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Genesis 48 - 50



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In this presentation, Steve Gregg explores the final chapters of Genesis, which focus on the family business being taken care of before Jacob's death. Jacob blesses his sons, who become the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, but the interpretation of the blessings is somewhat difficult to understand. Other topics discussed include the division of the nation of Israel, the disqualification of some sons from the birthright, and the prophecy of the Messiah or Jesus Christ in relation to the tribe of Judah. Throughout the story of Joseph, we see forgiveness and the theme that God can use even harm for good.

Transcript

In Genesis chapter 48, we only have three chapters left, and some important family business has to be taken care of in Jacob's family before he dies. And one of those things is the adoption of Joseph's two sons. It says, Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, Indeed, your father is sick.

And he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And Jacob was told, Look, your son Joseph is coming to you. And Israel strengthened himself and sat up on his bed.

And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz, which is Bethel, in the land of Canaan and blessed me and said to me, Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you. And I will make of you a multitude of people and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession. And now your two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, who he mentioned in reverse order, by the way, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt are mine as Reuben and Simeon.

They shall be mine. Now, of course, they were already his grandsons. But what he means is they'll be like Reuben and Simeon are my sons, which is just as I'm going to adopt them as full sons.

And this is entirely to their advantage, because this is the way in which Jacob is going to give Joseph a part of the birthright. We know that Judah is the one who received the spiritual aspects of the birthright, because Jesus came through him and therefore the seed of Abraham through all the nations of the earth to be blessed came through Judah.

But there was another aspect of the birthright was merely earthly, not a spiritual thing.

Just the ordinary part of a birthright where the oldest son would get a double portion of the father's inheritance. But Jacob doesn't have anything really to leave his son. I mean, they have livestock, but but the big inheritance is the land of Canaan.

And that's what he says here. The Lord appeared to me and said, he's giving this land to your descendants as an everlasting possession. So the land of Canaan is the real inheritance to leave to his sons.

And how should they divide that up? Well, they did divide it up in the days of Joshua. Each tribe got a portion. But since Joseph's sons became full sons of Jacob, then Joseph became two tribes instead of one.

And therefore, when each tribe received a portion, Joseph's tribe got two portions. He got the double portion of the inheritance because Ephraim got an inheritance and Manasseh got an inheritance. And they were had been.

You see, if not for this adoption, then Joseph would have gotten one portion of the inheritance and Ephraim and Manasseh would have to divide that between themselves. But in this way, they become full tribes. And therefore, Joseph is the son who gets the double portion of the family inheritance in the land.

Unlike Judah, this is only a temporary blessing because, of course, the Jews don't even have the land anymore. I mean, they're in the land, many of them, but it's not secured to them. And for a long time, they weren't even in the land.

It's the land promises, as we have seen, are conditional upon obedience. And therefore, what Joseph's seed inherited was not necessarily. Secure forever, but Judah's seed is Christ, and obviously that's an eternal.

And will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. But as for me, when I came from Patton, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way. And there was but a little distance to go to Ephraim.

And I buried her there on the way to Ephraim, that is, Bethlehem. Then Israel saw Joseph's sons and said, Who are these? And Joseph said to his father, They are my sons whom God has given me in this place. Now, this question obviously is not seeking information.

It would appear that this begins sort of a ritual of adoption. So it begins with asking this question and getting these answers and so forth. So, I mean, it's not like he suddenly says, Who are these kids here? He's already been talking about them as his own sons now.

But verse eight, it would appear there's sort of a formal ritual of adoption that takes place. And it begins with him saying, Who are these? It's sort of like when the minister says, Who gives this woman to be married to this man? Well, he already knows the answer, but it's part of the ritual. Yes, the question, get the answer and so forth.

So Joseph said to his father, They're the sons whom God has given me in this place. And Jacob said, Please bring them to me and I will bless them. Now, the eyes of Israel were dim with age so that he could not see.

Then Joseph brought them near him and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, I had not thought to see your face. But in fact, God has also shown me your offspring.

Probably before he went blind, he's now been 17 years in Egypt restored with Joseph. And so he probably has gone blind after coming to Egypt. So he did see Joseph and his offspring before going blind.

So Joseph brought them from beside his knees. And he bowed down with his face to the earth and Joseph took them both Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh, the older one with his left hand toward Israel's right hand and brought them near. Of course, when you're facing someone, your right hand is opposite their left hand and so forth.

Jacob was going to put his hands on these boys and bless them. The right hand would be the hand of preference. And so Joseph brought his sons up and positioned them in such a way that as Jacob put his hand, his right hand would be on Manasseh, the older son who should receive the preferential blessing.

And Ephraim would be his left hand. That's how that's how they're positioned here. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly for Manasseh was the firstborn.

So actually, he actually had to cross his arms to do this blessing here. And he blessed Joseph and said, God, before whom my father's Abraham and Isaac walked with God, who has fed me all my life long to this day, the angel who redeemed me from all evil. Bless the lad.

Let my name be named upon them and the name of my father's Abraham and Isaac and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. Now, when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. So he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from me from his head to Manasseh's head.

And Joseph said to his father, not so my father, for this one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head. But his father refused and said, I know my son, I know he also shall

become a people and he also shall be great.

