

Robert Vannoy, Old Testament History, Lecture 28

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Jacob's Blessing of Judah, Joseph

Opening Comments

By the general outline I gave you of the week-by-week progression, we are somewhat ahead of where I thought we'd be by this week. In other words, I thought we'd be up to Abraham but we're already down to Isaac and Jacob. So we're down the line quite a bit. And we'll move into Joseph today; that will help us next quarter. That means we'll have more time next quarter, which is good. It's hard to project in a course like this how far you go, as it depends an awful lot on how much discussion and interaction there is. If there is a lot of discussion it slows down how much you can cover. Then I end up eliminating things. We have a lot of leeway of what we can do in this class following your interests.

F. Jacob ...

3. Jacob at Peniel in Genesis 32

4. The Loss of Joseph in Genesis 37

We were at 4. under F. We finished 3. "Jacob at Peniel in Genesis 32." 4. is "The Loss of Joseph in Genesis 37." I'm not really going to discuss Genesis 37; we'll pick that up under Joseph himself. But I think it is good to mention it here when you think of Joseph's life. The loss of Joseph was a significant turning point as Joseph goes down to Egypt. Eventually that means the whole family of Jacob goes down into Egypt.

5. Jacob's Blessings in Genesis 49

Let's go on to 5. "Jacob's Blessings in Genesis 49." Now the entire chapter of Genesis 49 contains blessings that Jacob pronounces on each of his sons. It is reminiscent of the sort of thing that Noah did with his sons. Remember he pronounced certain blessings and curses on Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Isaac blessed his sons in Genesis 27:27 and following. Jacob, of course, prior to this, in what we mentioned in the

last class hour, blessed the sons of Joseph- Ephraim and Manasseh.

Now with all of those formulations of blessings, you are really talking about something more than just Noah's desire or Jacob's desire or wish for his sons, because I think we must say that these blessings are actually inspired pronouncements of what is actually going to come to pass on the descendants of the people involved. These blessings are programmatic for the future; we saw the way it worked out with Noah's sons and the implications of that. The same is true here. So I think they are to properly be understood as prophetic in character. I think we must conclude that Jacob, by divine revelation, sees something of the future of each one of the tribes of Israel as he pronounces these blessings in Genesis 49.

Judah's Blessing – Gen. 49:8-12

I'm not going to go through the chapter and look at each of these pronouncements. But I do want to focus on the one for Judah, which is in verses 8-12. We read there, "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness- who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk." Verse 10 is very well-known and it is significant, but if you look at the earlier part of the blessing, I think we see the first phrase implies that the rite of the firstborn is going to rest with Judah- "your brothers will praise you." I think the line of promise that has proceeded from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob is now to be continued with Judah.

Two things are said of Judah: something concerning his enemies and something concerning his relationship to his brothers. "Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies and your father's sons will bow down to you." In other words, he will subject

his enemies and his brothers are going to recognize his superiority.

Early Mention of Kingship

Then in verse 9 his glory is depicted in the imagery of a lion. “You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion crouches and lies down, like a lioness- who dares to rouse him?” That phrase brings us to the well-known statement, “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs.” Now the “scepter” is a word that is used to indicate royalty. It was a symbol of royal power. The statement is “The scepter will not depart from Judah.” Well the implication certainly is that royalty is going to arise within Judah. So you get here the first explicit indication that there's going to be a royal line in Israel. That whole idea of kingship in Israel becomes a significant thing later. It really isn't established until the time of Saul and David under Samuel after the period of Judges. Israel was in the land for a long time before the kingship arises, but eventually it's established. It's anticipated in Genesis 49. Other things are said later in the book of Numbers 24 by Balaam when he prophesied about the future of Israel. He also sees the royalty in Israel. When we get to Deuteronomy 17 there's a law of the king, set out in advance. It describes when you do have a king how he should function. It really doesn't become set up until later, but in kingship you get the institution established that ultimately is the institution that points forward to the great messianic ruler of the future which points forward to Christ himself who will sit on the throne as the son of David. So kingship becomes an important theme. Here's one of the first intimations of it.

A lot of people are under the notion that, there's no idea of kingship before it arose and when it did arise that people thought it was something wrong. They assume it was something they should have never asked for. We'll discuss that when we get there. I think the issue is that they wanted the wrong kind of a king for the wrong reasons. But the kingship in itself is something that was in God's plan for His people from the very beginning. So it's a very positive thing. Now the wrong kind of king and desired for the wrong reasons is something else and that's what we see in 1 Samuel.

This is the first explicit reference to it. Although the word “king” isn’t used here, the “scepter” is the symbol for royal authority, which appears here. Unless you can say that implicitly, you go back to Genesis 3:15 and see that the woman is going to crush the serpent’s head. You may say implicitly the idea of royal power evolved from that, it’s certainly not clear. This is the first explicit mention.

