

Brandon Phillips

The Seed: Sovereignly Preserved / Jacob (Son of Isaac); Tribes of Israel / Genesis 49

In Genesis 49, Jacob demonstrates his faith in God's covenant promises by prophetically blessing his sons and revealing the future of Israel.

Pre-Sermon Comments

Genesis 48:15 LSB

¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd throughout my life to this day,

Review

Proposition and Outline

In [Genesis 49](#), Jacob demonstrates his faith in God's covenant promises by prophetically blessing his sons and revealing the future of Israel.

- Jacob Beckons His Sons ([Genesis 49:1–2](#))
- Jacob Blesses His Sons ([Genesis 49:3–27](#))
 - Jacob Rebukes Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (vv. 3–7)
 - Jacob Promises Kingship to Judah (vv. 8–12)
 - Jacob Foretells the Future of Six Sons (vv. 13–21)
 - Jacob Pronounces Abundant Blessing on Joseph (vv. 22–26)
 - Jacob Foretells Benjamin's Strength (v. 27)

- Jacob Breathes His Last ([Genesis 49:28–33](#))

Jacob Beckons His Sons ([Genesis 49:1–2](#))

Genesis 49:1 LSB

¹ Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Gather together that I may tell you what will befall you in the last days.

The Last Days

Genesis 49:10 LSB

¹⁰ “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.

Numbers 24:14 LSB

¹⁴ “So now, behold, I am going to my people; come, *and* I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the last days.”

Numbers 24:17 LSB

¹⁷ “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

Genesis 3:15 LSB

¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Deuteronomy 4:30–31 LSB

³⁰ “When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the last days you will return to Yahweh your God and listen to His voice. ³¹ “For Yahweh your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Isaiah 2:2–4 LSB

² Now it will be that In the last days The mountain of the house of Yahweh Will be established as the head of the mountains, And will be lifted up above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, To the house of the God of Jacob, That He may instruct us from His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion the law will go forth And the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.

Jeremiah 30:9 LSB

⁹ ‘But they shall be a slave to Yahweh their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

Jeremiah 30:24 LSB

²⁴ The burning anger of Yahweh will not turn back Until He has done and until He has established The intent of His heart; In the last days you will understand this.

Hosea 3:4–5 LSB

⁴ For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar, and without ephod or household idols. ⁵ Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come in dread to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days.

Micah 4:1–3 LSB

¹ Now it will be that in the last days The mountain of the house of Yahweh Will be established as the head of the mountains, And will be lifted up above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. ² And many nations will come and say, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may instruct us from His ways And that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion will go forth the law, And the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. ³ And He will judge between many peoples And will render decisions for mighty, distant nations. And they will hammer their swords into plowshares

And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war.

Acts 2:17 LSB

¹⁷ ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says, ‘THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;

John 6:39–40 LSB

³⁹ “Now this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

Genesis 49:2 LSB

² “Assemble together and hear, O sons of Jacob; And listen to Israel your father.

Jacob Blesses His Sons ([Genesis 49:3–27](#))

Jacob Rebukes Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (vv. 3–7)

Reuben

Genesis 49:3 LSB

³ “Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my vigor,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in strength.

Genesis 49:4 LSB

⁴ “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 35:22 LSB

²² Now it happened while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine, and Israel heard *of it*. And there were twelve sons of Jacob—

Genesis 30:3–4 LSB

³ And she said, “Here is my maidservant Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may obtain children.” ⁴ So she gave him her servant-woman Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.

1 Chronicles 5:1–2 LSB

¹ Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he profaned his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not recorded in the genealogy according to the birthright. ² Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him *came* the ruler, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph),

Simeon and Levi

Genesis 49:5–7 LSB

⁵ “Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. ⁶ “Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they killed men, And in their self-will they hamstrung oxen. ⁷ “Cursed be their anger, for it is strong; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will divide them amongst Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.

Genesis 34:1 LSB

¹ Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

Genesis 34:24 LSB

²⁴ And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

Genesis 34:25 LSB

²⁵ Now it happened on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came upon the unsuspecting city and killed every male.

Genesis 49:5–7 LSB

“Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly

James 1:20 LSB

²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Exodus 32:26 LSB

²⁶ so Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Whoever is for Yahweh, *come to me!*” And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.

Jacob Promises Kingship to Judah (vv. 8–12)

Judah’s Preeminence

Genesis 49:8 LSB

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

Genesis 29:35 LSB

³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son and said, “This time I will praise Yahweh.” Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

Genesis 49:4 LSB

⁴ “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 49:7 LSB

⁷ “Cursed be their anger, for it is strong; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will divide them amongst Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.

Genesis 49:8 LSB

⁸ “Judah, as for you, 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’s Power

Genesis 49:9 LSB

⁹ “Judah is a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lioness, who dares rouse him up?

Revelation 5:5 LSB

⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Stop crying! Behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Judah’s King

Genesis 49:10 LSB

¹⁰ “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.

Genesis 17:6 LSB

⁶ “And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will go forth from you.

Genesis 35:11 LSB

¹¹ God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and an assembly of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from your loins.

Genesis 49:10 NET

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him.

Ezekiel 21:27 LSB

²⁷ ‘A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes to whom the legal judgment belongs, and I will give it to Him.’

Genesis 49:10 LSB

¹⁰ “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.

Genesis 12:3 LSB

³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

2 Samuel 7:12 LSB

¹² “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up one of your seed after you, who will come forth from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.

Psalms 2:8 LSB

⁸ ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth as Your possession.