But truly, his younger brother shall be greater than he and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations. So he blessed them that day saying, by you, Israel will bless saying, may God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh. And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

That is, people will not say, may God bless you as he blessed Manasseh and Ephraim, which would be normal. He says, no, from now on, people say, may God bless you as Ephraim and Manasseh, thus putting Ephraim ahead, the younger son ahead. Then Israel said to Joseph, behold, I'm dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

Moreover, I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow. Now, as I understand this particular portion he's talking about is not entirely, it's not entirely clear what he's referring to, because we don't read of Jacob ever going to war and acquiring land by war. However, it is thought by many that this is a reference to the city of Shechem, which had been conquered by Simeon and Levi.

Whom he might be referring to as his sword and his bow. This property had been taken from the Shechemites and had apparently become the property of Jacob, though we haven't read much about that. But that may be what he's referring to there.

Now, it was near Shechem that Jesus met the woman at the well and she was at Jacob's well. And she when Jesus said, if you ask me, I'd give you living water. She said, you don't have a bucket, you don't have a rope.

And where are you going to get this living water? Are you better than Jacob who gave this well to our fathers? Now, their fathers were Joseph the Ephraimites. It says here that Ephraim would become the father of many nations or he will become many nations. When the nation of Israel divided in the days of Rehoboam after Solomon's death, Rehoboam took the throne of David after Solomon.

Rehoboam was a foolish young king, and he divided the nation by his foolishness and split into two, never to be rejoined again. The southern kingdom was remained loyal to David's household and was called Judah. It was really two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, but because Judah was so much larger, the nation that included the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin was called the nation of Judah.

The northern kingdom had 10 tribes, but the largest of those was Ephraim. So the northern kingdom was sometimes called Israel and sometimes it was simply called Ephraim. But the Ephraimites or the nation of Israel in the north ended up going into captivity and never returning.

What happened is when the Assyrians conquered that nation to the north, the people eventually intermarried with the pagans and they became many nations. Their blood got mixed with many nations' blood. And some of those who were in the area who were the half-breed Ephraimites slash Gentiles were what were called the Samaritans in Jesus' day.

The woman at the well was a Samaritan. Therefore, she traced her ancestry, at least in part, to Ephraim and to Joseph. Therefore, though she also had a lot of pagan blood in her, as all her people did.

But the point here is that the well that Jesus met her at was near Sychar or Shechem. And it was a well that she said that Jacob had given to their ancestors, on this occasion, apparently, that Jacob gave this property to Joseph's descendants. And so it had remained, it's still called Jacob's well at that time.

And it was apparently this property he's referring to that had been acquired by violence. Now, now that we've got Ephraim and Manasseh elevated to the status of sons rather than grandsons of Jacob, we will have him dispensing with his blessings for the other sons. And that's what chapter 49 is almost entirely about up through verse 27.

Now, these 27 verses, when you read them, you think, oh, I can't wait till Steve expounds them because I don't know what they mean. And I just want to tell you, I don't know what a lot of them mean either. There's some of them we just we don't know what they mean, partly because the later specific endowments of these tribes and their individual histories as tribes are not well documented.

We do have, of course, documentation in the books of Kings and so forth about much of what happened in Israel and in Judah, but not so very much about what specifically was going on with the tribe of Issachar or Zebulun or Naphtali or some of these. And therefore, we don't really have the records, the historical records to tell us very much about some of these guys. Now, some of the blessings that were rather short and enigmatic, they were somewhat difficult to know exactly what they mean.

They use symbolic or poetic language. And perhaps the people of those tribes at a later date, maybe even in Moses' day, would be able to say, oh, OK, we see how that's been fulfilled with this tribe or that tribe. But we don't have that information.

So it's going to be a frustration in some cases that we read this and say, well, this is what he said, but I don't know what it means. I don't know what happened. You know, something happened.

These are prophetic. And in some cases, we can see very easily what they mean. But you just have to live with some with some ignorance about some of this.

Now, Jacob called his sons and said, gather together that I may tell you what shall befall

you in the last days. And this is his patriarchal blessing, but the patriarchal blessings often were predictive prophecy, perhaps not with other families, but with this family. Abram was a prophet.

Isaac and Jacob apparently were regarded to have, you know, since God talked to them, I guess that makes some prophets. And so they were able to prophesy. And when it says in the last days, of course, there's many people, modern, especially dispassionate, who would say, well, this is talking about modern times, the last days were living in the last days.

And so he's saying this is what would happen to Israel in our time. On the other hand, there's no reason to be certain that we are living in what could be called the last days of anything except maybe the American way of life. But that doesn't mean the last days of the world.

We sometimes think the end of the American way of life is the same as the end of the world, but they probably thought that when the Roman Empire fell to. Oh, that's the end of the world. But it wasn't.

And when England had its great heyday and then it diminished and went down to not much, they thought some of the English probably thought, oh, it's the end of the world. But it wasn't. When our own society starts going downhill, we begin to think, oh, this must be the end of the world, because, well, we are the world.

I mean, we are we're rather provincial. We see every like the whole world is us. And it is really.

