

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of My Inheritance

Lesson #13 Amazing Prophecy Tucked In A Blessing

God's Word declares the inheritance normally given to the firstborn is in 3 parts:

1. The Kingship of the Family
2. The Priesthood of the Family
3. The Double Portion of The Father's Estate

What is the prophetic significance of Jacob's ministry to his sons?

Genesis 49 provides a sobering wakeup call to contemplate both our present and future life.

In the first 28 verses Jacob gives his last words to his 12 sons. All 12 of Jacob's sons regardless of their faithfulness have a future with God and are blessed by God.

Some will receive a greater blessing. Even those who were rebuked by Jacob and whose future was portrayed as dismal were blessed in measure. [appropriate to each one]

But *Only* The Faithful Sons Will Have An Inheritance In The Land.

The 2 most faithful sons are given greater responsibility. [Gen. 49:8-12, 22-26]

The lesson is clear: The actions of believers determine their future blessings and rewards in God's program.

Gen. 49:1-2 "Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, 'Gather yourselves together that I may tell you THAT which will befall you in the last days.'

[refers to the distant future, including the end of the age and millennium].

The Purpose Of Jacob's Carefully Prepared PROPHETIC Words Are To:

1. Reveal the future
2. Serve as a warning against sin
 - a. His words revealed human character and conduct
 - b. 3 of the 12 sons will learn their past conduct has cost them their future inheritance
 - c. He does assure each tribe of a future place in the Promised Land
3. Motivate them to Godly living now
4. Foreshadow the life and ministry of Jesus the Messiah

I. Gen. 49:3-7 Jacob's three oldest sons are Disinherited For Their UNFAITHFULNESS.

- a. "Reuben, you are my firstborn; My Might and The Beginning Of My Strength, Preeminent in Dignity And Preeminent in Power. Unstable as water, You Shall Not Excel [have preeminence], because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch."
- b. Jacob affirms: Reuben holds a special place as his firstborn who should have become the leader of the family. He was also entitled to a double share of the inheritance.
- c. But Reuben was not to receive this blessing of the firstborn even though it was his positionally because he was "uncontrolled as water."

- The Hebrew word translated “uncontrolled” means “reckless or destructive.”
 The picture is of water that floods its banks and goes wildly out of control.
 The evaluation of Reuben points to wildness and weakness, an undisciplined life.
 Arrogant attitudes and a reckless way of life aren't fitting for a firstborn son.
- d. The sin of the past has disqualified him from blessing in the future. After Rachel died Reuben slept with Rachel's servant—the mother of his brothers Dan and Naphtali (35:22).
 - e. This incident happened 40 years earlier. As the firstborn, He should have defended his father's honor, not defiled it. He should have been the leader among his brothers.
 - f. Scripture does not indicate Reuben REPENTED of his actions.
 - g. All the potential in the world won't benefit you if you don't develop self-control.
Great gifts are worthless without godly character. [Gal. 5:22; John 15:4-5]
 - h. Reuben provides a gripping illustration: The Passion Of Uncontrolled Lust Leads To Ruin.

