

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER ELEVEN – GENESIS 49:1-33

INTRODUCTION:

In our last episode to bring you up to speed to where we are and to remind you of what happened Joseph was called from his administrative duties because his dad had gotten sick again. And he takes his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him to visit grandfather and probably for the last time.

When they are gathering together Jacob rallies and he wants to bless the two boys, replacing Reuben the firstborn with Joseph and then taking his two boys and making them a part of his own. When the time came for the blessing however Jacob fooled his son Joseph by crossing his hands and giving the blessing of the firstborn to Ephraim rather than to Manasseh who was the firstborn. This upset Joseph a little bit. But we learned a lesson last time and that lesson is that we must be those who are willing to accept God's plan for our lives even though it crosses our own purposes.

Well, we are now ready to study the end of this great patriarch. At the end of today's study he is going to pull his feet up into bed for the last time and wrap it up. That is going to be hard on Joseph and the rest of the boys to realize that the great patriarch Jacob is no longer here. What a way to watch him go out though.

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This man's life has been filled with heartache and suffering. It has been splattered with sorrow but also there have been times of tremendous blessing and insight. I thought about that for a little while and then I added this. So what else is new? You know we can expect that same thing in our lives. The trouble is we are such softies when something just hits us a little bit we just indulge in self-pity for six months and have an excuse for doing nothing. And as a result of that we miss so much and we become so ineffective for Him. Jacob responds. And is he going out? Oh he is going out a winner.

v. 1 Then Jacob called for his sons and said: "Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in the days to come."

Now Jacob senses that his time is here. As you know there is a play on his name. He is known as Jacob and he is known as Israel. Israel – God's fighter. Israel the nation is going to be formed of 12 tribes coming from his sons. It is part of God's purpose beside the fact that they are also going to be in the land that is not theirs, the land of Egypt.

They are in the land. Now here is the critical next step. This is the formation of the 12 tribes of that nation as dear old Jacob has the chance to tell them what is going to happen in the formation of that so you just see another step in God's purpose.

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Jacob is going to be a prophet now. He is going to take each one of the boys and he is going to say a word to them. And the word to them is what is going to happen to them and their tribe that is going to be formed out of each of their families.

v. 2 Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel.

Well all the boys are there and they are probably still talking about dad's condition. The last medical reports that have come through are not very good and they know he is not going to be with them very long and so they are kind of whispering there and old Jacob hears the rumbling in the background and finally he just says, "Come on fellows. Get together. I've got one last thing I want to tell you before the coach leaves." And he gathers them around.

And it is altogether fitting that he would take the sons of Leah first and he speaks to them. Then he speaks to the sons of the handmaids. And then he speaks to the sons of his beloved wife Rachel as he concludes this final patriarchal address.

"Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel."

Now the first one that is standing there by the bed that is close, and it is a pain to him is Reuben.

v. 3 Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power.

v. 4 Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it.

Well Leah's boys are first and there are six of them in all and the firstborn is Reuben.

Robert Candlish when he comments on this particular phrase said he should have been strong. He should have proved himself to be a man who was consistent but he was "unstable as water. The contrast is what Jacob would have had his eldest son to be, and what he turned out to be.

My might, -- the prime of my strength, -- all that I had of excellency, in respect of dignity or power, -- all might have been his. But he lost it all by his instability; he wanted for self-control. Impatient and impetuous, he was like an unruly stream, soon spending its force, and then becoming languid. He had manifested this temperament in the commission of a horrible crime. It was great wickedness; but it was great weakness too. His father fastens on the weakness of it; the entire want of self-command which it too plainly showed. And he foresees that, if this is to be the character of his tribe, it must mar all prospect of high fame or indeed of any future of fortune.

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I looked at those words “instability” and Donald Grey Barnhouse helped the best on that. Why does Jacob say, “You were this way, the son of my strength, my pride, I rejoiced in you as my firstborn. And you are like this. You are unstable as a stream.” Why does he say that? And then he says the results of it is because you are like that you will never excel. Now I can understand some of that but listen to Barnhouse as he talks on it.

