

*Bible Study Series:
The Tribes of Israel Part 7*

Chart

The fulfillments of Genesis 49

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Version 1.8



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“All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing **each with the blessing suitable to him.**”
(Gen 49:28)

Bible study articles in the Tribes of Israel series:

- *Israel – the Apple of God’s Eye (part 1)*
- *The True Roots and Origin of the Scots (part 2)*
- *The British Sense of Mission as a Ruling People (part 3)*
- *The Second Exodus and the Last Trump (part 4)*
- *What will Israel be doing in the World Tomorrow? (part 5)*
- *Chart: Was Israel Mixed? (part 6)*
- *Chart: The Fulfillments of Genesis 49 (part 7)*

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Our purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God’s message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

Introductory Comments

The purpose of the Bible study chart is to explore the blessings that God, via Jacob, bestowed upon the tribes of Israel as detailed in Genesis 49.

Of particular importance is to understand that this prophecy has fulfillments – or partial fulfillments - in ancient Israel’s history; during these last days; and finally during the millennial rule of the Messiah. This would follow the Biblical model of past (historical); Christian era (inc last days); and Kingdom (or millennial) fulfillments of prophecies or elements of salvation. This is what the Church of God (and others) have taught for decades.

For example we have been saved from our sins; we are being saved on a daily basis; and we will finally be saved at the resurrection. Then there was the ancient Kingdom of Israel (possibly with overseas colonies during the time of Solomon); Israel today; and the coming Israelite Kingdom during the millennium (Acts 1:6). A chart *The Process of Salvation: From Baptism to Resurrection* is available expounding upon this and can be found in the study *The Born Again Teaching in the Light of History Biblical Salvation Principles*.

We find a similar pattern when identifying the spiritual people of God: those in ancient times preceding Israel (eg Shem, Abraham) and during ancient Israel’s duration (eg David, the prophets); the spiritual Israelites during the Christian period; and the spirit beings working with Christ during His future reign.

Past, present, future are Biblical principles, and this must be demonstrated because of works attacking the ‘lost tribes of Israel’ doctrine. These works maintain that Genesis 49 was fulfilled after Israel entered the Promised Land. This claim is partially correct – for some aspects of Genesis 49 were fulfilled as a forerunner of end-time fulfillments and even Millennial fulfillments. Yet, they cannot seem to see that Genesis 49 was not completely fulfilled and much of it is dual and future.

On the other hand, those that advocate the ‘lost tribes’ doctrine must also understand that these prophecies were *partially* fulfilled by ancient Israel and not intended for the end times only.

Before we enter into the chart that displays or sets out the past (ie ancient Israelite), current (latter days) and millennial fulfillments of prophecy, let us consider the following to assist in forging our understanding of this outstanding chapter:

1. what is interesting is that Jacob blessed them “each with the blessing suitable to him” (verse 28). It seems that God, through Jacob, bestowed these blessings based upon their works that molded their characters which, in turn, passed on down through their descendants. Thus this chapter demonstrates succinctly the characteristics of these tribes
2. not all blessings were equal – some blessings allocated to the specific tribes were greater than others

3. it should also be noted that those whose conduct was not up to standard – even these received a blessing! This demonstrates God’s goodness and kindness toward us. Simeon, Levi and Reuben were all guilty of terrible sins, and it appears that their blessings were thereby curtailed. Yet blessed they were
4. Judah means *praised or to praise*. This name weaves itself into prophecy (Gen 49:8) where we are told that he will be praised by his brothers (some of whom appeared to be jealous of his capacity – cf Is 11:13). Typologically, this portrays Christians who will some day be acknowledged by their antagonists (Rev 3:9). While Dan is forecast to judge his people (Gen 49:16) and his name means *judge or to judge*
5. these blessings are also prophecies of events well into the future.¹

Finally, please note that this is not an academic paper or article for publication (though it could swiftly be converted for that purpose) – rather it is a chart with helpful notes to better understand Genesis 49 and its fulfillments.

Prophecy for the Latter Days

Genesis 49:1 tells us that this prophecy is for the latter days:

“Then Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in **days to come.**” (*English Standard Version*)

Other versions render this verse as follows”

“And Jacob calleth unto his sons and saith, `Be gathered together, and I declare to you that which doth happen with you in the **latter end of the days.**” (*Young’s Literal Translation*);

“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the **last days.**” (*King James Version*)

“And Jacob called his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, and I will tell you what will befall you at the **end of days.**” (*Darby Bible*)

“And Jacob called unto his sons, and said: ‘Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the **end of days.**” (*Jewish Publication Society Bible*)

¹ Keith Essex notes: ““... the blessings of the LORD promised to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant are in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant. William D. Barrick aptly notes, The blessings recited in Leviticus 26:4-12 **are at least in part a fulfillment** of the covenant made with Abraham. Those blessings fall into six categories: productivity (vv. 4-5; cf. Gen 24:35; 27:28; 30:43) peace (v. 6; cf. Gen 22:17) power (v. 7-8; cf. Gen 22:17) population (v. 9; cf. Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:6) provision (v. 10; cf. productivity, above), and presence (vv. 11-12; cf. Gen 17:7-8). All these blessings were associated with the land that Israel would receive from Yahweh. They are consistent with various statements and restatements of the Abrahamic Covenant.” [footnote 65: “William D. Barrick, “Inter-covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants” (a paper presented to the Far West Section of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, California, April 23, 1999). See also Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. by Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991) 35.”] (“The Abrahamic Covenant,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 10/2 (Fall 1999), p. 207)” [emphasis mine]

The Hebrew for this phrase is בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים = “in the end of days”. The *Septuagint* (LXX) version similarly has it as ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν = “in the last days.”

Or as John Sailhamer in *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* states:

“Because of the terminology he [Moses] uses (viz., ‘the end of days’), we could call it an eschatological reading of his historical narratives. The narrative texts of past events are presented as pointers to future events. **Past events foreshadow the future.**” (*The Pentateuch as Narrative*, p. 37) [emphasis mine]

But when are the latter days? Here are some interpretations:

1. these “days to come” were partially fulfilled in the time of Israel when they settled the land. Centuries later they experienced terrible Tribulation when they were defeated militarily and ended in captivity
2. since around 1800 with the rise of Britain followed a century or so later by America, we have the last days where these prophecies take on a greater fulfilment
3. there will be further, final fulfillments during the Millennium.