And so even if we're living in times of decline of our own nation, it doesn't tell us really very much about whether we're living at the end of the world or not. Some things are getting better in some nations. And so I don't necessarily think we have solid basis for saying we are living in the last days if by that we mean the end of the world.

But here when he says the last days, it's to be understood he means the latter days or times in the future. And these days, actually, that he's speaking of do not have to mean the end of the world. It can just mean in much later times than their own.

It's a common expression that prophets use that often was talking about things that were not the end of the world, like when Peter on the Day of Pentecost says this is what was prophesied by the prophet Joel, who said in the last days, I will pour out my spirit, says the Lord. Well, he said, this is it. It's the last days.

So but it wasn't the end of the world. And a lot of times the prophets speak of that. It just means days long hence from now.

And so the future of these tribes is in some sense summarized or predicted in some way

in some of these prophecies. OK, gather together in here, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel, your father. Reuben, you're my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength.

The excellency of dignity, the excellency of power, or at least you should have been. In fact, you were as unstable as water. You shall not excel because you went up to your father's bed.

Then you defiled it. Then he says, he went up to my couch. Can you believe it? Can you believe this boy did that? You know, it's like he breaks off from his prophecy.

Can you guys believe this? Do you hear what he did? Now, it's interesting that this happened some long time earlier, years earlier. We know that Reuben had slept with Bilhah, the concubine, and Israel, it says, heard of it, but didn't do anything about it. He may have shown general disfavor to Reuben after this, and Reuben may have picked up that his dad wasn't happy.

But in general, no punishment came. It was adultery. It was incest.

It was punishable by death, even in that society before the law. But he seemed to get away with it. And here's the thing that this tells us, is that a lot of times when you do what is sinful, nothing immediately happens.

And it seems like you got away with it. And sometimes it's just being stored up for the right moment. You know, Israel knew, Jacob knew that his son had done this and didn't lower the boom on him until almost his dying breath.

And he said, you're out. You would have been the excellency of strength, but you're unstable. You're a man unstable as water.

If you would go in and sleep with Bilhah, you must be a very unstable person. I mean, no one who's thinking in his right mind would do something like that. I mean, like I said, it's not just a matter of lust.

The woman was a lot older than him. She was old enough to be his mother. And there were lots of women.

They had taken all the women of Shechem as slaves and so forth, and those were available for wives. It's not like he didn't have any women folk around. He was just driven by lust.

He did something impulsive and stupid. And that cost him permanently his birthright, which would have been his otherwise. You know, there's a verse in Ecclesiastes that I always think of when I think of Reuben like this.

In Ecclesiastes, chapter eight and verse twelve, I believe it is or eleven, it is. And twelve,

because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. And it is, though a sinner does evil a hundred times and his days are prolonged.

Yet surely I know that it will go well with those who fear God, who fear before him, but it will not go well with the wicked. But he says in the end, it will not go well for the wicked. But the sentence isn't always executed immediately.

You do an evil thing, something that you heard is supposed to get in trouble for, and you don't get in trouble. Say, oh, well, what do you know? I can do this kind of thing and get away with it. Because the sentence is not executed speedily, it says.

Therefore, the hearts of the sons of men is set in them to do evil. They think, well, why not? I was scared the first time I did it. I thought the boom was going to be lowered.

I mean, nothing happened. So I did it again. It still doesn't happen.

And I can live in sin now because there's no consequences. And someone says, well, that's not really true. There are consequences.

They're just not immediate. That's what Rubin found. He did something really wicked and really evil.

But he seemed to get away with it. Now, we don't know that he ever repeated that particular action, but he probably lived the rest of his life thinking I'm scot-free on this. But then he finds out in the end there was a punishment.

There was a cost. And it just came up much later. Same thing with Simeon and Levi.

They're taken together. They're the second and third sons. Simeon and Levi are brothers.

Well, of course, they're brothers. That's what goes without saying. But what he means is they are similar.

In Hebrew idiom, sometimes being a brother of something means you bear a resemblance to them. It says in Proverbs that he that is a slothful man is a brother to him who is a waster. It just means that he's a brother to him and that there's a resemblance, a family resemblance, so to speak, in their behavior.

And so when he says Simeon and Levi are brothers, it means more than just that they're siblings, that they are two peas in a pod, we would say. Instruments of cruelty are in their habitation. Let not my soul enter their council.

Let not my honor be unified to their assembly. So they're obviously not getting the birthright. For in their anger, they slew a man and in their self-will, they hamstringed an

ox.

Now, hamstringing an ox, usually when you would conquer a nation in those days, you would hamstring usually their horses. The horses were their military equipment. They were their military vehicles.

And the hamstringing, they cut the hamstring on the back of the legs of the horses would be crippled and of no use. And when you conquer your enemies, you'd hamstring their horses so that they could not rise up and retaliate against you. And so without their horses, they couldn't fight.

Now, hamstringing an oxen would seem or ox would seemingly just be an act of cruelty, just an act of senseless destruction. And it may be figurative. We don't read in the earlier story at Shechem that they hamstringed an ox or they did anything like that to the livestock there.

But he may be using it figuratively that they did a deed that is as senselessly cruel as if a man would hamstring an ox. That's very possibly what is meant here. And he curses their anger.

There's not a blessing on these guys. This is the patriarchal blessing moment. And he says, curses be their anger.

