

JACOB'S PROPHETIC BLESSING ON JUDAH

GENESIS 49:08–12

Introduction

A person reaps what he sows in life. This is one of the great laws of life. God has decreed it to be so. Whatever we sow, we shall reap. If we do good, we shall reap good; if we do bad, we shall reap bad.

Usually the principle holds true in this life; that is, we usually reap in this life exactly what we sow. But not always. Many people sin and do wrong in this life yet never suffer the consequences. But God declares that a day of judgment is coming, a terrifying judgment, a judgment where perfect justice will be executed. But note: God is loving as well as just. He is perfect love. He is never moved by emotion but rather by pure and perfect love and knowledge. Therefore, no person will ever be judged for anything for which he is not guilty. God will execute perfect justice. We will not reap anything other than exactly what we have done. We will never suffer a single thing other than that for which we are truly guilty. But we will reap exactly what we have sown.

This is the subject of this passage of Scripture: *Jacob's Prophetic Blessing: Reaping What We Sow in Life.*

Genesis 49:08–12 The Prophecy Concerning Judah

There was the prophecy concerning Judah, the fourth son born to Jacob. An interesting thing now happened in the prophetic blessing pronounced over Judah. In that day and time, a father's birth right included a double portion of the inheritance and the leadership of the family. But in the case of the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — it also included God's promise of the very special promised seed, the Saviour of the world. Reuben, Jacob's oldest son, had forfeited his right to the birth right, and so had Simeon and Levi. Consequently, Jacob, under God's prophetic utterance, passed the birth right not to one son, but to two sons, to both *Judah and Joseph*. Scripture clearly states this:

1 Chr 5:1-2 The sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel, (for he was the first-born; but when he defiled his father's marriage bed, his rights as first-born [double portion of the estate] were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel; so he could not be listed in the genealogical record in accordance with his birthright, and though Judah was the strongest of his brothers and a ruler came from him, the rights of the first-born belonged to Joseph).

Judah's life is a beautiful picture of a person's growing into spiritual maturity. As a young man, he lacked the courage to physically oppose his brothers although he spoke out against their killing Joseph (Gen 37:26-27). He was also part of the plot to deceive his father about Joseph's fate. Sometime after, he apparently became annoyed and impatient with the family: the deception, the constant conflict and the tense atmosphere. When he

came to the point he could take it no more, he left home (Gen 38:1f). He left the godly influence of his father to go out into the world and live a worldly life. He lived with a certain Adullamite and married a worldly Canaanite who gave him several children. Judah was later deceived into committing a shameful sin of immorality with his daughter-in-law. But despite this period of carnality in his life, he was the one who humbled himself and emerged as the leader among his brothers when tested by Joseph. The change in his heart and life is seen in three events:

=> Before his father, he offered himself as surety for Benjamin (see note, Gen 43:8-10).

=> Before Joseph, he pleaded and offered his life in the place of Benjamin.

=> Before the land of Egypt, he was acknowledged as the leader by his father (see note, Gen 46:28-30).

It was because of Judah's clear repentance and conversion as well as the strong leadership he gave to the family that he was chosen to be the leader of the family. Note the prophetic blessing pronounced upon him and his tribe.

1. Judah's tribe was to be praised for military leadership and power (vv. 8-9). His hand would be on the neck of his enemies: he would defeat them, and the other tribes would bow down before him, that is, would follow his leadership in battle.

Judah would be like a lion. The lion is a symbol of courage, strength and security. The lion is the king of the forest, a symbol of sovereignty (v. 9). Very simply stated, Judah was to rule over the other tribes. This is clearly seen in the great kings the tribe of Judah produced:

- Saul
- Asa
- Jotham
- David
- Jehosaphat
- Hezekiah
- Solomon
- Uzziah
- Josiah

2. Judah's greatest blessing, however, was to be the blessing of Shiloh, the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Shiloh was to come through his seed, his offspring (vv. 10-12). This is a great prophecy of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world who is the very special promised seed. The meaning of the word Shiloh, however, is disputed. The meanings with the strongest textual weight are these:

=> "Shiloh" can be related to the word *shalom*, which means *peace*.

=> "Shiloh" can be taken from the root *shalah*, which means *rest*.