Years after writing this article I came across Rick Sherrod’s *Review of United States and Britain in Prophecy (Part I)* where he demonstrates that Herbert W Armstrong taught that many prophecies pertaining to Israel may indeed cover three periods:

“Mr Armstrong wrote that Solomon “reigned in a gorgeous splendor probably never equalled before or since. . . . In Solomon's reign" the Israelites "reached a considerable state of prosperity. However they had not yet flowered into the full predominant-world power status promised under the birthright.” (p. 38)

Mr. Armstrong wrote, "the prophecy was for [1] David's own time, for [2] the ultimate fulfillment in the time of the Millennium to come, and also [3] for a different time in a different land where these scattered Israelites were to gather, after being removed from the Holy Land, and while that land was lying idle and in possession of the Gentiles." The Millennial fulfillment to which he refers will see "an era that will far surpass (in grandeur and magnificence) even the reign of King Solomon." Mr. Armstrong also noted that the Millennium would be the time of the quintessential reunion of the twelve tribes of Israel (Ez. 37:19,22), a prophetic event forecast during the Davidic-Solomonic era (USB, pp. 59, 93, 122, 184 [1986 edition])” (p. 38)²

In a letter to the Runcorn’s³ on 28 March 1928, Mr Amstrong wrote:

² Here are two further examples of this: “Moses had led out of Egypt by *withholding* from them entry into the promised land FORTY YEARS. **That promised land was a beginning part of the birthright**” (p. 122) [emphasis mine]

“The house of Israel not only was to lose its identity, but its name. It was to be called by a new name, since they no longer were to know their identity as Israel, as God said plainly in Isaiah 62:2, **referring to these latter days, and to the millennium.**” (p. 96) [emphasis mine]

³ Mrs Runcorn was the woman through whom Mrs Loma Armstrong learned about the seventh-day Sabbath. Both Mr and Mrs Runcorn were members of the Church of God (seventh day).

Now if my theory is worth anything, it is this: Salvation is for all the world who will come to Jesus and accept it, regardless of race. But **the special blessings, many of which I believe are to pertain to the next world, promised Israel**, are for that one blood race alone." [emphasis mine]

This shows that he understood that the blessings to Israel are more than a period leading up to the Great Tribulation, but also during the Millennium.

However, even the first century was a type of the ultimate end times or latter days.

Here are some Scriptures that indicate that in the Bible, the period of the first century was regarded as if it were the last days:

- Matt 3:7-12 (cp Mal 4:1-6)
- Matt 10:23; 16:27-28; 26:64
- Matt 12:41-42; 16:4
- Matt 24:3-9, 15-16; Luke 21:20-24; 23:26-32, 36 (cp Is 2:9-11, 19-21)
- Matt 24:29 (with Is 13:9-13; 34:1-5)
- Mark 11:11-17 (cp Zech 14:21)
- Luke 4:16-21
- John 12:31
- Acts 2:17-21 (cp Joel 2:28-32)
- Rom 10:19 (cp Deut 32:21-22)
- Heb 1:2, 10-12
- Heb 10:25
- 1 Peter 1:5, 20
- 1 Timothy 4:1-2
- 2 Tim 3:1
- 2 Peter 3:3
- 1 John 2:18
- James 5:1-3
- Jude 18

So the end times can cover several time periods, applicable for a particular audience. Even the first century! Such is duality in prophecy, long taught by the Church of God (and others). As such, the Church of God rejects preterism which teaches that the prophecies of Daniel, Matthew 24 and Revelation have already been fulfilled. There are general forms of preterism, but this is its basic teaching.

The Day of the Lord can also cover several periods. *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, article "Type; Typology":

“As another example, **Joel understands the "day of the Lord" (2:31) to be not a single event but a theological concept with multiple fulfillments, or perhaps better, multiple manifestations.** The locust plague, a terrible judgment of God on his people, was the day of the Lord, but an apocalyptic invasion yet to come (vv. 1-11, referring to a human, not locust, army) was still another manifestation of the day of the Lord. Even so, the day of the Lord was also salvation for his people, as seen in the restoration of the land (vv. 21-27), the pouring out of the Spirit (vv. 28-32), and the judgment on the nations (3:1-21). **Each of these events is a separate manifestation of the day of the Lord and each can be called a "fulfillment."** Peter, therefore, can cite the entirety of Joel 2:28-32 as fulfilled on Pentecost Sunday since the pouring out of the Spirit, in Peter's understanding as well as in Joel's, was no less than the day of the Lord. In short, the locust plague that took place in Joel's time, the destruction of Jerusalem by invading troops of men, the pouring out of the Spirit, and the final judgment on the nations are all genuine fulfillments of the idea of the day of the Lord.

Typological interpretation clarifies how a prophecy can have its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus and yet have other fulfillments as well. Perhaps the clearest example here is the series of "Servant Songs" in Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). The major concern has always been that of the identity of the servant. At one point, Isaiah explicitly identifies the servant as Israel (49:3), but in 50:4-9 he describes the servant in very individualistic terms and in verse 9 the prophet seems to identify himself, speaking in the first person, as the servant. He ascribes various functions to the servant; the role of taking the gospel to the nations figures prominently (49:5-6). In 52:13-53:12, however, the servant suffers and dies vicariously for the sins of the world but is ultimately vindicated and exalted. There is little need to wonder why the debate about the identity of the servant has raged for so long.” [emphasis mine]

According to *The Acts of God* by Francis Foulkes

“Yet even though the prophets and people believed that this ‘day of the Lord’ would be unique, they could not help but think of it in terms of the past. As Fairbairn puts it, ‘the expectations cherished of what was to be, took very commonly the form of a new and higher exhibition of what had already been.’ They thought of the future in terms of the greatest leaders that God had previously given them, and the greatest acts of God on the behalf of Israel.” (pp. 24-25)

“Thus we find in the Old Testament the twofold basis of typology. We find that the belief in the unchanging God who is Lord of history leads to the understanding of the repetition of the acts of God. **We find also that the Old Testament itself points forward to divine acts more glorious than any in the past.** The Old Testament is an incomplete book, it is revelation developing towards a climax. **There is the constant prediction of a ‘day of the Lord’, a consummation, a unique revelation of the power and glory of God in the person of the Messiah or in a Messianic age.** Then God will reveal Himself in mercy and in judgment more fully than ever before. This hope is expressed in terms of the past, yet exceeds anything experienced in the past” (p. 33) [emphasis mine]

Refer to the Bible study *DayS of the Lord* for further evidence.

Concluding Remarks

A question I ask myself about all of this: “Is prophecy an extension of history or part of it?” In other words, does history repeat or show cycles, patterns or rhymes because national characteristics continue on through the ages?

If so, in the case of many prophecies we should expect them to repeat or unfold or develop periodically. Many prophecies cannot be and should not be restricted to one period in history.

From this we can understand the dual or multiple application of the prophecies contained within Genesis 49. So, from this vantage point, we can say that there are three applications or fulfillments for Genesis 49:

1. Historical fulfilment (partial) after Israel entered and occupied the Holy Land. Though the characteristics of the tribes were certainly in vogue from the outset, down through the centuries⁴
2. End-time fulfillment from around 1800 for the direct, genetic descendants of Israel found in NW Europe and in the Anglo-Saxon-Keltic peoples throughout the world.
3. Millennial fulfillment – at least partially.

Concerning the Abrahamic promises:

“Some theologians have insisted that the statement in Josh 21:43 means that the land promise of the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled then. But this cannot be true because later the Bible gives additional predictions about Israel possessing the land after the time of Joshua (e.g. Amos 9:14–15). Joshua 21:43, therefore, refers to the extent of the land as outlined in Numbers 34 and not to the ultimate extent as it will be in the messianic kingdom (Genesis 15:18–21).” (Gary Gromacki, “The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant,” *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*. Fall (vol 18, no 2), 2014, p. 93)

“Traditional dispensationalists argue that God has fulfilled some promises of the Abrahamic covenant in past history, **but God has not fulfilled every promise that he made to Abraham** in the Abrahamic covenant.” (p. 119) [emphasis mine]

Here is an example of how a prophecy may be fulfilled in the aforementioned time periods, including the Millennium.