They obviously are passed over. Now, the first three sons, then Reuben, Simeon and Levi, all disqualified by their own bad conduct for the birthright. That leaves Judah next in line.

And it's clear that Jacob acknowledges Judah as the one who receives the birthright. Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise. Obviously, a play on words since Judah means praise.

Your brothers will praise you. But that also means you're going to have supremacy. Your brothers will look up to you.

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's children shall bow down before you. This is the kind of thing that was that Jacob received the blessing from his father, that his mother's sons would serve him and so forth.

So this is clearly a birthright blessing. Judah is a lion's wealth from the prey. My son, you have gone up.

He bows down, he lies down as a lion and as a lion who shall rouse him. Now, it's not clear exactly what this imagery means. There's similar animal imagery in some of these other blessings.

And it's not always obvious what it means. But certainly a lion in those days, as now is

considered to be a very regal animal, a very stately animal, an animal that didn't really have any natural enemies, one that could just strut around, lie down at leisure, get up and do what it wants to do, because no one really attacks lions. Now, of course, that's not entirely true, because there are some kinds of wild animals that do occasionally attack lions.

Hyenas do. Cape hunting dogs in South Africa do. But for the most part, lions are invulnerable.

They're unafraid of anything, almost everything. Even elephants will leave them alone. And so maybe he's simply saying that like a lion, he's got this regal dignity and people will respect him.

Then he says something very important in verse 10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah. Now, a scepter is.

You know, an ornate rod that in the hand of a king represents his royal status. In some countries that still have kings, even if the kings are mere figureheads, they have their scepter, they keep it in a safe, in a vault somewhere, because the ownership of the scepter represents the right to be the king or the queen. And so it's a symbolic item, a possession which a king possesses.

And if he's got it, it's like having those teraphim in Laban's house. You're in charge if you have the scepter. And it says the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet.

Between his feet refers to his offspring, the people, his children that come from him until Shiloh comes and to him shall the obedience of the people be. Now, this is generally recognized as a prophecy about the Messiah, and I believe it is properly seen that way. The Messiah came from Judah, and this is hinted at here.

He says that the scepter is not going to depart from Judah until Shiloh comes. Now, Shiloh means him to whom it rightly belongs. That's what most scholars believe that the word Shiloh means, the rightful owner.

In other words, Shiloh means the rightful owner, the one to whom it belongs. So the scepter of rulership in Israel is going to be invested in the tribe of Judah, and it will remain there until the ultimate ruler comes, the one to whom the scepter belongs, the Messiah. And to him, the people will gather, to him will be the gathering or the obedience of the people.

The King James says the gathering. The New King James says the obedience of the people. The point is, when Shiloh comes, people will obey him.

He's the Lord. He is Jesus. He's the one to whom the scepter belongs.

He's the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given. And therefore, there is a reference here to that. Now, I would point out to you that the word until functions here, as it does in some other places that are important to note.

I noticed it in an earlier passage in Genesis. I don't remember now where it was, but I almost made comment about it then. But I'll make comment about it now.

This does not mean that the scepter will be in the tribe of Judah until Shiloh comes, then it'll go to some other tribe. It means until the ultimate king of Judah comes. And of course, the scepter will remain with Judah then.

But the until doesn't mean this is a duration that will come to an end at this point. It means that there is an end anticipated. And until that is brought about, the scepter is going to remain in the family and it will continue to remain in the family when that end is there.

But the end is sort of a stop point of the vision. And until that point, and the reason I bring this up is because there's verses in the New Testament that people I think misunderstand that use the word until that way also. And I wish I could remember now what the earlier instance in Genesis was.

If you look up until you'll find it, because it was only a few chapters back a few days ago. I almost comment on this, but similar thing versus such and such will happen until something. But it's obvious that it doesn't mean and then it'll stop at that point.

It means this something is the goal to which it looks forward. And until then, there will be no interruption in this circumstance. But there won't be an interruption then either.

It's just that at that point, it's the fulfillment is going to happen. But in the New Testament, you've got statements like that in Matthew. I should say in Luke 21, where Jesus said that Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

And some people say, well, that means that after the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled, Jerusalem no longer be trampled underfoot because he said it's only going to happen until then. But if the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled is essentially the ultimate thing to which God is looking forward. He's just saying until the full fulfillment of God's plan exists, this condition in Israel is going to be uninterrupted.

They'll be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles the whole time until the end, essentially, not suggesting that then they won't be anymore. It's a different meaning of the word until. Likewise, in Romans chapter 11 and verse 26, it says that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in.

Um, so the times of the Gentiles, I may have quoted it wrong in Luke 21. In Luke 21, he

says until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. I don't know if I quoted it that way or otherwise, but people say, well, you see, blindness in part has happened to Israel only until the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

And then they expect something else to happen. But the fullness of the Gentiles coming in is the fullness of God's plan, the fulfillment of all the promises. In other words, until God's purposes have been completely fulfilled, this blindness will continue to be part of the of the phenomenon.

Part of part of Israel is going to be blind all the way through. But it's not suggesting something will change after that. As it says, the scepter will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes.

It doesn't mean but then it will. Because that would then be suggesting the Messiah will not be of the tribe of Judah. When Shiloh comes, he'll take it from the tribe of Judah.