Instability is always caused by an act of sin which traces a groove in our nature again and again, and the character is molded to that form of sin. This is why we must rush to God whenever we sin, in order that the groove may be filled with grace and other grooves traced in the pattern of the divine will. Continuance in sin renders a man incapable of acting right because moral instability has become his pattern of living. The opposite of instability is seen in the Apostle who wrote, “This one thing I do” (Philippians 3:13). His stability began with forgetting things that were behind and reaching forth unto the things that were before. Lord, make us stable.

Make us people who are consistent, people who can be counted upon. And that makes a lot of sense when you realize that the one thing that a woman needs in a marriage relationship is stability. She needs stability and security that comes from that security. And a man who learns to walk with God just keeps on walking. He is consistent.

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You can count on him you can lean on him. He will be there. He will not throw it in at the time when you need him the most.

Robert Foster said it this way quoting W.H. Page.

W.H. Page would remind us that some men are like sand...ever shifting and sliding. Some are like the sea...restless and unsettled. Some are like the wind...uncertain and inconstant. Others are as a flower...weak, seasonal and temporal. But the God-fearing man is like Mt. Zion...strong, stable and secure

Reuben, you are just like my brother Esau. He sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. You sold yours because you could not restrain yourself morally. Turbulent waters. You will no longer excel and he gives the reason.

Now I shared with you a little bit in last week's study why I think Reuben got involved in that situation. Bilhah was Rachel's handmaid. When Rachel died I think Bilhah thought that she was going to win the affections of Jacob rather than Leah. After all she had given Jacob Dan and Naphtali, his two sons already. And when that did not happen I think she felt like she was really left out. She felt terribly neglected. And Reuben being through the whole thing from the beginning when Rachel and Leah had been fussing all the way through all of this certainly has not learned anything of morally restraint.

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What happens in this study is that the firstborn of Leah is replaced by the firstborn of Rachel. Joseph now gets the right of the firstborn. The inheritance is doubled. His two sons are going to be brought into it. But Joseph does not get the leadership. That goes to Judah as we are going to see in just a minute.

Now it is the tribe of Reuben as you go on a read the history of the 12 tribes that ends up on the east side of Jordan. It is a fascinating study and the reason I am taking time to take this 49th of Genesis and build it into this series of studies is this helps you really understand the rest of your Old Testament. You can take this instability of water and you can see the tribe of Reuben every time it comes into the picture in the book of Numbers and in Deuteronomy. Even in the study of the book of Joshua you are going to see Reuben. They want to stay over on this side of the Jordan. They do not want to go over there and get involved in that big fight. And that is the kind of tribe that it is.

He says you are “turbulent as waters, you will no longer excel.”

Reuben you are like that. Now let's get on with the rest of the boys.

v. 5 Simeon and Levi are brothers -- their swords are weapons of violence.

v. 6 Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstrung oxen as they pleased.

v. 7 Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.

Whew! That is strong. Do you know who these two boys are? This is the second and the third born sons of Leah. These are the two boys back in Genesis 34 that went up to Shechem to pasture the flocks in that first study several ago they were going up to Shechem. Well when they were in Shechem before having come back into the land, that is where their sister Dinah was raped by somebody at Shechem High School. And they went up there and they proceeded to wipe out that town and that is what daddy is talking about here. He got so upset with Simeon and Levi because they organized this thing and literally wiped out the male population of the town and did all these other things that are described. So he says, “Do not let me enter their counsel. Let me not join their assembly.”

Now when you see the future of these two tribes, Simeon is absorbed in the tribe of Judah later and so they are scattered through Israel and Levi has a different destiny because Levi is the tribe that responded to the presence of the Lord when Moses came down from the mountain and found the golden calf that was built when he had the commandments.