“How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel!

Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters.

Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and **his kingdom shall be exalted**.

God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; **he shall eat up the nations**, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows.

⁴ For instance Keil & Delitzsch in their *Commentary on the Old Testament* (online) wrote: This blessing began to be fulfilled from the time of the Judges, when the tribe of Ephraim so increased in extent and power, that it took the lead of the northern tribes and became the head of the ten tribes, and its name acquired equal importance with the name Israel, whereas under Moses, Manasseh had numbered 20,000 more than Ephraim (Numbers 26:34 and Numbers 26:37). As a result of the promises received from God, the blessing was not merely a pious wish, but the actual bestowal of a blessing of prophetic significance and force.”

He crouched, **he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?** Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you."”
(Num 24:5-9)

The partial fulfillments may be regarded as forerunners to the much greater fulfillment later on. The value of this is that they inform us of the future and help us to anticipate and understand it in advance.

Further information and supporting argument is found in the appendices: **Appendix 1** contains a graphic of the various symbols for each tribe; **Appendix 2** contains a diagram showing where each of the tribes were located after they entered the Promised Land; **Appendix 3's** diagram provides information on the Millennial allotments to the tribes; **Appendix 4** graphically portrays Jacob's family tree and the tribes that sprang from particularly wives; and **Appendix 5** is a short commentary on this chapter, containing helpful insights.

Table – Genesis 49 Expounded

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
1	“Then Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.”	<p>“This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death.</p> <p>He said, The Lord came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand.</p> <p>Yes, he loved his people, all his holy ones were in his hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you, when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob.</p> <p>Thus the Lord became king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together.” (Deut 33:1-5)</p>	<p>“Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day: That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the Lord! Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing; I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel.” (Judges 5:1-3)</p>				<p>There is much literature on the subject of modern Israelite identify. I recommend the condensed research on this in Notes on the ‘Lost’ Tribes of Israel Today</p>	<p>Cf http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/Genesis/Jacob-prophesies-of-Israel-in-the-last-days/</p> <p>NB: Israel is regarded as holy ones or saints (as are angels and Christians)</p> <p>NB: “days to come” can also be translated as “latter days”</p>

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Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
2	“Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.”							le take heed. To seriously take on board or even obey. Cp Rev 3:22
3	“ Reuben , you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.”	“Let Reuben live, and not die, but let his men be few.” (Deut 33:6)	“the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed at his heels. Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Why did you sit still among the sheepfolds, to hear the whistling for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.” (Judges 5:15-16)	According to Num 32 the Reubenites decided to settle before rest of Israel settled into the Promised Land. In addition, the tribe commenced places of worship not approved (Jos 22:10-34). As well they did not even fight foreign invasions (Jud 5:15-16). Normally the birthright included wealth and to be the political and spiritual leader (cf Matt 19:30). These elements of the blessings were given to Joseph and Judah instead of Reuben. It is apparent that no king judge or prophet came from Reuben.	Not world leader – will not excel like the British did. Civil War in late 1800s of Nordics vs Gauls. Never produced leaders like Britain and America have.	Will not have the birthright, but will still inherit Israelitish blessings	Northern French – around 20% of French population	As firstborn, Reuben should have enjoyed great blessings, but these were removed from him (Gen 48:5-6, 22; IChron 5:1-2) “The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son” (IChron 5:1)
4	“Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!”			As above	As above	As above		

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Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
5	<p>“Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords.”</p>	<p>“And of Levi he said, Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you quarreled at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and mother, I regard them not; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant. They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. Bless, O Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those who hate him, that they rise not again.” (Deut 33:8-11)</p>		<p>Simeon had allotment within Judah and a few cities (Jos 19:1) – also had smallest nos of all the tribes (Num 26:14) having started out as 3rd biggest (Num 1:23).</p> <p>Although scattering leads to weakness, it can also be a blessing. The passion and intensity of the Levite demonstrated by their role during the golden calf rebellion - their faithfulness to the true religion (Ex 32:26-28). In fact, their scattering became a blessing and they were able to be the pervayors of His truth.</p> <p>Levites did not receive land for the Lord was their inheritance (Jos 13:33),</p>	<p>Simeonites and Levites still scattered.</p> <p>Many Levites in the Anglican Church (apostate) and also Church of God</p> <p>[cp Christ in Matt 8:20]</p>	<p>During the Millennium the Priestly line will be of Zadok (Ezek 44:15)</p>	<p>Though scattered, there appears to be a concentration of them in parts of Scotland, Wales and Ireland</p>	<p>Fierce, war-like men and deceitful Gen 34:25-29 Ephn4:26, 31</p> <p>“These two brothers of Dinah were greatly angered by the violation of her purity at the hand of Shechem, but it was not righteous indignation. By their submitting to circumcision they had deceived the men of Shechem, letting them believe that a treaty was being ratified. And in their anger they slew the men of the city. The hamstringing of the oxen was a further evidence of their uncontrolled anger, a detail not mentioned in the account of Genesis 34:25-30. Horses were hamstrung because of their military use, pulling chariots (cf. Joshua 11:6), but oxen were used for peaceful purposes. The</p>

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Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
								hamstringing of these oxen evidenced wanton violence and senseless destruction. The alliance of Simeon and Levi was an unholy one, and thus, like those at Babel who joined together in disobedience (Genesis 11:1ff.), they would be dispersed.” (Bible.org “The Purpose of Prophecy (Gen 49:1-28))
6	“Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company.”							le best to avoid these fighting cocks
7	“Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel!”							This could be a force for good or evil
8	“ Judah , your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you.”			Judah’s lion like qualities stood out – he became the leading tribe. Also, kings came from him – from David to Christ.	How like the Scots who became the leaders and at the forefront. The Scottish-British kingly line was the most prominent of	Judah still at the forefront. Christ Himself will be King and Ruler over the entire world.	Scots (most) and Jews	His character shone through when he offered himself as Joseph’s (Gen 44:18-34)

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Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
					the Judaic Royal lines.	From him sprung kingly lines: Ireland, Britain, Scandinavia, Danish-German.		
9	“Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?”	“And this he said of Judah : Hear, O Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend for him, and be a help against his adversaries.” (Deut 33:7)		Some commentators see two aspects of the birthright: the physical blessings (double portion) poured out on Joseph; and the leadership aspect in a family - given to Judah. For from him would come the Messiah – the King of the World (“The Lion of the tribe of Judah” Rev 5:5). “... though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)” (IChron5:2) Cp Num24:9	Strong warriors. Selfless and zealous for causes	During the early years of the Millennium Judah will stand up with Christ against Gentile forces. Cp Zech 14:14, 21		“The firstborn normally had two rights. First, he became the leader of the family, the new patriarch. Second, he was entitled to a double share of the inheritance, receiving twice as much as any of the other brothers.” <i>(Genesis, an Expository Commentary by James M Boice)</i>
10	“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”			It took around 640 years until this prophecy began to be fulfilled. In fact, this was promised to Abraham (Gen 17:16; 35:11) much earlier. Then another 1,000 years until it was fulfilled, in part, with Christ at His first	Kings continue to spring from Judah	Tribute will come (Mic 5:2-5) Cp Ps 2		When Israel demanded a king (ISam 8) it was not in the way God wanted it. He was going to raise up kings from Judah anyhow in accordance with the prophecies. Perhaps a bit like Jacob

