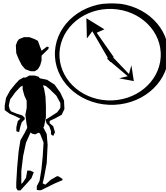


Inside this issue:

<i>Jacob Blesses His Sons</i>	1
<i>Christianity, Marxism, and Social Justice</i>	5
<i>P.M. Sermon Outline: Love One Another</i>	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Every other Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.

OR

Bible Study	4:00 p.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study	7:00 p. m.
-------------	------------

Jacob Blesses His Sons

Some thought on Genesis 49

By Jefferson David Tant

Prophecy and its fulfillment present some of the strongest evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures. This presents a strong challenge to those who seek to deny that the Bible is of Divine origin. The apostles also recognized the significance of prophecy, as so often they referred to this in their preaching.

Genesis 49 is a most interesting chapter, wherein the dying Jacob called his sons together to pronounce his blessing and prediction upon each of them. It is revealing to note the statements he made, and then to look to their fulfillment.

Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, "*Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come. Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob; And listen to Israel your father*" (Genesis 49:1-2).

"*Reuben, you are my firstborn; 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).

None of Reuben's descendants ever had a position of prominence — no judge, priest, king, etc. Reuben had a sexual relationship with his father's concubine — Bilhah (Genesis 35:22) and thus suffered for that sin.

"*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 brothers had the same mother — Leah. They slaughtered all the Shechemite men following the rape of their sister, Dinah, in Genesis 34. They had tricked the Shechemites into being circumcised and then came upon them while the men were recovering. Levi received no land inheritance — only the cities of refuge. Simeon evidently received only a small allotment in the midst of Judah, as shown in Joshua 9:1.

"The tribes of Simeon and Levi were scattered and dispersed in Israel, in conformity with the prediction of Jacob, on account of their sacrilegious and piratical revenge of the outrage committed against Dinah their sister (Genesis 34:1-31, 49:5). Levi had no compact lot or portion in the Holy Land; and Simeon received for his portion only a district dismembered from Judah, with some other lands the tribe overran in the mountains of Seir, and in the desert of Gedor." [*American Tract Society Dictionary*].

"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).

We see fulfillment in the success of the kingdom under David and Solomon, and thus the *"father's sons bowed down"* to the kings over the tribes. The latter phrases would refer to the richness of the land that *"flowed with milk and honey, as God has promised"* (Exodus 3:8).

There is a special significance to Genesis 49:10: *"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."* The scepter refers to the ruling power. Even after its captivity, Judah did not lose its tribal identity, and the right to pass its own laws, including the death penalty. The Jewish rulers ceased their reign when Herod came to the throne, and the legal power of the Sanhedrin was restricted 23 years before the trial of Jesus, thus they had to go to the Roman authorities in order to get the death penalty passed.

In any of the Jewish writings, "Shiloh" is another title for the Messiah. So neither the scepter nor the ruler's staff will depart until Messiah comes. But after he comes the scepter will depart from Judah. The scepter is a "tribal staff" This and "the ruler's staff" indicate the lawmaking power of Judah (mainly here to pass the death penalty), which will not depart until the Messiah has come, and then it will depart.

Now, let's trace this through history. The 70-year Jewish exile in Babylon, spoken of by Daniel, was started by Nabopolassar and continued by his son, Nebuchadnezzar.

zar. Judah lost its national sovereignty but did not lose its tribal staff, its tribal identity, or the right to exercise its own laws and pass the death penalty.

Herod the Great, who was not of Jewish blood, came to the Jewish throne, following the Maccabean princes who were the last Jewish kings to reign in Israel. The legal power of the Sanhedrin was restricted 23 years before the trial of Jesus. Dr. McGaff, in his book, *Jesus Before the Sanhedrin*, points out that the Jewish Supreme Court (and there were actually two of them, one of 71 members, and one of 23) started to have their power restricted.

This was actually started by Archelaus, who was the son and successor of Herod the Great, in 11 A.D. Josephus records this in his *Antiquities*, Book 17, ch. 13. The Roman historian, Tacitus, states that "The Romans reserved to themselves the right of the sword," and thus took power away from the Jews. The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds both bear this out. (These were Jewish commentaries, and are named for the cities in which they were written). The Jewish Talmud states: "A little more than 40 years before the destruction of the Temple (which would be 30 A.D., as the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.—jdt), the power of pronouncing capital sentences was taken away from the Jews." Remember, this was 30 A.D.

