



Lesson 29

Last Things

In our last lesson we saw how Pharaoh accepted Jacob and his family and gave them the land of Goshen in which to live. Jacob was 130 years old when this happened and he lived another 17 years, dying at 147 years of age. As his end approached, he first blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph and then he called all of his sons together to tell them of the destiny of the 12 tribes of Israel that would be their descendants.

Jacob blesses his Sons (chapter 49)

“Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.” Genesis 49:2

Notice that both names are used here. His sons are to come to Jacob, their natural father, but they are to listen to spiritual things which will be said by Israel (the special name given to faithful Jacob by God).

Reuben was his firstborn son but had shown that he could not be trusted. He had taken one of his father’s wives for himself and grossly wronged his father. He would never have the special position normally given to the eldest son because of this. The tribe of Reuben was never an important one in Israel.

Simeon and Levi were natural brothers, the sons of the same mother, Leah. They had plotted against and cruelly killed all the men of Shechem which brought shame on the family. Jacob loathed this and told them that they would never settle in the land of Canaan as united tribes but would be scattered amongst the others.

Judah had been the son whom Jacob could trust and a special blessing was given to him. From him would come the kings of Israel and also the Lord Jesus Christ through Mary (who was descended from Judah).

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” Genesis 49:10

Many years later the prophet Ezekiel continued this message of Jesus as the king who will come saying *‘until he comes whose right it is and I will give it him’*.

Jacob told his sons that they would all acknowledge this special descendant of Judah who would overcome all his enemies.

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you.” Genesis 49:8

This has not yet happened; the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and eventually killed him. However, when he returns he will overcome all his enemies. Then the Jews will realize that their ancestors killed God’s anointed king and will bow down in worship of him.

Zebulon was told that his territory in the land of Israel would border the sea. However this never happened but the prophet Ezekiel tells us of the way the land of Israel will be divided when Christ returns, at that time Zebulon’s territory will be extended to the Mediterranean Sea.

Issachar like Zebulon and Naphtali was a tribe that settled in the north of the land. One translation of Jacob’s words about this son suggests that his descendants would become hard working farmers.

“Issachar has desired that which is good; resting between the inheritances. And having seen the resting place that it was good, and the land that it was fertile, he subjected his shoulder to labour, and became a husbandman (farmer).” Genesis 49:14-15

Dan was a tribe from which a judge would come; this was fulfilled through Samson, one of the great judges of Israel. But Dan was not a tribe to be trusted; it would be treacherous in its dealings with others. We read later (in Judges 18) about an incident which showed this characteristic.



Gad was a tribe that made a very bad choice. It asked to settle on the east bank of the River Jordan because the land there was good. However, this was an isolated part, separated from most of the remaining tribes and very vulnerable to invasion. Jacob, inspired by God, foresaw this.

Asher was told that his inheritance would make his children rich and they would supply food for the king's court.

Naphtali gave 'goodly words' (King James version). This tribe settled around Galilee where Jesus grew up and preached the Gospel – the 'Good News of the Kingdom of God'.

Joseph was told that he would have many blessings from God – many children, much land, his descendants would be made strong by the Lord. He became the father of two tribes named after his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, Both of these became strong, powerful tribes with much territory in the land of Israel.

Benjamin is mentioned last. No doubt this youngest son would be puzzled when told his descendants would be 'ravenous wolves'. However we read in Judges 19&20 of wicked, savage behaviour by Benjamites. Also King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin and he persecuted David, trying to hunt him down and kill him.

The Death of Jacob (chapter 50)

Jacob was about to die and he was determined on one thing - he must be buried in the land of the Promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He would sleep with his ancestors until the day when those promises would be fulfilled. He said *'I have waited for your salvation O Lord'*.

There was a great mourning amongst both the Israelites and the Egyptians for Jacob. A large party of men assembled and took his body back to the land of Canaan for burial. He was buried in the cave that already contained the bodies of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah all of them awaiting the day of the resurrection from the dead when Christ returns.

Joseph returned to Egypt and lived out his life there dying at the age of 110. He lived to see his great, great, great grandchildren! In this detail is a clue to what we see when we turn the page of the Bible and come to the Book of Exodus. God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation and now his descendants began to multiply greatly in Egypt. Joseph knew that the time would come when they would all return to the land of Canaan which would then become Israel, the land of the Children of Israel (Jacob). He made his family promise that they would keep his bones and take them with them when they left.

So ends the Genesis record.

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned:

- Jacob's blessings of his sons were inspired words, given by God. They were amazing accurate in the way they identified what would happen to the tribes that would develop from each son.
- Both Jacob and Joseph knew that the stay in Egypt would not last for ever. Eventually the Children of Israel would return to the Promised Land as God had said. Both wanted their bodies to be buried there to await the Resurrection Day and the fulfilment of God's promises to their fathers.