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Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
				coming. Judah was to keep the scepter until Shiloh (Christ) comes the second time and hand it over to Him.				obtaining the birthright (Gen 25:27-34; 27:1-46.
11	“Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.”			The land Judah settled was advantageous for grape growing and thus wine.	His first coming was on a donkey	The Messiah will put down uprisings during the Millennium (cp Ps 2). This seems to indicate a fierceness – a wrath toward His enemies		
12	“His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.’					This may refer to the bright, healthy appearance of Judah’s descendants		Heb for bright or sparkling is rendered beautiful in the <i>Vuglate</i>
13	“ Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea; he shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall be at Sidon.”	“And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents. “They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer right sacrifices; for they draw from the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand.” (Deut 33:18-19)	“From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant’s staff” (Judges 5:14) “ Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the	They dwelt in the area between the Mediterranean Sea and Sea of Galilee. Of any of the tribes, they supplied David with nos of troops larger than the other tribes.	Polders and famous Dutch ships are probably referred to here. Rotterdam is Europe’s largest port. The Dutch also claimed to have invented printing.	In addition to returning to their land in NW Europe as with the other tribes, their land is extended during the Millennium (Ezekiel 48:1–8, 23–27).	Settled Holland	

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
			death; Naphtali, too, on the heights of the field.” (Judges 5:18)					
14	“ Issachar is a strong donkey, crouching between the sheepfolds.”		“the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed at his heels. Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.” (Judges 5:15)	The land they inherited was in Galilee (Valley of Jezreel) which contained rich farmland.	Rich, farming country. Frisian cattle?		Either western Finnish or Frisians	
15	“He saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant, so he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant at forced labor.”			They were targeted by invading armies leading to servitude.	Reference is to Russia or Germany?			
16	“ Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.”	“And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's cub that leaps from Bashan.” (Deut 33:22)	“Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan , why did he stay with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, staying by his landings.” (Judges 5:17)	The great judge Samson sprung from this tribe. But many of the leaders over time were involved with idol worship (see Jud 18).		The ultimate fulfillment will be under the Messiah	Southern Irish (though there are many Simeonites and also those of Viking stock)	
17	“Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels			It was this tribe that was responsible for the introduction of idolatry (Jud 18:30. Cf Amos 8:14).		They are the first tribe listed in Ezek 48 – probably indicating their repentance and	Snipe away at the British	

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
	so that his rider falls backward.”			A golden calf was set up in Dan by King Jeroboam (IKings 12:26-30) While they are not listed among the tribes in Rev 7:5-8 they appear first among the tribes in the Millennial list (Ezek 48).	They are not listed among the tribes in Rev 7:5-8.	God’s forgiving character.		
18	I wait for your salvation, O LORD.”					During the Millennium they will be granted national salvation.		
19	“Raiders shall raid Gad , but he shall raid at their heels.”	“And of Gad he said, Blessed be he who enlarges Gad! Gad crouches like a lion; he tears off arm and scalp. He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander's portion was reserved; and he came with the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments for Israel.” (Deut 33:20-21)		They supplied a large number of troops for King David (IChron 12:14) Yet foreign armies oppressed them (Jer 49:1)	A militarized nation – families are armed to the hilt. Protected by mountains		Western Swiss	
20	“ Asher’s food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal delicacies.”	“And of Asher he said, Most blessed of sons be Asher; let him be the favorite of his brothers,	“Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he stay with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast	His food or bread would be rich. This may refer to luxuries and many human needs lavished upon and emanating	Famous Belgian dainties and chocolate.		Northern Belgians	

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
		and let him dip his foot in oil. Your bars shall be iron and bronze, and as your days, so shall your strength be." (Deut 33:24-25)	of the sea, staying by his landings." (Judges 5:17)	from Asher due to the fertile soil they settled.	Dwells close to Zebulun?			
21	" Naphtali is a doe let loose that bears beautiful fawns."	"And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, sated with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord, possess the lake and the south." (Deut 33:23)	"Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the death; Naphtali , too, on the heights of the field." (Judges 5:18)	Christ did much of His ministry near the Sea of Galilee where Naphtali settled (Matt 4:12-15).			Sweden	
22	" Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall"	"And of Joseph he said, Blessed by the Lord be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above, and of the deep that crouches beneath, with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwells in the bush.	"From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant's staff" (Judges 5:14)	Joseph received the double portion or physical birthright. His two sons were Ephraim and Manasseh.	Immense blessings bestowed upon the Anglo-Saxon peoples	Blessings repeated in USA	British nations and the USA	

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
		<p>May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers.</p> <p>A firstborn bull—he has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”</p> <p>(Deut 33:13-17)</p>						
23	“The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely,”			Canaanite attacks	Nazis, Communists, Islamics etc			
24	“yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob”			Israel won many battles	God granted them military capacity	Any opposition to Israel will be put down severely		
25	“by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above,							

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
	blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.”							
26	“The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills. May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. ”				UK, USA, British colonies. Separate from continental NW Europe			
27	“ Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey and at evening dividing the spoil.”	“Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord dwells in safety. The High God surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders.” (Deut 33:12)	“From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin , with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant's staff” (Judges 5:14)	This tribe can be severe, even cruel. Cf Jud 3:15-23 (Ehud); 1 Samuel 9:1; 14:47-52 (Saul); (Acts 8:1-3 (Paul). Refer also to Judges 19 & 20. In addition to military leaders such as Ehud, Saul and Jonathan, overall they were fighters (Jud 5:14; 20:16; IChron 8:40).	Vikings		Norway	
28	“All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them,	“There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his	“So may all your enemies perish, O Lord! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might.	The destiny was unique to each tribe. It seems that they were blessed according to what they would be best at and				Cp Matt 25:15

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
	<p>blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.”</p>	<p>majesty. The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, Destroy. So Israel lived in safety, Jacob lived alone, in a land of grain and wine, whose heavens drop down dew. Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.” (Deut 33:26-29)</p>	<p>And the land had rest for forty years.” (Judges 5:31)</p>	<p>could do with that blessing.</p>				
29-30	<p>“Then he commanded them and said to them, “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the</p>							

The Fulfillments of Genesis 49

Verse	Scripture (ESV)	Compare Deut 33	Compare Judges 5	First fulfillment	Latter day fulfillment	Millennial fulfillment	Modern identity	Comments
	land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.”							
31-32	“There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah— the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.”							
33	“When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.”							