This had a profound impact on the Jewish court. Rabbi Rachman says, "When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived of the right over life and death, the judicial power of the scepter, a general consternation took possession of them. They covered their heads with ashes and their bodies with sackcloth exclaiming, 'Woe unto us, for the scepter has departed Judah and the Messiah has not come.'"

But wait a minute! Who was walking in their midst in 30 A.D.? Jesus Christ! And the prophecy said that the Messiah had to come before the scepter departed, and the scepter departed by 30 A.D. Thus the Messiah had to be in their presence. (*Quotes from The Messiah and Prophecy*, pages 1 and 2 by JDT)

Thus we see this particular prophecy fulfilled some 1,700 years after it was spoken by Jacob. What powerful evidence! Jesus was in their midst, and the rulers were blind to it. Jesus referred to this in his statement in Matthew 15:14: "*Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.*"

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

Their land was from the Mediterranean Sea to the Lake of Gennesaret. Their ports for the trade ships provided the means of profitable commerce for them.

"*Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds. When he saw that a resting place was good and that the land was pleasant, he bowed his shoulder to bear burdens, and became a slave at forced labor*" (Genesis 49:4-15).

Issachar had good land and worked hard to reap the produce of the land. Their men showed their strength in their valor (I Chronicles 7:1-5). They also showed wisdom in their leadership (I Chronicles 12:32).

"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. For Your salvation I wait, O LORD" (Genesis 49:16-18).

The 20-year judgeship of Samson, who was of the tribe of Dan, would be an obvious fulfillment of this, and certainly, the Philistines would have considered Samson to be a poisonous snake that greatly troubled them. And he was a savior of Israel, in that he delivered his people from the oppression of the Philistines.

"As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, but he will raid at their heels" (Genesis 49:19).

The tribe of Gad was often attacked by the Ammonites, but in time the Ammonites themselves suffered a great defeat (Judges 10:8; Jeremiah 49:1ff).

"As for Asher, his food shall be rich, and he will yield royal dainties" (Genesis 49:20).

Asher's allotment was on the seacoast between Tyre and Mt.Carmel. It was a very fertile area and produced fine corn and oil.

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

This is a possible reference to him as an agile and beautiful warrior. Barak, of the tribe, was summoned to go with Deborah to defeat Sisera and the Canaanite army (Judges 4:6ff). As to the beautiful words, he helped Deborah with the beautiful song of victory recorded in Judges 5.

"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).

It is quite obvious that Joseph was bitterly attacked, not only by his brothers but by Potipher's wife. Yet he remained firm in his faith. We also note that the record refers to the fact that God was constantly with him (Genesis 39:2, 3, 5, 21, 23).

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

Benjamin had a war-like character. The tribe overcame the other tribes in battle, having produced strong warriors. Ehud was from Benjamin. He delivered Israel from the Moabites, by slaying their king Eglon, and then he raised an army and defeated his people. He judged Israel with honor for many years (Judges 3:12-31; 4:1). We also note that King Saul was from Benjamin, and he had much success in battle.

For the most part, these prophecies started to be fulfilled some 400 years after Jacob spoke them, with some reaching final fulfillment 1,700 years later when Jesus (Shiloh) came. Truly, God "*did not leave Himself without witness*," as Paul declared to his hearers at Lystra (Acts 14:17).

Christianity, Marxism, and Social Justice

By Wilson Adams

Marxism is an atheistic and materialistic ideology -nothing exists beyond what we see. Christianity, by contrast, holds to an ultimate and infinite Power (God) – our Creator and Redeemer.

Marxism says there's no such thing as a transcendent dimension (life after death). Christianity counters with the evidence of a first day empty tomb and the promise of hope beyond the grave.

Marxism believes only the state brings about social justice utopia. Christianity says, no. While we seek justice as best we can, yet because of sin there will be no social justice utopia on this side of eternity.

Result: the ultimate solution to social injustice isn't the State, but the Gospel. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, you are one in Christ." Where?

Social injustices are not solved by man's ideologies, but by Christ. It's treating others the way you want to be treated and living outside of self. It's not allowing culture to define who you are or who others are, but loving everyone as He loves. What if... others don't return the same? Jesus' followers offer another amazing gift: grace.

Has everyone lining the halls of history lived up to His standard? No. Do some today miss the mark? Yes. What can I do about it? Determine to be part of His solution.

When you see others from the perspective of Jesus, it changes everything –from the inside out. Only God can make that happen.