Truth Of Jacob's Prophecy

- a. The Reubenites never produced a significant man, no judge, no king and no prophet for Israel.
- b. The tribe of Reuben's numbers decreased between the 2 censuses in Num. 1:21; 26:7.
- c. We know the least about the tribe of Reuben. His forfeiture affected his descendants.
I Chron. 5:1-2 Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he *was* indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that The Genealogy Is Not Listed according to the birthright; Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him *came* the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)
- d. They never entered the Promised Land, but settled for less on the wilderness side of the Jordan. This is a further indication of the loss of godly influence on his brothers to which his firstborn birthright entitled him.
- e. They stood on the Mt. Ebal or cursing side [Deut. 27:12-13; Numbers 23; 32]
- f. They built unauthorized places of worship. Josh 22:10-34
- g. His tribe failed to answer the call to arms under Deborah's judgeship. [Judges 5:15-16]
- h. Two Reubenites were leaders in the rebellion of Korah which led to the deaths of thousands.
- i. His tribe couldn't be trusted to rule themselves. [I Chron. 26:31-32]
- j. His tribe was always the first to receive judgment and suffer attack because of the dwelling place they chose. [II Kings 10:32-33]
- k. That which Reuben lost, he lost forever. But he himself Remained A son of Jacob [was not disowned or disinherited] and was Blessed In Measure, BUT NOT AS THE FIRSTBORN.
- l. Reuben's birthright was divided among 3 of his brothers.
 - Judah received the kingship of the family.
 - Levi received the priesthood.
 - Joseph's 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasseh [both adopted by Jacob] received the double portion of property. Each received a full inheritance. [I Chron. 5:1-2]

Note: During the Messianic Era the status created by Reuben's sin WILL STILL STAND:

1. Rev. 5:5 The King Will be of the House Of Judah
2. Ezek. 44:15,16; 48:11 The Priests Will Be Of The House of Levi
3. Ezek. 47:13; 48:4-5 Double Portion Will be Held By The House Of Joseph, through Ephraim & Manasseh

Spiritual Application: The Passion Of Uncontrolled Lust Leads To Ruin

Reuben's virtue was unstable; he did not have control of himself and his own appetites.

The charge of instability could refer to his being sometimes very regular and orderly, while at other times wild and undisciplined.

- a. As God's child, we are to be in control of our flesh, its appetites and desires at all times. We are to be steadfast in our faith and not "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine" [Ephesians 4:14].
- b. Those who dabble in sin must not expect to save their reputation or maintain a positive influence upon others. Reuben's sin left an indelible mark upon him and his family. *"Dishonor is a wound that will not be healed without a scar."*

II. Jacob now moves on to his next two sons and prophecies over them.

In 49:5-7, Jacob declares, "Simeon and Levi are brothers; their swords are implements of violence [cruelty]. Let my soul not enter into their council; let not my glory be united with their assembly; because In Their Anger they slew men, and in their self-will they digged down a wall [lamed oxen]. Cursed Be Their Anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel.

I Will Disperse Them In Jacob, And Scatter Them In Israel."

- a. These brothers are "two of a kind." [equally headstrong, deceitful, vindictive, and cruel] Brothers and sisters can either encourage one another to righteous living or to sin.
- b. These brothers plotted how they would get even with the Shechemites because the prince of Shechem had raped their sister.
- c. It was right to avenge the raping of their sister, but it wasn't necessary to wipe out innocent people [treacherous & barbaric act] to gratify their desire for revenge.[Gen. 34:24-30]
- d. This barbaric act brought reproach upon Jacob's entire family. Jacob distanced himself from their treachery and pronounced a curse upon their anger.
- e. Since it was dangerous to be "in their assembly," God arranged that the 2 tribes would not be able to assemble or do anything together.
- d. These two sons teach us that The Passion Of Uncontrolled Anger Leads To Ruin.

Truth of Jacob's Prophecy:

1. Tribe of Simeon was characterized by cruelty and was used as mercenaries in battle. [Judges 1:3; I Chron. 4:42-43]
2. Tribe of Simeon was omitted from the blessing of Moses in Deut. 33:8.
3. Tribe of Levi was eventually released from the curse on them and became the tribe of the priesthood. [Ex. 22:27-28; Num. 25:6-13]
4. Tribes were to be Divided And Scattered.

- a. Tribe of Simeon was the smallest and weakest of all the tribes at the close of their journey in the wilderness. They did not receive a separate territory in the land but were placed within the allotment given to Judah. [Joshua 19:1-9].
- b. Jacob did not cut the descendants of Simeon off from any part in the promised inheritance, but he did divide and scatter them because of idolatry and wickedness.
- c. Tribe of Levi was not given a portion of the land. They became, by God's grace and through their loyalty to God [Ex. 32:26-29], the priestly tribe [privilege] and residents of the 48 cities of refuge which were scattered throughout the land. [Num. 35:8; Josh. 14:4; 21:1-42].