Appendix 1: Symbols of the Tribes of Israel

The Tribes of Israel



Figure 5

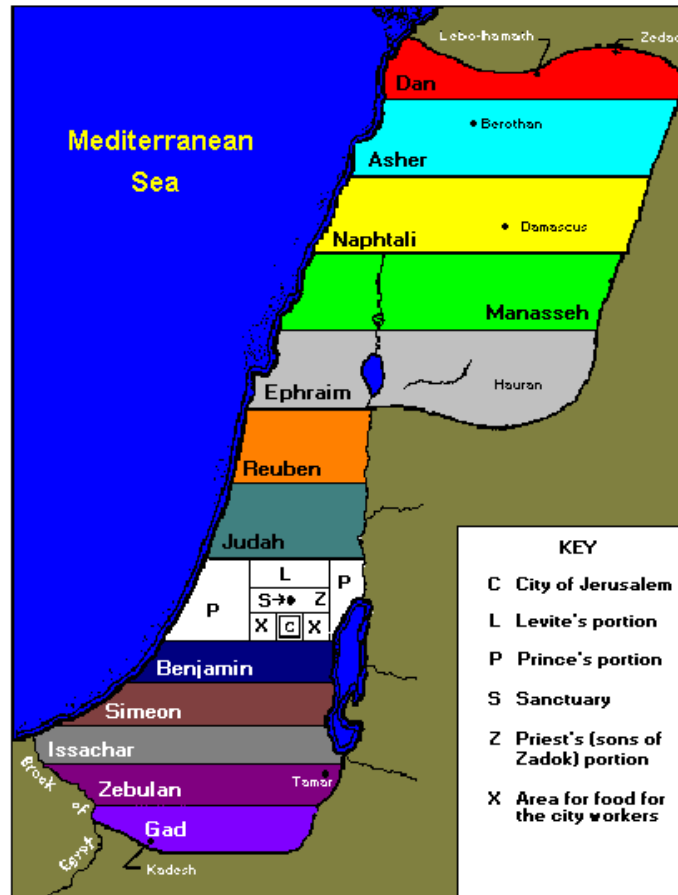
Diagram from the internet

Appendix 2: Division of the Promised Land to the Tribes of Israel (Joshua 12-14)



Diagram from the internet

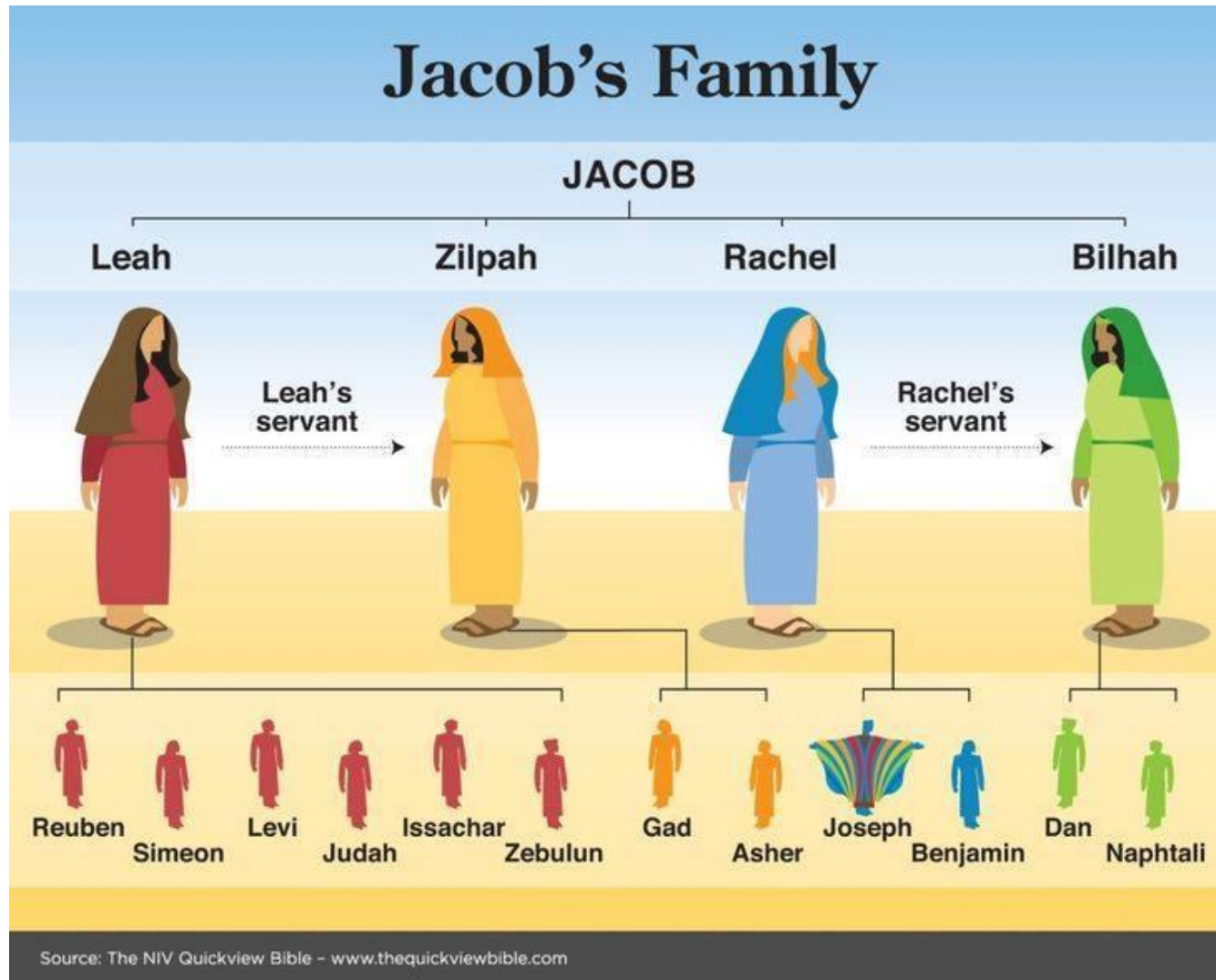
Appendix 3: Millennial Allotment to the Tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 48) LAND ALLOTMENT IN THE MILLENIUM ACCORDING TO EZEKIEL



Adapted from map prepared by Lambert Dolphin © 1996

Diagram from the internet

Appendix 4: Jacob's Family and Wives



Appendix 5: Genesis 49. The Purpose of Prophecy (Genesis 49:1-28)

<https://bible.org/seriespage/49-purpose-prophecy-genesis-491-28>

Introduction

As a student in my senior year of seminary, I was required to write a thesis. I chose to write on the themes of the Exodus as they were employed in Isaiah 40-55. During my Christmas break I was trying to put all the pieces together and complete the thesis. At one point I became totally lost in the project and, in the midst of all the particulars, lost sight of the purpose of my paper. Only after consulting with Dr. Waltke, the department chairman, did I regain my perspective and complete the thesis.

I find biblical prophecy to be much the same for many Christians. There is a plethora of particulars, a mountain of minutia, which can overwhelm us and cause us to lose sight of the purpose of prophecy. Some Christians immerse themselves in the details of those “things to come” which comprise prophecy. They carefully chart out the future in even the most obscure and sketchy matters (so far as biblical revelation is concerned). And yet, while prophecy is a worthy matter for serious study and investigation, the details become an obsession while the weightier matters of godly living are brushed aside. In effect some Christians strain out eschatological gnats, while swallowing biblical camels.

