

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace — study 31



COVENANT CONFIRMED

I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again ... Gen. 46:3,4 (NASB)

ISRAEL'S FAITH (47:27 -- 48:22)

47:27-31 At the age of 147, what hope is left to the "supplanter"?

(1) In the New Testament record of Old Testament men of faith, God took from the life of each the salient feature which characterized him as a man of faith. There are many surprises, but the record of Jacob is the most surprising of all. God selected one incident in this deathbed scene as that which pleased Him most in Jacob's life. *Lord, may we obey Thee in things that seem little to us.* -- Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Genesis* Vol.2 p.221

48:1-11 Now he is blind, how is Jacob's vision clearer? (Heb. 11:21)

(2) Out of Jacob's long career Hebrews 11:21 selects this as his outstanding act of faith. It has the quality, praised in that chapter, of reaching out towards the promise, even in face of death, 'having seen it and greeted it from afar.' There is gentle irony in the fact that this if just such a situation as the one on which he had exercised his guile in his youth. Once more the firstborn's blessing is destined for the younger brother, but now there is no faithless scheming or bitter aftertaste -- Derek Kidner, *Genesis* p.212

The irony of it ...
another firstborn,
another blessing

(3) God's grace sanctifies every human relationship and gives keenest savor to all human love. One of His great accusations of the unsaved is that they are "without natural affection" (II Timothy 3:3). God Himself "is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (I John 4:16). Although he was a trickster in financial deals, Jacob was a warm, loving human being with rich memories of Rachel, and of Joseph whom he had prized and cherished above all others. In his dying moments he put his arms around his grandsons and drew them to himself. *Lord, we thank Thee for family ties.* ... Jacob suffered long years of gnawing pain over the supposed death of Joseph, and then came the

joy of learning that his son was alive. This is how God blesses us. We may think that we have lost something, but the gifts and calling of God are without any change of mind on His part (Romans 11:29). God will make up the loss with blessing exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. Jacob sent a son out to find his brothers; after a few years he received back the governor of Egypt, provider for himself and his family, land, home and provision, protection from famine and danger -- all this in the son he thought was lost forever. In addition, he held in his arms two fine grandsons! Isn't that just like God? *Lord, we thank Thee for Thine abundance.* -- [v.10] D.G. Barnhouse, *op. cit.*, p.224

(4) 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.' But lying dying there, with it all well behind him, he has become wiser; and now it all looks to him as one long showing forth of the might of his God, who had been with him all his life long, and had redeemed him from all evil. He has got far enough away to see the lie of the land, as he could not do while he was toiling along the road. The barren rocks and white show glow with purple as the setting sun touches them. The struggles with Laban; the fear of Esau; the weary work of toilsome years; the sad day when Rachel dies, and left to him the 'son of her sorrow'; the heart sickness of long years of Joseph's loss -- all have faded away, or been changed into thankful wonder at God's guidance. ... So we waste our days; are deaf to His voice speaking through all the clatter of tongues, and blind to His bright presence shining through all the dimness of earth; and, for far too many of us, we never can see God in the present, but only discern Him when He has passed by, like Moses from his cleft. ... we have to say: 'Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not.' -- A. Maclaren, *Expositions: Genesis* pp.297,298

Do we only discern
Him when He has
passed by?

48:12-22 What have many commentators discerned in the blessing on Joseph's boys? (cf. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)

(5) In this threefold reference to God as the covenant-God, the Shepherd and the Angel-Redeemer, we have a distinct anticipation of the truth concerning the blessed Trinity. -- Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Genesis* p.179

(6) The three eldest sons are failures. Reuben the firstborn had every natural advantage -- the right of primogeniture, his father's strength, a certain native dignity and power. His youth was full of promise, and he might easily have retained the pre-eminence. He had good impulses and much kindness of heart; he was averse to inflicting pain, and easily moved to tears. But he forfeited all his advantages, lost his supremacy, and sank into obscurity, through lack of self-control. Unstable as water, he could not excel (v.4). He vitiated his nature by animal passion. He made himself vile and despicable. He was wanting in the first attribute of manhood -- chivalrous respect for the honour of womanhood. He let lust extinguish the light and glory of his soul. He transmitted to his posterity a vicious taint which they never eradicated. While other tribes were rising to power and fame, Reuben was decrepit and decadent. No judge, or prophet, or ruler had Reuben's blood flowing in his veins. Sensuality enervated the race ... -- J. Strahan, *Hebrew Ideals in Genesis* p.342

(7) In all the remainder of this particular story the name used is Israel, and the whole attitude and action of the man was that of faith. ... He did not himself claim to have walked before God. His fathers Abraham and Isaac had done that. He did claim that He had always fed him, and that he had been redeemed from all evil. When he said, "let my name be named on them," he was undoubtedly referring to the name of Israel. -- **G.C. Morgan**, *Genesis* p.276

(8) 'The angel of God' or of 'the Lord' is a regular Old Testament expression for God manifest in human form. **D. Kidner**, *op. cit.*, p.214

The DAYS to COME (49:1-28)

49:1-7 Do we discern any valuable spiritual principles in the prophecies regarding Reuben, Simeon and Levi? (Ex. 34:6,7)