=> "Shiloh" can mean *he to whom*.

The point to see is that the meanings have a double reference. They refer to both Judah and Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Judah was to bring peace and rest to Israel through the great leaders the tribe was to produce. But the peace would last only for a season. A lasting peace and rest was to come when the real *Peace-giver* and *Rest-giver* came, the Messiah and Saviour of the world, the Lord

Jesus Christ Himself. He was the true *Shiloh*, the true Peace-giver and Rest-giver who was to bring eternal peace and rest to the people and nations of the world. He was the One who was to pick up the sceptre of Judah and offer such peace and rest that people would gather and flock to Him.

If a person prefers the meaning *he to whom*, then “Shiloh” is the Messiah. *He to whom* the sceptre or rule belongs. The Messiah rules and governs the world and the obedience of the nations belongs to Him (v. 10, NIV). Note: this meaning is supported by Ezekiel, where the same words are used (Eze. 21:26-27).

Now, note what happened in the prophetic blessing of Jacob (vv. 10-12). Again, these points have a double reference, referring to both Judah and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- => The people would gather to offer their obedience to Judah, but even more, they would eternally gather to offer their obedience to *Shiloh*, the Messiah (v. 10c).
- => Judah would bring great prosperity and abundance to Israel, but even more, *Shiloh*, the Messiah, would bring prosperity and abundance to the people of the earth. Note the figurative language used to describe this fact: the vineyards would be producing so much fruit that Judah would tie his donkey to a vine, and the loss of the vine destroyed by the tied strap would not be felt. There would be such an abundance of fruit that he could wash his clothes in the juice of the grapes.
- => Judah would bring health to the people, but even more, *Shiloh*, the Messiah, would bring health (v. 12). Again, the language is figurative. His eyes would be darker or duller than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. The thought is that of a healthy colour, of good nourishment and health.

Thought 1. Note these facts about Jesus Christ, the promised seed, the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

- 1) The New Testament identifies Jesus Christ with this prophecy. Jesus Christ is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

Rev 5:5 *Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

- 2) Jesus Christ gives us peace.

Isa 9:6 *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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isa 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Acts 10:36 *You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Eph 2:13 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

3) Jesus Christ gives us rest.

Exo 33:14 *The Lord replied, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*

Psa 116:7 *Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.*

Isa 28:12 *To whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose" — but they would not listen.*

Mat 11:29 *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

Heb 4:3 *Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.*

Rev 14:13 *Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour; for their deeds will follow them."*

4) Jesus Christ gives us an abundance.

John 1:16 *From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.*

John 10:10 *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

John 15:11 *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*

Eph 3:19 *And to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Col 1:19 *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.*

Col 2:9-10 *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

5) Jesus Christ is sovereign: He rules over all, and all owe their obedience to Him.

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Isa 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 Counsellor, 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.*

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 *"But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."*

Rom 14:9 *For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*

Eph 1:20-22 *Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.*

1 Pet 3:22 *Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"*

Thought 2. Henry Morris points out that this prophecy concerning Judah has been fulfilled. He says:

Once the tribe of Judah, under King David, attained leadership over the nation, the sceptre (that is, the position of leadership in the nation) never departed from Judah until after Christ came. The kingdom was divided, and later all the tribes were taken into captivity: but as far as Israel itself was concerned, Judah was always the dominant tribe. Even during the captivity, Daniel, of the nation of Judah, was the greatest among the Israelites, and in fact became the third ruler in the kingdom of Babylon.

*After the captivity, those who returned were primarily from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, along with many Levites, as the other ten tribes had been scattered by the Assyrians. Although many from the ten tribes did manage to return to the land, Judah was essentially from then on synonymous with Israel as a whole. This condition continued, of course, until the actual coming and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. Soon after, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews (a name derived from Judah) were dispersed into the nations. Since then, even the genealogies have been lost, so that the tribal distinctives have all been fused and blurred among the Jews as a whole. This did not happen, however (that is, the sceptre did not pass from Judah), until Shiloh came — just as Jacob had predicted! This fact, incidentally, confirms that the Messiah did come, and that He must have come sometime before A.D. 70, since the sceptre passed from Judah about that time. (Henry Morris. *The Genesis Record*, p. 656.) ■*