Few would suppose that Genesis chapter 49 has much to say to the Christian of the 20th century. The prophecies contained in this text are related to the destiny of the descendants of Jacob. There are, of course, messianic prophecies here, and that we find of interest. But in addition to these we are given insight into the purpose of all prophecy as we consider the purpose which these prophecies had for the sons of Jacob and their descendants.

Jacob’s sons, who were the recipients of these prophecies, would die in Egypt. Like their forefathers, they would not live to see the fulfillment of God’s promises in their lifetime. Why, then, did God predict events which were beyond their lifetime? We may be able to grant that these prophecies had meaning to those who first read them from the pen of Moses. After all, these were the descendants of Jacob, who would begin to realize the prophecies of their forefather. But of what value were the words of Jacob to Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and the rest? I would like to suggest that they were of profit to them in precisely the same way that prophecy (yet unfulfilled) is important to us. Let us first learn from the sons of Jacob, and then consider the implications for ourselves.

Questions Which Provide the Key to this Passage

You may not agree with the answers which I find in this text, but I am convinced that none of us will understand the passage without answering a few key questions.

- (1) Did every detail of Jacob’s prophecy come to pass? If not, why not?
- (2) What purpose does this prophecy serve for the sons of Jacob, since none of them will live to see the fulfillment of them in Canaan?
- (3) What reasons did Moses have for recording this conversation between Jacob and his sons?
- (4) Why did Reuben, Simeon, and Levi receive a rebuke from their father for their sinful actions, when Judah, just as great a sinner (chapter 38), received the greatest blessing of all the sons, as he would be the forefather of the Messiah?
- (5) What can we learn from these prophecies?

Observations Concerning the Prophecy of Jacob Regarding His Offspring

Before we give our attention to some of the details of the prophecies of this passage, it would benefit us to look at the passage as a whole. Several characteristics can be identified.

First of all, these are the last words of Jacob. The prophecy is literally the final word of Jacob, spoken with his dying breath.

When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people (Genesis 49:33).

The dying words of any man should not be taken lightly, much less those spoken by a patriarch and recorded under the superintendence of the Spirit of God.

Second, this is poetry. We might tend to think that a man's last words, spoken with great effort, should be disorganized and difficult to follow. A look at this passage in the NASV reveals that we are dealing with Hebrew poetry, for the form is noticeably different from the preceding pages. There are numerous indications that these final words of Jacob were thought out carefully in advance. Jacob's words are ones that have been carefully planned and probably rehearsed.

Third, this is more than poetry, it is prophecy. While the form is poetry, the substance is prophecy. Jacob's words reveal "things to come" for his descendants. As a rule,**104** the prophecy is general. It is not intended to spell out the future for Jacob's sons as individuals, but as tribal leaders. The future which is foretold is the future of the nation as manifested in the twelve tribes (cf. verse 28). Normally the prophecy will not speak of a particular place,**105** nor of a certain person,**106** nor of a specific point in time,**107** but of the character and disposition of the various tribes throughout their history. This forewarns us that we must be careful to look for fulfillment which is too specific.

Fourth, the words spoken by Jacob are a blessing:

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him (Genesis 49:28).

All the sons of Jacob were blessed in that they were to be a part of the nation Israel. All would enter into the land of Canaan and have an inheritance there.

Some would certainly receive a greater blessing than others. Even those who were rebuked by Jacob and whose future was portrayed as dismal were blessed, as we shall point out later.

Fifth, the future which is foretold is not independent of the past, but an extension of it. Moses told us that every one of the sons was given "the blessing appropriate to him" (verse 28). As we think our way through these blessings of Jacob we find that each of them was related to the past. The blessings of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, were based upon the sins which they had committed in the past. Joseph, on the other hand, had been bitterly attacked, but had remained faithful (verses 23-24). Others found their blessings related to the name they had been given at their birth. Judah, derived from the Hebrew root, 'to praise' (cf. 29:35), is now prophesied to be praised by his brothers (49:8). Dan whose name seems to be the participle meaning 'to judge' (cf. 30:6), is foretold that he will "judge his People" (49:16). Prophecy, then, is not detached from history, but an extension of it into the future.

Reuben (49:3-4)

Reuben, by virtue of his position as the first-born of Jacob, should have had pre-eminence over his brothers and the double portion of the inheritance (which was given to Joseph (cf. 48:5,6,22; I Chronicles 5:1-2). But these were taken from Reuben because of his instability:

Reuben, you are my first-born; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it—he went up to my couch (Genesis 49:3-4).

As suggested earlier, I do not think Reuben's lust was sexual as much as it was political—it was a lust for power. Reuben, like Satan, was not content with his exalted position and wanted more power, more pre-eminence (cf. Isaiah 14:12ff.; Ezekiel 28:12ff.). He therefore took Bilhah, his father's concubine, not because of her sexual desirability, but because she was symbolic of the right to rule over the family. To possess the harem of the ruler was to usurp the authority of the ruler (cf. I Kings 2:13f.). Since "the last shall be first" (Mark 10:31) and those who serve shall rule in the kingdom of God (Mark 9:35), Reuben had to be rejected from his position of power and pre-eminence. He who would rule must surely first rule himself.

Simeon and Levi

(49:5-7)

Like Reuben, Simeon and Levi had demonstrated character that was not befitting to godliness:

Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. 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 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 (Genesis 49:5-7).

These two brothers of Dinah were greatly angered by the violation of her purity at the hand of Shechem, but it was not righteous indignation. By their submitting to circumcision they had deceived the men of Shechem, letting them believe that a treaty was being ratified. And in their anger they slew the men of the city. The hamstringing of the oxen was a further evidence of their uncontrolled anger, a detail not mentioned in the account of Genesis 34:25-30. Horses were hamstringing because of their military use, pulling chariots (cf. Joshua 11:6), but oxen were used for peaceful purposes. The hamstringing of these oxen evidenced wanton violence and senseless destruction. The alliance of Simeon and Levi was an unholy one, and thus, like those at Babel who joined together in disobedience (Genesis 11:1ff.), they would be dispersed.

Judah

(49:8-12)

After learning of Judah's folly in Genesis 38 we would not expect him to prosper spiritually, but Jacob's words speak of a bright future for his descendants: Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine. And his teeth white from milk (Genesis 49:8-12). The pre-eminence which was taken from Reuben is clearly transferred to his younger brother, Judah (cf. also I Chronicles 5:2). He would not only rule over his brothers in the days to come,**108** but he would also prevail over his enemies (verse 8). His military might is compared to the strength of a lion (verse 9). Verse 10 has long been held to be a messianic prophecy by both Jews and Christians, but the precise meaning of "Shiloh" is uncertain. It is either a reference to a place, as it is elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. Joshua 18:1,8,9; 19:51; I Samuel 1:13, etc.), or it may refer to the person of the Messiah.**109** The prosperity of the tribe of Judah is depicted in verses 11 and 12. He will be so blessed in the vineyard that his vines will be strong enough to hold fast a young donkey, and the produce of the vine will be so abundant that he could, so to speak, wash his garments in its wine. In other words, wine will be as abundant as water. The quantity would be sufficient to more than meet a man's capacity to consume it, thus the reddening of the eyes (verse 12). The cattle will prosper such that milk will also be readily available (verse 12).