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Listen to Exodus 32:26

So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, “Whoever is for the Lord come to me,” and all the Levites rallied to him.

Everybody else stayed with the golden calf but the Levites were the only ones who said we’re for the Lord and they redeemed themselves in a sense.

But when they get their inheritance it is 48 cities scattered throughout the whole land. They do not have any inheritance of their own. They are a religious tribe. So they are just cities scattered all over through it and it is an actual fulfillment of what he is saying here truly what God has done. “Their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly. They have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased.” Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.”

Well, there are tribes two and three.

Now Leah had one more boy in their early marriage by the name of Judah and it was “praise the Lord” for number four. Judah was born. Now look at the interesting things. Now this is going to be the hardest part for you to understand but let me tell you a couple of things as we start and then some things will start

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making meaning to you if you are familiar with some of the Bible.

This is all Messianic prophecy okay. It is future. It is prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ. Now put all of that in the back of your mind because it is out of the tribe of Judah that the Lion is going to come. And the Lion of the tribe of Judah is Jesus Christ who is going to be the Messiah. The King who is coming. The Redeemer. The Hope for the nation Israel. Now these statements maybe will take some significance as you realize Jacob has just slipped into making a Messianic prophecy of his fourth-born son Judah.

v. 8 “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you.

v. 9 You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness -- who dares to rouse him?

v. 10 The scepter [or ruling scepter] will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

Oh, isn’t that great!

v. 11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.

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v. 12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

All right let's just observe a few things out of those similes.

Number one leadership is going to come from this tribe. That is obvious. "The scepter will not depart from Judah, not the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes (Jesus Christ) to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."

Okay if you want to take that little phrase and just write Isaiah 9:6, 7 out beside it that will make that come alive.

Here is Isaiah now talking just 700 years before Christ actually came.

Isaiah 9:6,7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

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“Praise the Lord” Judah your brothers will praise you. That is the fulfillment of his name which means “Praise.”

It says until the ruler or Shiloh should come.

J. Vernon McGee in speaking on this says:

This is one of the more remarkable prophecies in all the Word of God. Already we have been told that there will be a seed of the woman. That was the first prophecy of Christ: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). The “seed” of the woman is the One who will do the bruising of the serpent’s head. He will be the One to get the victory. This first prophecy was in Genesis; then that Seed was confirmed to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Now it is confirmed to Judah – out of Judah’s line He is coming. Also, the word Shiloh means “rest and tranquility.” Christ is the One who will bring rest. Remember that when the Lord Jesus walked here on earth, He turned from those who had rejected Him, and He said to the populace, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will rest you” (Matt. 11:28). That is Shiloh – Shiloh had come.

Jesus Christ he is the one who indeed is going to come.

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Now you can take those other Hebrew similes and you can take the colt and the donkey if you want to and figure it into the triumphal entry of Christ when he rode on the little donkey into town. You can take the robes and blood realizing that it was prophetic of the fact that he was going to die as the Messiah who came and was rejected and you can fit all kinds of things into that prophecy whatever you like.

Verse 13. We move now from Judah to Zebulun. What happens here and this is the only place it happens is that he takes Issachar and Zebulun and turns them around. Zebulun is actually younger than Issachar. If he was going in order in other words of Leah's 6 sons it would have been Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. So he changes these two fellows around. And there is no reason to it other than the fact that he has got them all there and he is chatting with them.

v. 13 Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships; his border will extend toward Sidon.

Well basically Zebulun is very close to the port of Haifa which is the great seaport in the land of Israel today. And Zebulun benefited from the trade route that came out of Hifa into the land. And it came through the land of Zebulun. And so actually it is indeed fulfilled.

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v. 14 Issachar is a rawboned donkey lying down between two saddlebags.

These are some interesting statements after Issachar.

Listen to this statement. This statement comes out of 1 Chronicles 12:32.