Spiritual Application:

1. Anger is the cause of a great deal of sin when it is allowed to boil over without restraint, resulting in a scenario in which hurts are multiplied [Prov. 29:11].
2. Anger leaves devastation in its wake, often with irreparable consequences.
- 3 We may have anger against sin but we should always be very careful to distinguish between the sinner and the sin.
4. Do not take the counsel of an angry man because he is unstable and exhibits an inability to control his passions.
5. When anger is a defining trait in a person's life, it is an indication of the lack of self-control, which is a hallmark of the fruit of the spirit. [Galatians 5:22-23].

Note: Even though the first 3 tribes suffered loss for their sins, Jacob's prophecies about them were still a blessing.

1. They retained a place in the chosen family and enjoyed the benefits of God's promises as Jacob's heirs. BUT, they were disqualified from the reward that could have been theirs because of their Failure To Repent Of Their Sin. [Num. 32:23-24; Ezek. 18:30]
2. By demoting Reuben for his turbulence and uncontrolled lust, Jacob saved Israel from reckless leadership.
3. By cursing the cruelty of Simeon & Levi, Jacob restricted their cruel rashness from dominating.
4. The loss of these 3 reminds us: Purity And Self-Control Are Essential To Godly Character.

Side Note: Perversion and anger, 2 sins men struggle with, can be handed down from generation to generation. What kept Moses from beginning his work at first and later from entering the Promised Land? ANGER

- a. Anger caused him to murder the Egyptian who was mistreating the Hebrews. He then had to flee to the desert for 40 years.
- b. Anger with the Israelites caused him to strike the rock to bring forth water. God had told him to speak to the rock. For that sin, God prevented Moses from entering Canaan.
- c. It is interesting that Moses was a descendant of Levi.

Note: The 7 acceptable sons are Given Responsibilities. [Gen. 49:13-21, 27] The imagery of the destiny of the remaining sons seems to be based on "a word play of their names."

1. Jacob's Prophecy Over ZEBULUN - Son #10

Gen. 49:13 Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He *shall become* a haven for ships, And his border shall adjoin Sidon.

Note: When Zebulun was born, Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons" [Genesis 30:20]. Zebulun means "dwelling" or "honor."

Key Pt #1 Upon entering the Promised Land, Zebulun failed to drive out the Canaanites although they did subject them to forced labor [Judges 1:30]. This was INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE to God's CLEAR COMMAND to drive out all the inhabitants of the land (Num. 33:52).

From the beginning these unfaithful Jews suffered the problem of mixed marriages and the inevitable pagan influence resulting from the unequal yoke.

Consider: Not responding fully to God's Word is a trait to which we all can relate. How often do we choose to follow our own paths and not fully obey God?

Key Pt. #2 Later, Zebulun returned to God and followed His commands.

a. Deborah & Barak praised the men of Zebulun for rallying to the cause and valiantly fighting Sisera. [Judges 4:6; 5:18]

b. The judge Elon was from the tribe of Zebulun. [Judg. 12:11]

c. Zebulun joined David at Hebron to transfer Saul's kingdom to David. [I Chron. 12:23, 33, 40] Brave people whose warriors had excellent reputations; stable; trustworthy

Consider: While at times we turn away from God, His love for us draws us back into communion with Him and compliance with His will.

Spiritual Application: Numerous verses in the Bible extol God for His unfailing patience, love, and faithfulness. Indirectly, Zebulun's history reminds us that God is always present when we return to Him. No matter how battered or bruised we may be or how ashamed we may feel about past transgressions, God can still use us.