The first six sons referred to are the offspring of Jacob and Leah. The next four are the sons of the concubines of Rachel and Leah. The last two sons are the children of Jacob and Rachel, the wife of his preference.

Zebulun and Issachar

(49:13-15)

The prophecy concerning Zebulun is disturbing, for it has not yet come to pass:

Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore; And he shall be a haven for ships, And his flank shall be toward Sidon (Genesis 49:13).

Kidner comments:

Zebulun's allotted land in Joshua 19:10-16 did not reach the coast, unlike the neighboring Asher's (cf. Jdg. 5:17), nor did it closely approach Sidon. But it was near enough to both to be enriched by seaborne trade (to 'suck the abundance of the seas', Dt. 33:19), and the prepositions in the verse could mean 'towards.'**110**

In contrast to Judah, who subdued his enemies like a lion, Issachar failed to do so, and as a result, instead submitted to the service of the Canaanites. That which we do not master often tends to become our master.

Dan

(49:16-18)

Our hopes are raised initially, for it seems that the prospects for this tribe are bright, but they are suddenly dashed upon the rocks of reality:

Dan shall judge his people, As one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse's heels, So that his rider falls backward (Genesis 49:16-17).

Dan was the first child of Rachel, through Bilhah her handmaid (Genesis 30:1-6). Rachel felt that she would be vindicated through this son, and thus his name suggested that God had heard her cries and had judged in her favor. Dan would judge his people, as one of the sons of Israel, but he would eventually serve more destructive purposes. The incident in Judges 18 serves to reflect the bent which this tribe took. In the listing of the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:5-8, Dan is omitted.

Verse 18 is an unusual outburst of hope and expectation, but it is difficult to relate to its context: "For thy salvation I wait, O Lord (Genesis 49:18).

I understand it to be a reflection of the faith and hope of Israel, in the light of the prophecies spoken. The prognosis for the tribes of Israel thus far has not been particularly good, with the exception of the tribe of Judah. Through David much of the prophecies will be fulfilled, but the ultimate fulfillment is in the Messiah, who is the son of David. Having finished his prophecy concerning Dan, and thus being halfway through his descendants, Jacob bursts out with these words in verse 18. An expression that the hope of the nation does not lie in the sons he has borne, but in the God who has borne him along throughout his sojourn. Salvation surely will not come from his sons, but from God. Salvation will not come from within, but from without. That, I believe, is the substance of Jacob's words here.

Gad and Asher

(49:19-20)

As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, But he shall raid at their heels. As for Asher, his food shall be rich, And he shall yield royal dainties (Genesis 49:19-20).

Gad would be continually plagued by his neighbors, but would not be overcome.**111** Asher,

With a fertile plain and trade routes to the sea, ... would 'dip his foot in oil' (Duet. 33:24) and produce a notable annual quota for the palace (cf. I Ki. 4:7).**112**

Naphtali

(49:21)

Naphtali is a doe let loose, He gives beautiful words (Genesis 49:21).

The portrait of Naphtali's future is one of unhindered freedom and increase. While the NASV translates verse 21 to read "words" in the second line, it seems preferable to render it more naturally, "fawns," as in the King James Version. Under Barak, Israel was led to break their bonds (Judges 4-5).

Joseph

(49:22-26)

Joseph, we would all have to agree, was most worthy of any blessing which Jacob might pronounce. While he is greatly blessed by God, he does not have the privilege of being the forefather of Messiah, as does Judah.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him; But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob. (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), From the God of your father who helps you, And by the Almighty who blesses 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 surpassed the blessings of my ancestors Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; May they be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers (Genesis 49:22-26).

Joseph's future is described as one of fruitfulness and abundance. He had been bitterly attacked, yet remained steadfast (verses 23-24). I believe the primary reference here to be to the rejection and persecution he experienced at the hand of his brethren. Joseph remained firm and the God of Jacob sustained him. His blessings are largely material. He will be pre-eminent among his brothers, but not in the same way as Judah. Because of Ephraim's pride (Judges 8:1; 12:1) and apostasy (Hosea 4:17; 5:3f.), enjoyment of these blessings was not what it could have been.

Benjamin

(49:27)

Jacob described Benjamin as one who would be fierce and aggressive:

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, And in the evening he divides the spoil (Genesis 49:27).

This side of Benjamin can be seen in Judges 19-21. Moses, in a later pronouncement of blessing, has a more gentle word about Benjamin:

Of Benjamin he said, "May the beloved of the Lord dwell in security by Him, Who shields him all the day, And he dwells between His shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12).

Conclusion

Having given a very brief explanation of the prophecies of Jacob concerning each of his sons, we must return to our original questions if we are to gain a grasp of the purposes of prophecy.

(1) Did every detail of Jacob's prophecy come to pass, as he predicted? I believe we can say with a fair degree of confidence that the answer is no. For example, Zebulun did not dwell at the seashore (verse 13). Also, we must remember that while Levi is rather harshly rebuked by his father here, and he is said to be dispersed among his brethren (verse 7), he is to become the head of the priestly tribe. In this position there is great blessing.

What explanation can we give for the fact that some prophecies are not precisely fulfilled, as we have come to expect? First, let me remind you that God's purposes for Israel are not yet complete:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." "AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS" (Romans 11:25-27).

The promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were never fully realized in Israel's history, and thus they are still viewed to be future. How can we be surprised, then, that some prophecies are not yet fulfilled?

Secondly (and this will sound like a great heresy) God never intended to fulfill every prophecy. Before you turn me off and tear up this page, let me explain what I am saying. While most prophecies are specific and certain of their fulfillment, not all are so. Some prophecies are God's warning of what would come to pass if men did not repent and change their attitudes and actions. This is why Jonah had no intention of prophesying impending judgment to the Ninevites:

When God saw their deeds and that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity" (Jonah 3:10-4:2).

Some years later, the truth which Jonah knew was clearly stated by the prophet Jeremiah:

At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it, if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it, if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it (Jeremiah 18:7-10).

(2) What purpose does this prophecy serve the sons of Israel, since they will all die before God causes the nation to return to Canaan? For the twelve sons of Jacob, the primary lesson I see is that their character not only affects their own destiny, but also the conduct of future generations and the consequences which that conduct conceives. In other words, the sons of Jacob are reminded of the lesson which Jacob had himself recently learned, that present actions have future results and repercussions. Jacob's deceptiveness could be seen in his two sons, Simeon and Levi. The prophecies of Jacob remind his sons that what they are tends to shape what the nation will be in years to come. If they live godly lives, this will be a blessing to coming generations. If they are godless, the nation will likewise reap the consequences:

"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ... Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! Go, say to them, 'Return to your tents.' But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess." So you shall observe to do just as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess (Deuteronomy 5:9, 29-33).

(3) Why did Moses record the words of Jacob? What did the ancient Israelites learn from them? The lesson for those Israelites was precisely that which Jacob sought to teach his sons, that present actions tend to shape the future. The early chapters of Deuteronomy (such as Deut. 5:9, 29-33, quoted above) record Moses' attempt to underscore the importance of trusting and obeying God, for present and future blessing.