Isaiah 11:1-4 LSB

¹ Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and might, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. ³ And He will delight in the fear of Yahweh, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor render a decision by what His ears hear; ⁴ But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with uprightness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will put the wicked to death.

Revelation 5:9 LSB

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood *people* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

The Prosperity of the King

Genesis 49:11-12 LSB

¹¹ “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. ¹² “His eyes are dark from wine, And his teeth white from milk.

Amos 9:13 LSB

¹³ “Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “When the plowman will overtake the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills will melt.

Isaiah 25:6 LSB

⁶ And Yahweh of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, *And* refined, aged wine.

Revelation 20:4–5 LSB

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their witness of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who also had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Philippians 2:9–11 LSB

⁹ Therefore, God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

Jacob Foretells the Future of Six Tribes (vv. 13–21)

Zebulun

Genesis 49:13 LSB

¹³ “Zebulun will dwell at the seashore; And he *shall be* a shore for ships, And his flank *shall be* toward Sidon.

Deuteronomy 33:18–19 LSB

¹⁸ Of Zebulun he said, “Be glad, Zebulun, in your going forth, And, Issachar, in your tents. ¹⁹ “They will call peoples *to* the mountain; There they will offer righteous sacrifices; For they will draw out the abundance of the seas, And the hidden treasures of the sand.”

Issachar

Genesis 49:14–15 LSB

¹⁴ “Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between the sheepfolds. ¹⁵ “And he saw that a resting place was good And that the land was pleasant, So he bowed his shoulder to bear *burdens*, And became a slave at forced labor.

Dan

Genesis 49:16 LSB

¹⁶ “Dan shall render justice to his people, As one of the tribes of Israel.

Genesis 49:17 LSB

¹⁷ “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 49:18 LSB

¹⁸ “For Your salvation I hope, O Yahweh.

Gad

Genesis 49:19 LSB

¹⁹ “As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, But he will raid *at* their heels.

1 Chronicles 5:18 LSB

¹⁸ The sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, consisting of men of valor, men who bore shield and sword and shot with bow and *were* learned in *the ways of battle*, *were* 44,760, who went out for *military* duty.

Asher

Genesis 49:20 LSB

²⁰ “As for Asher, his food shall be rich, And he will yield royal dainties.

Naphtali

Genesis 49:21 LSB

²¹ “Naphtali is a doe let loose, He gives beautiful words.

Judges 4:6 LSB

⁶ Then she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, “Has not Yahweh, the God of Israel, commanded, ‘Go and march

to Mount Tabor, and take with you 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

Discussion Questions

Read [Genesis 49:1-2](#). What does Jacob mean when he says he will tell his sons what will happen “in the last days”? How does the rest of Scripture expand our understanding of that phrase?

Jacob was about to die without seeing many of God's promises fulfilled. What enabled him to speak about the future with such confidence? What does this teach us about biblical faith?

Reuben possessed strength and position but lacked self-control. Why is self-control so essential for spiritual maturity and leadership? Where are we most tempted to excuse a lack of self-control because someone is otherwise gifted?

Reuben remained part of Israel, but his sin still brought lasting consequences. How should we distinguish God's forgiveness from the temporal consequences of sin? Why is that distinction important?

Simeon and Levi had a legitimate reason to be angry over what happened to Dinah, but their response became sinful and cruel. What can we learn from them about handling righteous anger? Discuss the principle: “A righteous cause never justifies an unrighteous response.”

Jacob's prophecy that Levi would be scattered was fulfilled, but God eventually transformed that scattering into an opportunity for ministry. What does this teach us about God's ability to work through even the consequences of our past sins?

How has Judah changed during [Genesis 37-49](#)? Compare the Judah who participated in selling Joseph with the Judah who offered himself for Benjamin. What does his life teach us about repentance and transformation?

Read [Genesis 49:8–10](#). What indications do you see that Jacob is looking beyond Judah himself to a future King? How does the promise progress from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah, and ultimately to Jesus Christ?

[Genesis 49:10](#) says that the peoples will obey Judah's coming ruler. What does it mean practically for us to acknowledge Jesus not merely as Savior, but as King? Are there areas of life in which Christians are particularly tempted to resist His rule?

Jacob's prophecies concerning Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, and Naphtali demonstrate God's knowledge of Israel's future. How should God's sovereign knowledge and control of the future affect the way we respond to uncertainty in our own lives?

Jacob suddenly says, “For Your salvation I hope, O Yahweh” ([Genesis 49:18](#)). Why is that statement significant in the middle of these prophecies? What are some ways we subtly begin trusting human strength, circumstances, leaders, or strategies instead of looking to Yahweh for deliverance?

The sermon concludes with the idea, “Jacob is dying, but the promises of God are very much alive.” What promises of God help you remain faithful when you cannot see what God is doing?

What are some things we are doing today whose spiritual fruit we may never personally live to see? Think particularly about raising children, discipling others, serving the local church, evangelism, and investing in future generations.

If you knew you had only a short time left to live, what would you most want the next generation to understand about God? What does your answer reveal about what you believe is ultimately important?

Jacob could face death confidently because he trusted the God who keeps His promises. What would it look like for you to live this week as someone who genuinely believes that God will accomplish everything He has promised, even if you never live to see it?

Family Discussion Questions

Questions for Younger Children

Questions for Elementary Children

Next Week:

Jacob Pronounces Abundant Blessing on Joseph (vv. 22–26)

Jacob Foretells Benjamin's Strength (v. 27)

Jacob Breathes His Last ([Genesis 49:28–33](#))