(9) Simeon is left quite unmentioned in the blessing of Moses, Deut.[32]., and disappears almost entirely after the disruption of the kingdom. Levi received no territory of his own, the Levites being scattered among all the tribes ... Num. 35: 1-8, allotted to them 48 cities. Subsequently this scattering became a means of the clerical vocation of the tribe of Levi, here it appears as the punishment of a brutal fanaticism. This penal sentence on the two brothers is a proof of the great antiquity of the blessing. -- **F. Delitzsch**, *Genesis* Vol.2 pp.370,373

(10) Jacob never forgot that Simeon and Levi deceived the men of Shechem into receiving circumcision in order to murder them. Whenever men usurp the right of vengeance they are taking the place of God. Their actions cry out, "God! You haven't done anything about this matter, and these men did this to us! And since You aren't doing something about it, we shall!" ... In the last analysis, any sin of temper is anger at God. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, p.231

49:8-12 In this great Messianic promise, is there even more than a reference to "Shiloh"? (i.e. the Messiah himself)

(11) Judah, it will be remembered, had engineered the sale of Joseph into slavery and wronged his daughter-in-law, Tamar. However, by this time both sins had been expiated. Jacob left little doubt that Judah would become one of the most prominent tribes and one "whom thy brethren shall praise" (v.8). The phrase "his hand would be upon the neck of the enemies" indicated that Judah's tribe would succeed in warfare, and its success is a matter of record (cf. Num. 2:9; 10 :14; Judg. 1,2). -- **John J. Davis**, *Paradise to Prison* p.297

(12) In all the commentaries, I find no satisfactory explanation of this verse. What pleases me most, but I put it forth haltingly, is that the vine is Israel and the ass is Ishmael (Genesis 16:12, RSV). The Arab peoples, the great thorn in the flesh of Israel, will submit to guidance and leadership. The promises made to Hagar for Ishmael will be fulfilled. ... When Israel's ways please the Lord He will make even her bitterest enemies to be at peace with her (Proverbs 16:7). -- **D. Barnhouse**, *op.cit.*, p.234

(13) And such a simple, idyllic, peaceful life was indeed, during the period of the Judges, the happy lot of Judah above all the other tribes. In the times of David and Solomon all Israel shared in the prosperity of Judah, 1 Kings v.5. But with Solomon it came to an end. -- **F. Delitzsch**, *op. cit.*, pp.365,385

(14) ... with the advent of the promised one, who will rule the nations, the scene becomes an earthly paradise such as the prophets foretell in their Messianic poems. It is a miniature of the biblical scheme of history. -- **Derek Kidner**, *op. cit.*, p.217

49:13-28 Why are these blessings "appropriate" (v.28)?

(15) The tribe of Issachar would be robust and hardy. It would receive pleasant country that would produce an abundance of food. This prophecy was fulfilled when Joshua allotted to this tribe the territory of lower Galilee, including the beautiful tableland of Jezreel. The tribe distinguished itself for heroic bravery and military commitment (Judg. 5:14,15,18) ... **John J. Davis**, *op. cit.*, p.299

(16) Issachar's portrait is drawn with a few plain, masterly strokes. ..., 'He saw a resting-place that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant' (v.15). He ... had his heart's desire. ... He should have been as strenuous as he was strong; but with wealth and comfort apparently secure, he did not see why he should exert himself overmuch. He loved the ignoble ease which has been called the vice of the rich lowlands all the world over. In one trenchant phrase he is described as 'a strong ass.' He was well aware of his strength, but did know that he was an ass. ... He points the moral that 'the prosperity (or careless ease) of fools shall destroy them. -- **J. Strahan**, *op. cit.*, p.345

"The careless ease of
fools shall destroy
them" – Prov 1:32

(17) [on vv 17, 18] We only put it as a suggestion, whether this may not contain an illusion to apostasy or to the Antichrist, at the same time noting that the name of Dan is omitted from the list of the tribes in Rev. vii.5-8. -- **Alfred Edersheim**, *op. cit.*, p.184

(18) [on v 27] There is little doubt that Jacob compared Benjamin to the wolf because of the tribe's warlike character. History confirms this description. At one point this tribe stood against all the others in defense of its wickedness in Gibeah (Judg.20,21). The Benjamites distinguished themselves as archers and slingers (Judg. 20:16; 1 Chron. 8:40; 12:2; II Chron. 14:8; 17:17). The judge Ehud (Judg. 3:15), King Saul (I Sam. 9:1; II Sam. 1:19-27) and Jonathan were Benjamites. So was the apostle Paul (Rom. 11:1), which probably indicates that tribal identities survived into the New Testament period. This is important because some maintain that certain tribes were "lost" and that they migrated to western Europe and North America. **John J. Davis**, *op. cit.*, p.301

(19) Before him, in prophetic vision, unrolled, as it were, pictures of the tribes of which his sons were to be the ancestors; and what he saw he sketched in grand outlines. It is utterly impossible to regard these prophetic pictures as exact representations of any one definite period or even event in the history of Israel. They are sketches of the tribes in their grand characteristics, rather than predictions, either of special events, or of the history of Israel as a whole. And to them applies especially the description which one has give of prophetic visions generally, that "they are pictures drawn without perspective," -- that is, such that you cannot discern the distance from you of the various objects. -- **Alfred Edersheim**, *op. cit.*, p.180