(4) Why did Reuben, Simeon and Levi receive rebuke from their father for their past sins while Judah is greatly blessed? Genesis 38 surely teaches us that Judah, like his brothers, was guilty of misconduct. But there is a significant difference between Judah and Reuben (for example). We are never told that Reuben repented of his evil, or that he changed his conduct significantly. Judah, when faced with his sin, confessed it and forsook it:

And Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again (Genesis 38:26).

Furthermore, Reuben's response to their distress in Egypt was to "pass the buck" by telling his brothers, in effect, "I told you so" (42:22). Judah, on the other hand, took full responsibility for the safety of Benjamin (43:8-10) and offered himself as a hostage in place of his youngest brother (48:18ff.).

These observations bring us to the purpose of Jacob's prophecy, and thus the purpose of all prophecy. Here, we can find the meaning of the many prophecies which are yet to be fulfilled, whether in our day or not.

THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

(1) Prophecy focuses our attention upon future things. Our tendency is to live our lives as though there were no future. Israel's hope, like ours, was a future hope. The ultimate reality is not in things seen, but in things unseen. Faith focuses upon the future rather than the present:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

While at the moment Jacob and his sons lived comfortably in Egypt, there was a grave danger in placing their hope and trust in what Egypt offered them. Israel's hope and the fulfillment of God's promises lay in Canaan, not Egypt. The sons of Jacob must look ahead.

We, too, must not fix our hopes on earthly things, in the momentary, temporal pleasures of this life, but in those things which God has yet in store for us:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:3-5).

(2) Prophecy focuses not only on the future, however, but on living in the present in the light of the future. The promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were to prompt purity in the lives of Israel's sons, not passivity or complacency. The future blessings (and judgments) which are in store for us are intended to encourage Christians to live in peace and purity:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (II Peter 3:10-13).

So it was that Moses was prompted to forego passing pleasures for eternal glory:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Prophecy, then, is given not to satisfy our curiosity, but to prompt us to purity. Many Christians have an obsession with prophecy, seeking to fill in their charts and laying out God's program for the future in minutest detail, as though it were some kind of puzzle to be solved. I fear that it is possible for us to strain eschatological (prophetic) gnats while we swallow biblical camels. While prophecy has future promises, it also contains present implications which are intended to prompt us to purity and piety.

I must make a momentary aside for yet another reason why we must exercise caution in attempting to too precisely plot out all of God's prophetic program. We know that while all of the prophecies of our Lord's first coming were literally and exactly fulfilled, no one, before the fact, could have predicted how it would happen. While the particulars of prophecy were known, the program was not. Dare we suppose that we will see the plan for our Lord's second coming any more precisely than did those saints of olden days see the first? Let us be careful about a fixation on particulars when the purpose of prophecy is purity.

(3) While we may be certain that specific prophecy (such as the second coming of Christ) will be fulfilled as specifically and literally as were those prophecies of Christ's first coming, more general prophecies may be given to warn men of the possibility of future things which can be avoided. Judgment did fall upon Ninevah, but it was delayed (from a human point of view) by repentance (Jonah 3:5ff.). And while judgment may fall on others, we may escape through the acceptance of divine grace.

In general we must say that all of the prophecy of Jacob either was fulfilled or will be in the future outworking of God's plan for Israel. To the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob, the prophecy was a warning of the potential for following in the footsteps of their father. As sons of their father, they had the predisposition to sin just as their forefathers. These words of warning were also words of hope for, through the grace which God provided, they need not follow in the steps of their fathers. The warning of sin and its consequences was designed to turn men from their sin to the Messiah, through whom deliverance would come. The sons of Jacob, like Jacob himself, must wait for God's salvation: "For Thy salvation I wait, O Lord" (verse 18).

We should also add that none of the blessings which Jacob pronounced upon his descendants were realized apart from divine grace. No one could inherit grace from their forefathers, they must accept it personally. This was the error of those in Jesus' day:

They answered Him, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is the slave of sin. And the slave does not remain forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:33-36).

Nationally, the prophecies of Jacob were certainties; they were sure to be fulfilled sooner or later in that tribe. But individually one could be the exception to the rule of the consequences of sin, or the participant in the divine promises of blessing, by trusting the Messiah who was to come.

The Scriptures abound in passages which speak of days ahead of suffering and eternal torment, of judgment and condemnation:

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown in to the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12-15). While some will surely face this judgment, you need not. Prophecy such as this is written so that you might turn from sin and judgment to Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers to all who will believe:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him (John 3:16,17).

By acknowledging your sin and the judgment you deserve, by personally trusting in Jesus Christ as Messiah and Savior, you may avoid the judgment to come and may live in purity and expectation of the promise of God of the blessed hope:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:1-4).

For the unbeliever, the purpose of prophecy is to warn him of the wages of sin. For the Christian, the purpose of prophecy is to motivate him to live in this life in purity and hope, assured that God has even greater blessings in store for those who will trust and obey.

104 "To such an attempt it is important to premise the following remarks: (1) That these blessings or announcements have respect mainly to posterity not to the persons of the twelve sons of Jacob. (2) That, consequently, the materials of a just interpretation are to be sought for in the subsequent history of these tribes. It is only from the documents furnished in the sacred record, that the leading characteristic traits, and the most important events related of each tribe, can be determined, and the appropriateness of the predictions clearly made out. (3) That the fulfillment of these blessings is to be traced not in any one event, or in any single period of time, but in a continuous and progressive series of accomplishments, reaching down to the latest era of the Jewish polity" George Bush, *Notes on Genesis* (Minneapolis: James Family Christian Publishers, ((Reprint)) 1979), II, p. 385.

105 In the case of Zebulun, he did not and has not, as yet, possess land on the coast.

106 Blessings were prophesied through Messiah in verse 10, but this is still not very specific.

107 Reuben's loss of the rights of the first-born was immediate, but the pre-eminence of Judah did not occur immediately. It was partially realized under David, and will be fully so under Messiah, when He comes.

108 It was Joseph who had pre-eminence over his brothers for the remainder of his life, not Judah. Only later would Judah rise to the position of preeminence.

109 "On the precise meaning of this clause it is still unsafe to dogmatize. *Shiloh* (AV, RV) is not elsewhere a biblical title of the Messiah, nor has it any clear meaning as a word. The alternative construction, 'until he comes to Shiloh,' corresponds to no Messianic event. But an early variant, revocalizing a shortened spelling of the consonants as *selloh*, yields either 'till what is his comes' (i.e. 'till Judah's full heritage appears'; cf. LXX) or 'until he comes, to whom [it belongs]' (cf. RSV). The latter, elliptical though it is, seems to be taken up and interpreted by Ezekiel 21:26f. (MT. 31 f.) in words addressed to the last king of Judah: 'Remove the mitre, and take off the crown . . . until he comes whose right it is: and I will give it to him.' Here is the best support for the Messianic content which Jewish and Christian exegesis has found in the saying from earliest times²⁰" Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*(Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), p. 218.

110 Ibid, p. 219.

111 "Four of the six Hebrew words of this verse consist of God's name and of word-plays on it. This may indicate that AV was right to translate it 'a troop' in 30:11; but puns can go by sound as well as sense (cf. the Hebrew of Is. 10:30: 'poor Anathoth')." Ibid, p. 220.

112 Ibid.

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