He'll have it instead of them. But it's not mean that it means Shiloh is coming. The one who really deserves the scepter, he is coming.

And he is coming from the tribe of Judah, in fact. And until he comes, the tribe of Judah will be the stewards of that. They will maintain the scepter until he comes.

And of course, when he comes, they'll still have it in him because he's of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is referred to in Revelation as the lion of the tribe of Judah. Apparently, borrowing imagery from this prophecy of him being like a lion.

Judah is like a lion. That's the only other place that we would derive that idea. Though later on, when the camps of Israel moved in the wilderness as separate tribes, they were in groups of three.

Three tribes in front of the tabernacle, three behind it and three on each side or whatever. Or was it four? It was groups of four and then it was just the Levites and Moses and Aaron in front. But the point is, they were in groups and there were standards.

Traditionally, the Jews say there were standards, banners that were carried by these different groups. And the banner of Judah was that of a lion. And so that's that also no doubt comes from this.

St. Judah is a lion as well. But the Messiah would come. He would come from Judah.

And it says in verse 11, binding his donkey to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine. He washed his garments in wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, his teeth wider than milk.

Now, what's all this mean? Well, it might mean something very esoteric and very mystical, but I think probably all it means is it's using the imagery of the day to speak of

great prosperity. To say he binds his donkey to the vine. Well, the vine is not a very sturdy plant.

Usually a vine is a very rather flimsy plant. You don't even the Bible says elsewhere, you don't even take a vine to make it such a thing as a tent peg. You know, it's just it's not useful wood for anything because it's it's a it's a kind of a flimsy plant plant and a donkey is a strong animal.

You want to bind it to something, something stable, a tree or something. But he says that Judah will be able to bind his donkey to a vine, which suggests that his vines will be hardy. His vines will be large and strong, strong enough to bind a donkey to which you normally would not.

And this is probably not literal. It's just saying that he's going to have strong, healthy vineyards. His teeth will be white with milk, his eyes dark with wine.

He'll have a lot of milk, a lot of cows, in other words, a lot of livestock and a lot of wine, which are simply the emblems of prosperity to an agrarian people. And so he gives Judah the rulership over his brothers and he also bequeathed him prosperity and he also predicts the coming of the Messiah. These are part of the blessing given to Judah.

Zebulun, by contrast, in verse 13, gets a short shrift. Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea. He shall become a haven for ships and his border shall adjoin side of.

Now, as I understand it, Zebulun didn't receive property that was adjacent with the Mediterranean Sea. I'm not looking at the map right now, but I guess I could. But I believe that Zebulun did border against the Sea of Galilee.

Let's see if I've got a map that gives those those tribal boundaries. I guess this this one does not give them. Some of you may have them, but we do know that Zebulun and Naphtali both were the region where Jesus began his ministry, because there is a prophecy about that in Isaiah chapter nine, verse one in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali.

It says those who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And then Matthew quotes that in Matthew chapter four and applies that to Jesus ministry in those regions. So up around the Sea of Galilee is no doubt where we're talking about here.

And Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea. He shall become a haven for ships and his border shall adjoin side. Not much information there.

Isashar is a strong donkey lying down between two burdens. He saw that the rest was good and that the land was pleasant. He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden and he became a band of slaves.

Not much known about the exact fulfillment of this. Apparently, he became contented in his inheritance eventually, and so contented that he lost. He let down his guard and he became a band of slaves.

That certainly did happen eventually to the whole northern tribes, which included Zebulun and Issachar and those people in the days of the Assyrian invasion. And it may it may look forward that far or it may not. It may look forward to one of the one of those cycles in the book of Judges where, you know, enemies came in and they captured and suppressed and oppressed Israel.

You know, there's so many situations that could end up being the fulfillment of this. It's just hard to nail any of them down. Verse 16, Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.

Dan, the name Dan means judging. So there's a play on words there. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path that bites the horse's heels.

And so that its rider shall fall backward. And they said, I have waited for your salvation, O Yahweh. Now, this is very mysterious because we don't know very much that would make this, I mean, would correspond with this.

Dan was the northernmost tribe. Samson was from the tribe of Dan. And some people think that he might be a fulfillment.

Dan shall judge his brethren or judge his people. Well, Samson was a judge and he was from the tribe of Dan. So but he was only one of many judges and most of the judges were not.

But maybe that was his one. Dan, the tribe of Dan's one claim to fame is having that one famous guy who was a judge. But when it says that he'll be like a viper, a serpent that bites the horse's heels and the rider falls backward.

This obviously is referring to some kind of treachery or some kind of ambush tactics that does some harm to his enemies. But we don't really know exactly what's involved with that because the details are not known to us. He says, I have waited for your salvation, O Lord.

Now, actually, some especially dispensationalists have said that the reason that Jacob breaks off at this point and says something like this, I've waited for your salvation, O Lord, is because as he is focusing on the future of the tribe of Dan, that Jacob realized that the Antichrist will come from Dan. And therefore, in despair, Jacob cries out, O Lord, I've waited for your salvation. Now, that's pretty far fetched, but you'll hear it a lot of places.