“Men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do “–

That sounds like the men of Issachar are men who are so on the cutting edge of things, they understand what the nation should do before they do it and therefore they are the leaders who are out front. Now that is the picture you get.

But I do not see that here. I see Issachar with the donkey with a good big load on him flat lying down in the middle of the road. And knowing what he ought to do but he does not do it. You see they can know what to do. The question is, do they do it.

Ooh what a message that is to you and me. You and I know a lot of things today they did not know back in those days. Question is, are you doing it?

I got so tickled at my buddy Ron Moore who sells Monroe shock absorbers and we were visiting in the health club the other morning after the run. He was telling me about an experience at a sales meeting in Phoenix. He says the man got up to speak and he said,

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“It is a waste of your time and mine that I am here because you are not going to do what I say anyway.” And everybody was just kind of shocked. And he walks out to the first table in the dining room and picks up a package of cigarettes that laying on the table and says, “Notice – warning by the surgeon general this could be harmful and hazardous to your health. Do you believe that?” He said, “Yeah. Are you going to quit smoking? No. See. What did I tell you?”

See you know what is right and you do not do it. You just refuse to respond. That is Issachar. They might know what Issachar ought to do but they flat are not going to bend their backs to do it unless they are just totally made to do it.

The picture of Issachar is a picture that seems to be at ease with the cost of liberty at stake. And that is Amos 6:1

Amos 6:1

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion and to you who feel secure on Mt. Samaria.

These individuals are people who are characterized as being able to discern the times and know what needs to be done but they are not doing it. They are content to be like donkeys lying down between two saddlebags of burdens of responsibility and work that is theirs and leave it for somebody else.

v. 15 When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor.

When he finally sees how good it is and there is a possibility that he might lose it then when you know it is just almost too late then finally he is going to just be forced to do it. That is the kind of person. Maybe circumstances, maybe events and those things will cause him to have to get up and do it.

All right let's go on.

We have the six sons of Leah done now. We are going to hit the four sons of the handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah here now. Dan is the first one.

v. 16 Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel.

v. 17 Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward.

The only thing we know about the tribe of Dan is it is on the furtherest northern border of the land. It is way up there. The only other thing we know about it is Dan produced one judge during the period of the judges. Can you guess which judge came out of the tribe of Dan and then you will understand a little bit as to what the tribe of Dan was like? Sixty-four thousand dollar question, who was the judge that came out of the tribe

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of Dan? Samson right on the numbers. That is exactly right. Samson is the epitome of the tribe of Dan. He is a man unsteady, unscrupulous, and violate and that is picture of the tribe of Dan.

Now when we get to this next verse you are going to get a reward for having hung in there to verse 18. A lot of commentators take verse 18 and they put it in the tribe of Dan but I want to tell you this is a diamond set right here in the middle of all of this kind of academic trivia about each of these sons. God has a way of doing that.

I think this is Jacob just getting so close to the goal he just got to let it all hang out right now. I think this is an outburst of praise before he keeps on going. I think he really believes that he is getting close. Do you know what I think happened? I think he started to think about what he just got through saying to Judah and it got him so excited he had to stop and talk about it. You know he has not said too much that has been very nice to any of the rest of them. I mean he could not rejoice too much over what he said to Reuben and Simeon and Levi but boy by the time he got through with Issachar and Zebulun and got to Dan he had to stop and think about what he said to Judah. And I think he goes back there in his mind. Isn't that great? Look at that.

v. 18 I look for your deliverance, O Lord.

It is a burst of praise from his lips. It is a man in a midst of these sad prophecies.

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Reminded of the fact that salvation is going to come out of this nation and I am looking for it.

Now he resumes.

v. 19 Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels.

Well the men of Gad are characterized in the Bible as men of mighty valor.

Deuteronomy 33:20, 21 describe them.

v. 20 Asher's food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king.

