Jesus Christ, in whom God has blessed us “in the heavenly realms with **every** spiritual blessing”. (Eph. 1:3) How much more than Joseph, then, should we stake our all on the One in whom all of God's promises are “Yes” and “Amen” (2 Cor. 1:19). Reflect tonight on what it means to live by faith. Have you trusted Jesus Christ completely with your life? Are there promises that God has made in His Word that you're having a hard time trusting Him for? Spend some time memorizing, meditating on, then living out the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”