And actually, one of the church fathers said that the Antichrist will come from the tribe of

Dan. I forget if it's Tertullian or another. One of the church fathers said so.

In fact, they said that that's why in Revelation chapter 7, when 144,000 are listed and there's 12,000 for each of the 12 tribes and their name that the tribe of Dan is omitted. And I say, you see, there won't be 12,000 for the tribe of Dan because the Antichrist comes from Dan. Well, the problem with all of this is that there's no place in the Bible that associates the Antichrist with the tribe of Dan.

In fact, there's not very many places in the Bible that even speak about Antichrist. But the places that do do not tell us anything about tribal associations. And so to suggest the Antichrist is going to come from Dan is 100% speculation without any shred of biblical data to base it on.

Except that, you know, well, Dan is missing from the 144,000. But there might be any number of reasons for that. Certainly doesn't tell us the Antichrist is there.

And this, to apply it here, is really a stretch. I mean, there's just no reason to say that that's why he said this. Verse 19, Gad, a troop.

Remember, Gad means a troop. A troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last. So he's going to have a hard time again in the period of the judges.

Things like this did happen. These tribes did get trampled upon by invading armies. But when the judges would arise, they'd try.

So, I mean, it's hard to know any specific case that this is referring to. There could be any number. Verse 20, bread from Asher shall be rich and he shall yield royal dainties.

So that's positive. Apparently, they'll have a lot of grain growing in their future and be able to make a lot of bread and dainties. Naphtali is a deer let loose.

He gives goodly words. Now, there's absolutely nothing known about Naphtali that would connect with this. But that doesn't mean it's not true.

It just means we know very little about Naphtali. The man, Naphtali, we know nothing about, except that he's one of the brothers. We have no specific information about him as an individual.

So that he gives goodly words. Maybe that was true of the man, Naphtali. Maybe he was well-spoken.

Maybe he was capable of being an orator. Who knows? Or maybe it's a reference to the tribe of Naphtali in some future time, which we have no record about. So it's a little frustrating when we really want to understand this and we don't have enough information.

Verse 22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well. His branches run over the wall.

The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength and his arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. From there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.

By the God of your father, who will help you and by the Almighty, who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him who has was separate from his brothers.

Now, although there's figurative language here, we know enough about Joseph to put some of it together. It's clearly very much informed by the fact that he had been despised by his brothers and isolated from them by his absence in Egypt. I mean, there's a direct reference to that in verse 26, that he's the one who was separate from his brothers.

When it says that in verse 23, the archers have bitterly grieved him and shot at him and hated him. But he withstood them. His bow remained strong.

There's a picture here of a warfare going on. But of course, it wasn't literally that they were shooting at each other. It's rather they were in competition with each other.

And he won. His brothers competed with him, hated him. They were hostile toward him.

They were, as it were, his enemies making war against him. But he obviously came out on top. When it says he's a fruitful bough in verse 22, and his branches run over the wall.

I don't know if that just means that he's like a tree that's so big and so prosperous and so healthy that its branches stretch out even beyond the borders of the land it's built on over the walls and so forth, perhaps to provide fruit for others over the wall. If so, it may be suggesting that Joseph was used by God to bless and to feed others besides the family, the Egyptians, for example, were spared starvation. Because God had this Jewish tree planted in the garden there and his branches reached out where even beyond the borders of the family of Israel to bless Gentiles as well.

Now, what's most interesting in this thing, in my opinion, is the second part of verse 24. Where it says that the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. Now, that in itself isn't particularly strange, but this parenthesis from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.

Now, the shepherd, the stone of Israel could be references to God himself, although it says from there, from where? He's made reference already to the mighty God of Jacob.

He doesn't say the mighty God of Jacob is the shepherd and is the stone, but rather that the shepherd and the stone comes from the mighty God of Jacob. The shepherd of Israel and the stone of Israel come from God, which suggests that the stone and the shepherd are not a reference to God himself, but one who comes from him.

Now, of course, as Christians, we know that Jesus is often referred to as a rock, as a stone in the prophecies, both in the Old Testament prophecies about him and also in New Testament references to him. And the shepherd, of course, immediately calls Jesus to mind in our minds. But the question is, is it valid? And I'm thinking it is.

You know, I mean, we sometimes immediately think of Jesus in Old Testament passages because the words are similar to things in the New Testament. We think, well, maybe that's not really supposed to be about him. Just sounds like it.

I think this must be a reference to Christ, who is, of course, the shepherd and the stone of Israel, the foundation stone of the new Israel. Because it says in Isaiah chapter 29 and verse 28, verse 16, it says, behold, I lay in Zion. For a foundation, a stone, a choice stone, a precious cornerstone.

And he's referring to Jesus as the foundation that is laid in Israel in Zion. He's the stone upon which the new Israel is built. So we have these references to Joseph.

But when it says from there comes the shepherd, it doesn't mean from Joseph. It's not saying from the tribe of Joseph. It's from the mighty God of Jacob that that stone comes from.

So there are predictions of the coming of the Messiah, both in the oracle about Judah and the oracle about Joseph. Now, verse 27, Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. In the morning, he shall devour the prey and at night he shall divide the spoil.