His name means "happy" and he is the second born of Zilpah and he is indeed one of those who is blessed.

v. 21 Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns. Sovereign God has made Naphtali FREE and FRUITFUL, the second born son to Rachel's handmaid Bilhah.

Now we come down to the last two, these two, Joseph and Benjamin. Listen to what he has to say to Joseph,

v. 22 Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall.

v. 23 With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility.

v. 24 But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,

v. 25 because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb.

v. 26 Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.

Take Joseph now and compare him against Reuben in the first one. You see strength. You see stability. You see satisfaction. You see fruitfulness. He is a prince among his brothers. He is a fruitful vine near a spring whose branches climb over the wall.

Do you want some verses to put there?

Jeremiah 17:7,8 and Psalm 1

He is indeed a fruitful vine. He has brought forth fruit.

John 15:8

And my Father is glorified with much fruit.

“With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility.”

You see the two people who shot at him with hostility are his brothers and Potiphar's wife. What happened to him though?

Verse 24

But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, *[He hung in there. Through all that prison sentence, through all that misunderstanding.]* because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob *[God Himself because of the Shepherd.]*”

And that is Genesis 48:15. The Shepherd of God who shepherded him all of his life. The Rock of Israel. The Mighty One. Because of your father's God who helps you. Because of the Almighty who blesses you.

He not only helps you Joseph he also blesses you “with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb.” And those are the two boys, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Yes indeed Joseph has been abundantly blessed.

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“Your father’s blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.”

Now Benjamin is the last one.

v. 27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder.”

We find of Benjamin, that it is a whole tribe of warriors. They are tough individuals.

Listen to Judges 20:16

Among all these soldiers there were 700 chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

These guys were left handed sling shot artists. Man they could hit a 50-cent piece off a fence post at 50 yards. Just a zip and bingo and they get them.

It is out of the tribe of Benjamin Saul that great military genius comes. They are men who are men of great war.

Now you will notice how many animals are involved in Jacob’s pictures of his different families. He calls Judah a lion, Issachar a strong ass, Dan is a serpent,

and Naphtali is like a deer that is let loose and Benjamin is a ravenous wolf.

v. 28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him.

Now that is it. He has said it. He has done his thing. Now wrap it up, pull your feet up in the bed, and go to the house. And that is it for today. Look at the rest of the verses.

v. 29 Then he gave them these instructions: “I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

v. 30 the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.

v. 31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah.

You see she died before they ever came down for these last 17 years and she is buried there.

v. 32 The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.

v. 33 When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

Death is the final act of a well-ordered life. Jacob has run a good race and he has finished his course. He has discharged his stewardship. He's been faithful to finish.

What a tribute and testimony to the twelve boys who are standing around that bed of this old man who has now died. And his final act is to give them these prophetic words.

These are the lessons I got out of it.

LESSON #1: God grant us stability in these unstable times. "On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand." God grant us stability in these unstable times.

LESSON #2: Deliver us from anger and cruelty.

LESSON #3: Jesus Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah who is going to come to rule and reign. You have just witnessed one of the great reasons for divine inspiration in what you have read.

LESSON #4: We can miss God's best for us by failing to do His will today. Issachar just sat down between the saddle bags like a donkey knowing what was right but failing to do it.

LESSON #5: FREEDOM and FRUIT ought to characterize our lives.

LESSON #6: Our father is glorified with much fruit.

You know I took those statements of Joseph and made them into this lesson.

LESSON #7: The Hand, the Shepherd, and the Rock of Israel wait to deliver us.

LESSON #8: Jacob teaches us how to die.

Can you tell me right now with an honest, forthright, clear face that you are ready to die?

Do you really know that?

If you knew that it was going to happen in the next 30 minutes could you with Jacob say, "I look for your deliverance O Lord.

I am at peace.

I am ready when that hour should come."

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In the *The Rebirth of America* I quote these words as I close:

There's probably more uncertainty about the most important matter in the world than about any other. Let me illustrate: If you were to ask 100 persons at random about war, politics, or pollution, you would get a fairly definite opinion from most of them.