Key Pt. #3 Zebulun will extend to the sea in the Millennium when his borders will extend as far as Sidon on the Mediterranean. [Ezek. 48:1-8; 23-27] Jacob's prophecy fulfilled! [Gen. 49:13]

2. Jacob's Prophecy Over NAPHTALI "My Wrestling" Son #6

Gen. 49:21 Naphtali is a doe let loose, He gives beautiful words.

a. The image is of one who springs forth with great speed and provides good news.

b. Deut. 33:23 Moses' Blessing: Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the Lord and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake.

c. Possessed the most fertile and productive land in all of Canaan.

d. They also failed to utterly drive out the Canaanites. They did force them to do labor.

e. Barak was from the tribe of Naphtali. [Judges 4:6-9] He was chosen by God to lead a military force of 10,000 of his tribe against the Canaanite oppressors. When the time came for action,

Barak responded in fear and cowardice. He agreed to fight only if Deborah the judge would accompany him. She consents but she prophesies that the honor for the victory would go to a woman and not to Barak. This was fulfilled in Judges 4:17-22.

f. This tribe would be well known for producing eloquent speakers and beautiful literature. Most famous was Deborah who composed a beautiful poem of military triumph in Judges 5:1-31.

g. Later, Naphtali responded to Gideon's call to repel the Midianites and Amalekites from their encampment in the Jezreel Valley. [Judges 6:35] Naphtali followed Gideon into battle.

h. When David was to assume the throne, the tribe of Naphtali provided 1,000 officers, together with 37,000 men carrying shields and spears, along with a caravan of food, to help him. [I Chron. 12:34, 40]

i. When King Solomon was building the temple, he hired Hiram [his mother was from Naphtali] to do the bronze work.

j. The tribe of Naphtali had its ups and downs. Its history includes incomplete obedience and shades of cowardice, but it includes bravery under Gideon and a godly support of King David.

Lesson: Probably the greatest lesson is that God exalts the humble.

Naphtali (as part of Galilee) was despised.

Isa. 53:3 For our sakes, He became "despised and rejected by men."

The King of kings had the most unpretentious start.

Key Pt. #4 The portion of land given to Zebulun [lower] and Naphtali [upper] became known as "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Isaiah spoke of this area in Isaiah 9:1-2.

But [in the midst of judgment there is the promise and the certainty of the Lord's deliverance and] there shall be no gloom for Her Who Was In Anguish.

In the former time [the Lord] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the Latter Time He Will Make It Glorious, by the way of the Sea [of Galilee, the land] beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great Light; those who dwelt in the land of intense darkness and the shadow of death, upon them has the Light shined.

1. Her Who Was In Anguish: This refers to the lands occupied by the Northern Kingdom of Israel after the split in 931 BC.

2. Being most remote from Judah it was nearest to the foreign countries and so subject to heathen influences. Not only the location contributed to its disgrace, but it had been the first to tremble in awe before the might of Assyria.

3. These lands experienced gloom and anguish at the hands of the Assyrian invaders. Place of devastation!

4. Jews were removed from their homelands by the Assyrians [Gentiles] and were replaced with Assyrians and other non-Jews [Gentiles].

5. This set the stage for this area becoming a "melting pot" of Jews and Gentiles: hence, the name "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Isaiah's Prophecy:

1. Announcement: An age of peace is coming. It will begin with the coming of the Messiah [1st coming] who will be your Savior and future King.
2. God's prophetic promise: This land which was now experiencing gloom and anguish would not always be in darkness.
3. The people in the north who have suffered so much have the prospect of a wonderful new beginning. "Light" [signifies prosperity, peace and joy] will shine on people who were walking in "darkness" [adversity, despair, gloom and evil].
4. "A great light has dawned on those in the land of the shadow of death."

Note: This language is used of the Messianic Age.