Well, the Benjamites were pretty fierce folks, pretty fierce warriors. And this may be a reference to that. The tribe of Benjamin at one time made war against the whole rest of the nation of Israel and came close to hurting them bad.

But Benjamin also is the tribe from which King Saul came, or for that matter, the apostle Paul. Saul of Tarsus came from that tribe also. And he was pretty wolfy at first.

He was a wolf that tore into the flocks when he was a persecutor of the church. But it's not entirely clear what references this is, what events this is referring to. But it is prophetic and something in their later history, of course, can conform to this.

Actually, more than one thing could be imagined as being the fulfillment. Verse 28, And all these are the twelve tribes of Israel. And this is what their father spoke to them.

And he blessed them. He blessed each one according to his own blessing. Then he

charged them and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people.

Bury me with my father's in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite in the cave that is the field of Machpelah, which is before memory in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebecca, his wife.

And there I buried Leah. I don't think we've been told previously that Leah had been buried there, but we that had happened in the meantime. The field in the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of Heb.

And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he dropped his feet into his bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people. Now, see, this makes it very clear that gathered to people doesn't mean brought into the same grave because he he didn't. He eventually got gathered there, but this just means he gathered into the realm of the dead where his ancestors before him had gone.

So Chapter 50, we quickly wind up the story. Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians to embalm his father.

So the physicians embalmed Israel. That was easy enough for the Egyptians to do. They did it routinely, though.

Jacob was probably the first person to be laid in Machpelah who had been embalmed. But in embalming him, it made it easier to delay the burial because he wouldn't rot so quickly and they could actually transport him to Machpelah then. Forty days were required for him for such are the days required for those who are involved.

And the Egyptians mourned for him 70 days. Now, Joseph was a hero to the Egyptians and they apparently had a heart for his dad, too. So after his dad died, they all of Egypt to mourn for him.

And when the days of his mourning were passed, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Behold, I am dying in my grave, which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan. There you shall bury me. Now, therefore, please let me go up and bury my father and I will come back.

And Pharaoh said, Go up and bury your father as he made you swear. So Joseph went up to bury his father and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house and all the elders of the land of Egypt. So this is quite an important entourage, really, going up there to bury Jacob.

The most important people, probably everyone except Pharaoh himself, went to the funeral, as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen.

And it was a very great gathering. Then they came to the threshing floor of Etad, which is beyond the Jordan. And they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation.

He observed seven days of mourning for his father. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Kinaj, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Etad, they said, This is a grievous mourning of the Egyptians. Therefore, its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.

Abel Mizraim means the mourning of the Egyptians. Mizraim is the name for Egypt in the Bible. One of the sons of Ham was Mizraim.

That's where the Egyptians came from. So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them, for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abram bought with the field from Ephron, the Hittite, as a property for a burial place. And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.

Now, of course, the brothers are not sure what's going to happen to them next. As long as their father was alive, it's obvious Joseph would never retaliate against them and bring grief upon his father. But now that the father is dead, who knows what Joseph may do to them.

After all, they did do him some serious harm. They did, you know, kind of deprive him of what might have been thought otherwise of the best years of his life. But and remember, Esau wanting to kill Jacob said, I'll wait till my father's dead.

You know, I don't want to hurt the dad's heart, but he's gone. So now I can do what I want to do. And so the brothers thought maybe that's where Joseph is at.

And when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, perhaps Joseph will hate us and they actually repay us for the evil which we did to him. So they sent messengers to Joseph saying, Before your father died, he commanded saying, Thus you shall say to Joseph, I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin, for they did evil to you. Now, please forgive the trespass of the servants of God, your father, the God of the God of your father.

And Joseph wept when they spoke to him this way. He wept because he realized that his brothers were behind this message and that they had not yet realized that his forgiveness was genuine. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face and

they said, Behold, we are your servants.

Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. In order to bring it about as it is this day to save many people alive. Now, therefore, do not be afraid, I will provide for you and your little ones.

And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Verse 20, almost the last verse in Genesis is perhaps the perhaps the theme verse of the story of Joseph's life, that there were those who meant to do him harm, but God was on his side and everything he did prospered. God meant it for good.

And it is actually for the good of the brothers, too. Even those who intended harm were benefited. God took this evil deed of his brothers and got such a great return of good out of it.

And I mean, just think what he could do if you do the right thing. You know, and this is not an argument for doing bad things because God can turn bad into good. But rather, it just shows how versatile God is.

No doubt, it says in James, the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. That is to say, ordinarily, that's not what God wants to do. He doesn't want to use the wrath of man to bring about his righteous purposes.

But it says in the Psalms, he makes even the wrath of man to praise him. Even though the wrath of man is not God's instrument of choice to bring about his righteous purposes, he can do it even then. If God can take that which is meant for evil and make good out of it, how much more can he do with that which is done obediently to him and done by righteous people who are seeking to serve him? But the point here is that even those who seek to thwart God's will are unable to do so.

That God brings about his purposes, despite all the evil done to us. And we see that especially also in the life of Jesus. Those who crucified him were certainly doing a very evil thing.

But in the act of crucifying him, they brought about the salvation of the world inadvertently. They incurred guilt in their own actions, but God used it for good, too. And so also, it is, I think, something we can have assurance of.