But ask the same 100 persons, "Are you a Christian?" or, "Are you going to Heaven when you die?" The vast majority would answer the varying degrees of doubt -- "I don't know"... "I'm not sure"... "I'm working on it"... "I've no idea."

Most of these same persons would tell you that they believe in Jesus Christ, and that they believe in Heaven. Yet they don't know whether or not they are going to Heaven.

What, by the way, would your answer be?

Most of us know definitely whether or not we are working and whether or not we are married. Yet we do not know whether or not we have eternal life.

Most persons know where their destination is when they're traveling somewhere. Yet ask them where their final destination will be -- where they will be living forever -- and very few know!

In the eighteenth century, a godly mother knew that her years of life were coming to an end. She taught her young son all that she knew about God and the Christian life.

When her son was seven, she died. That son soon rejected his mother's teaching. He went off to sea and eventually became the captain of a slave trading ship.

His crew became so disgusted with the depravity of his actions that one day when he fell overboard while in a drunken stupor, they rescued him by throwing a harpoon into him and pulling him back into the ship. Thereafter John Newton walked with a limp. Later he became a Christian, and every limp was a reminder of God's matchless grace to a wretched sinner. He is the composer of "Amazing Grace," as well as hundreds of other hymns.

Has God done that work in your life and do you know it. We are at the point where you have to decide. Either for Jesus Christ or against Him that is your choice but you have got to make it whether you like it or not one way or the other by the fact that you say you are not going to is a decision against.

That decision having been decided then will determine the effect upon your family and the lives of your friends as you live the rest of your life.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER ELEVEN - GENESIS 49:1-33

NOTES

v. 1 Then Jacob called for his sons and said: “Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.

v. 2 “Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel.

v. 3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power.

v. 4 Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer excel, for you went up onto your father’s bed, onto my couch and defiled it.

v. 5 “Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence.

v. 6 Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased.

v. 7 Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.

v. 8 Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you.

v. 9 You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?

v.10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

v.11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.

v.12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

v.13 Zebulun will live by the seashore and become a haven for ships; his border will extend toward Sidon.

v.14 Issachar is a rawboned donkey lying down between two saddlebags.

v.15 When he sees how good is his resting place and how pleasant is his land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and submit to forced labor.

v.16 Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel.

v.17 Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward.

v.18 I look for your deliverance, O Lord.

v.19 Gad will be attacked by a band of raiders, but he will attack them at their heels.

v.20 Asher's food will be rich; he will provide delicacies fit for a king.

v.21 Naphtali is a doe set free that bears beautiful fawns.

v.22 Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall.

v.23 With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility.

v.24 But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber,

because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,

v.25 because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb.

v.26 Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.

v.27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder.

v.28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him.

v.29 Then he gave them these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

v.30 the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.

v.31 There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah.

v.32 The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites."

v.33 When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 49:1-33 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What is Jacob's request, according to verses 1 & 2?

3. What does Jacob predict for Reuben, according to verses 3 & 4?

4. What is Jacob's prediction for Simeon and Levi, according to verses 5-7?

5. What is the significance of verse 10 in relationship to Judah?

6. Summarize the prediction for Joseph in verses 22-26,

7. What final instructions does Jacob give his sons in verses 29-32?

8. What do you think is the meaning of the phrase in verse 33 “gathered to his people”?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: God grant us stability in these unstable times.

LESSON #2: Deliver us from anger and cruelty.

LESSON #3: Jesus Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is going to come to rule and reign.

LESSON #4: We can miss God's best for us by failing to do His will today.

LESSON #5: Freedom and fruit ought to characterize our lives.

LESSON #6: Our Father is glorified with much fruit.

LESSON #7: The Hand, the Shepherd, and the Rock of Israel wait to deliver us.

LESSON #8: Jacob teaches us how to die.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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