5. Isaiah prophesied: In the past God humbled the land of Zebulun and Naphtali...but in the future, He will honor this area - Galilee.
6. This prediction is Messianic: Galilee would be honored as the first to hear Christ's preaching. This would more than compensate for their humiliation at the hands of the Assyrians centuries before.

Key Pt. #5 Initial Fulfillment Of Isaiah's Prophecy

Note: Matthew quotes Isaiah in conjunction with the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

Matt. 4:12-17 [It has been ~ 1 year since Jesus' temptation in the wilderness]. Now when Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, He went into Galilee. While in Galilee, He moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, and on those sitting in the region and the shadow of death a light has dawned. From that time Jesus Began To Preach This Message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

- a. Jesus' withdrawal to Galilee was no mistake. It was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. More proof Jesus is the Messiah.
- b. This despised district, despised even in New Testament times, was glorified when God honored it, and the fulfillment of the prophecy occurred when Jesus Christ the Son of God dwelt in Capernaum.
- c. This area was looked down on by the Judeans. It had become diluted ethnically and spiritually when the Assyrians brought foreigners to live there.
- d. Galilee was the most pagan of the Jewish provinces; considered less spiritual and less pure than Judea.
- e. Noted for being the nest of revolution
- f. Jesus' first miracle was in Cana of Galilee.
- g. This area had truly been in darkness. Miracles included the healing of the centurion's servant, Simon's mother-in-law, exorcising the man with an unclean spirit and healing of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof.

h. The honor was restored to this area with the coming of Jesus Christ.

All His disciples [but Judas] were from Galilee.

Ray Ortlund: God came to His people first where they had suffered the most and from that place He launched salvation for the world.

Pulpit Commentary: For thirty years he had dwelt at Nazareth, in Zebulun. There he had first come forward to teach in a synagogue (Luke 4:16-21); in Galilee he had done his first miracles (John 2:11; 4:54); at Capernaum. "upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali." He commenced his preaching of repentance (Mt. 4:13-17).

The "light" first streamed forth in this quarter, *Glorifying The Region On Which Contempt Had Long Been Poured.*

MacArthur Just as Isaiah had predicted eight centuries earlier, the despised, sin-darkened, and rebellious Galileans were the first to glimpse the Messiah, the first to see the dawning of God's New Covenant! Not mighty and beautiful Jerusalem, the queen city of the Jews, but Galilee of the Gentiles would first hear Messiah's message. Not the learned, proud, and pure Jews of Jerusalem, but the mongrel, downcast, nontraditional mixed multitude of Samaria and Galilee had that great honor. To those who were neediest, and who were most likely to recognize their need, Jesus went first. The fact that Jesus began His ministry in Samaria and Galilee, rather than in Jerusalem and Judea, emphasizes the fact that His gospel of salvation was for the whole world.

It was no coincidence of history that "The Light Of The World" (John 8:12) first proclaimed Himself in Galilee of the Gentiles. It was in and around Galilee that Jesus had spent all but a small part of His childhood and early manhood. It was there that His ministry first developed and began to spread.

As the new day of the gospel dawned, the First Rays Of Light Shined In Galilee.

[Recall: 1. Jacob's blessing on Naphtali: Beautiful words and good news.

2. Leah = wife not favored. Now my husband will Treat Me With Honor.

Zebulun means dwell and honor.]

While they deserved God's allowing them to be treated with contempt because of their unfaithfulness and their sins, they did not deserve the gracious promise of a Savior Who would minister powerfully where sin had previously abounded greatly.

Rom. 5:20 Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Such is the amazing grace of God!

He is the true light of the world that lights every person. He brings to a darkened world grace and truth, and the sure promise of peace. When He began to minister in Galilee with His teachings and His miracles, He demonstrated that He was indeed this Messiah. His proclamation of the kingdom through salvation is what ends the despair, for believers in Him are not lost in gloom and despair, for we Know that What He Promised Will Come To Pass at His Second Coming.

12 Tribes of Israel

Approximate borders assigned during the Conquest