It's great that the book of Genesis closes with such a helpful verse to reflect upon. When you think of that which is done maliciously to you by anybody in the past, things that have harmed you, and the things that transpired since then, you will often see that the things that were bad actually got exploited by God to bring about something that was better for you than would have been otherwise. And that doesn't excuse the persons who did the evil.

It does not say here that God meant for the brothers to do this evil. It says the brothers meant to do evil, but God meant to exploit what they were doing and make something good come of it. God didn't plant in their hearts their evil plans against Joseph.

That was their own, and they bear full responsibility for them. But God can counter and manipulate and exploit anything that people do in order to bring about his purposes. And that's the sovereignty of God that Joseph recognized.

And that's why he wasn't bitter. A lot of people say, well, if you get rejected by your family, you're going to have to go through some kind of counseling about that. You might need some inner healing even, because you're going to have hurts and bitterness and all that stuff.

And Joseph didn't get any of that therapy. He didn't need it because he had God, and he knew that God was sovereign. That's the thing.

When you know that God's in charge, it changes everything about your suffering. My second wife was hit by a young man driving recklessly. I don't blame him for it because I have driven just as recklessly many times.

I've been very fortunate there's been no pedestrians in my way because I could have, there but for the grace of God, go I. I've never been angry at that young man. But it was his fault. I'm sure he blames himself.

It was evil. But I just saw the sovereignty of God in it. I mean, I didn't want to lose my wife.

We had a great marriage, and it was a new one, too. But I just thought, well, God's in charge. God's sovereign.

And God can use this for good. But the thing is, people say that when you suffer a loss, or you suffer bereavement, or you suffer betrayal, that you go through stages of grieving over it. And that you have to go through denial and anger turned inward.

Anger turned outward. All these steps, five steps, they say, are grieving. They say everyone goes through that.

I didn't. I didn't go through denial. I never did deny her death.

It was painful, but I just didn't have any interest in denying. What was true? Nor did I get angry at me or at God or anyone else. And I didn't go through any of those steps of grieving.

And the reason is because I believe in the sovereignty of God. People who do not know God do experience grief differently and betrayal and so forth. They get bitter.

They get angry. They get depressed or whatever. But see, Paul said in First Thessalonians, Chapter four, he said, I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, considering those who have fallen asleep.

That means your friends who have died in Christ. Lest you should grieve as others who have no hope. You see, Christians do grieve, but they don't grieve like others.

The problem with people who predict how you're supposed to go through grief is that these are therapists who derive all their theories from their patients. And their patients are, by definition, people who are not handling things very well on their own. And when people don't handle things on their own with God well, then they do go through certain patterns.

The psyche goes through those things trying to protect itself and trying to recover from, you know, something that's left them reeling from a broad side of tragedy in their life. And when people don't know the sovereignty of God, well, then they've got nothing else but their human patterns to fall back on. But Paul says we don't grieve like others who have no hope.

If you have hope, it's different, entirely different. If you believe there's a God who's in charge who's going to work everything for good, if you believe that God is good, if you know he's sovereign, the grieving process is totally different. You're sad.

Of course you're sad. That's normal grief. You see, all the people in the Bible mourned for their dead.

When someone dies, you mourn for them. But you don't have to go through these stages of denial and anger and all that stuff. That's what you do when you don't know God.

And the reason that psychologists say, oh, everybody goes through that, is that the only people the psychologists are working from is their patients. And people don't become psychiatric patients or psychological patients unless they are not dealing with their hurts already. The psychologists never get the chance to see someone like me because I don't go to them.

And therefore, I'm not in their data bank. And so they think I'm abnormal. But it's just normal to trust God.

Joseph, think of the anger he could have had toward Potiphar's wife and the vengeance he could have brought upon her and Potiphar if he wanted to. Or on that butler who forgot him for two years. Or on his brothers that he just thought, oh, God's been in all this.

God meant it for good. So why should I be angry? He didn't need to go through inner healing or therapy or, you know, recovery or anything. He just, you got God.

You don't need all those human things to fix it for you. And that's true, not just of Joseph and not just in my own case. But I know, I know the testimonies of many Christians throughout history who have had the same experience.

It's normal. It's normal for someone who knows the sovereignty of God to go differently through life's hard times. So Joseph dwelt in Egypt.

He and his father's household and Joseph lived 110 years. Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children of Makar, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

And Joseph said to his brethren, I'm dying. We're skipping now to the end of his life. But God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land to the land of which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel saying, God will surely visit you and you should carry up my bones from here. So Joseph died being 110 years old and they embalmed him and he was put into a coffin in Egypt. And so the last thing we know when he dies is he exacts an oath from his brothers that they will not let his bones rest permanently in Egypt, but rather they will take his bones when they go.

He said that by faith because they didn't look like they were moving anywhere. They were comfortable in those days in Egypt. They were privileged class in Egypt.

They were not slaves yet. There was nothing pinching them, making them want to leave there. But he knew that God would bring them back to the land of Canaan one way or another.

And that when they did, he said, take my bones. I want to be buried in the promised land. And we do know that when Moses and the children of Israel hundreds of years later did leave Egypt, that they did take Joseph's bones with them.

They buried him in the land of Canaan. And thus ends the story that is recorded for us in Genesis.