Until “Shiloh” Comes (?) – Gen. 49:10)

The next phrase, I’m reading from the NIV, the King James differs here. The second phrase- “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet.” The King James says, “nor a lawgiver from between his feet,” which doesn’t make a whole lot of sense. The problem is, in the Hebrew, it’s the same word that can be translated either way. It seems best in the context to understand it the way the NIV does which is “a ruler’s staff from between his feet.” Until a certain thing happens- and here again you have a difference of translation. In King James it says, “until Shiloh comes,” that is, “unto Shiloh the gathering of the people shall be.” Whereas the NIV says, “until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.” Now the NIV does have a note that says “Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs*.”

Now the reason for those different translations is, it’s a very difficult phrase to translate from Hebrew. If you look at the Keil and Delitzsch commentary in Genesis by Keil, he takes it as the King James translation, and translates it as “until Shiloh comes.” He has a lengthy discussion of the term in Hebrew and concludes it’s related to the root, *shalam* from which probably they named the city Shiloh. Shiloh is the place later when Israel comes into the land where the ark was located. From that root the name of the city is probably derived. The meaning of the root is “to be quiet,” “to be at ease,” and “to enjoy rest.” The idea of Shiloh then is the city where the ark rested at Shiloh. But then Keil says Shiloh might denote not only a place of rest, but actually a bearer of rest, the one who gives rest. And he concludes therefore that Shiloh here is to be understood as a name and it’s really a messianic designation, the one who brings or bears rest. So it’s a

title of the Messiah. He says in that connection that we regard Shiloh as a title of the Messiah, in common with the entire Jewish synagogue and the whole Christian church, which although there may be uncertainty of the grammatical interpretation of the word, there is perfect agreement as to the fact that the patriarch is here proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. You would have the reading then that “the scepter will not depart from Judah or the lawgiver’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes”- the Messiah comes.

Intertextual Connection to Ezek. 21:27

Now others object to taking the Hebrew expression there as a proper name. It’s pointed out by those who translate it as the NIV version does, that taking it as a proper name or a title is found in no version earlier than the sixteenth century. There’s no other reference to Shiloh as a title of the Messiah anywhere else in the Bible. If this is the title for the Messiah, it’s the only place in which it’s used. Probably most importantly, in references made to Ezekiel 21:27, it seems that there’s an allusion to this passage. In Ezekiel 21 you have verse 27, although in the Hebrew it’s verse 32. But in this chapter you have a prophecy concerning the coming destruction at the hands of the Babylonians of Judah and Jerusalem. The NIV entitles it, “Babylon, God’s Sword of Judgment.” If you look at the second verse, “Son of man, set your face against Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuary. Prophesy against the land of Israel and say to her: ‘This is what the LORD says: I am against you. I will draw my sword from its scabbard and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. Because I am going to cut off the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be unsheathed against everyone from south to north.’” If you go down a bit further in verse 7 it says, “It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the sovereign LORD.” Then in verse 10, “A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished-sharpened for the slaughter, polished to flash like lightning!” Then a question, “Shall we rejoice in the scepter of my son Judah? The sword despises every such stick.” Now there you see a reference to the scepter of Judah. Just because Judah has this scepter, is that going to protect you against this judgment? Well, “The sword despises every such stick,”

is the statement in this chapter.

Down in verse 13, “Testing will surely come. And what if the scepter of Judah, which the sword despises, does not continue?” declares the Sovereign LORD.” Again you see, it seems like an allusion back to Genesis 49:10 where it says that “The scepter will not depart from Judah.” When you get down further in the chapter, down to verse 21, “For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads, to seek an omen.” Here you have insight into ancient Near Eastern ways of determining the will of God. “He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine the liver.” Remember, liver and its configuration were used to determine the will of God. “Into his right hand will come the lot for Jerusalem, where he is to set up battering rams, to give the command to slaughter, to sound the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates,” and so forth.

Now you read the end of verse 24 it says, you are going to be taken captive, he’s going to come against Jerusalem. Verse 26- “the LORD says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! It will not be restored,” and here’s the allusion to Genesis 49:10, “... until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to him I will give it.” Now the NIV translates Genesis 49:10 that “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.” So, the wording at Ezekiel 21:27 is different than the wording in Genesis 49:10, but most are convinced that what you have in the Ezekiel passage is a longer version, you might say, of what you find in Genesis 49:10.

This is the Hebrew word, for those of you have had any Hebrew- *Shiloh*. If you look it up in the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew Lexicon*, you’ll see a noun that probably equals *shelu*, “he whose it is comes” or “that which belongs to him comes” which is a combination of *asher* plus *lo’*. *Asher* is “which” and *lo’* is “to him.” “Which is to him” is the combined form of this word. It’s a shortened form of *asher* combined with *lo’*. You see it down here in Ezekiel 21:32; you have “until... comes... *asher lo’*”- that which

is to him, that which is rightfully to him.

Most of you, I realize, haven't had Hebrew, but I'm just trying to give you some idea of what the nature of the problem is respective to this translation. I think for myself, I would be inclined to go with the NIV and to accept that the Ezekiel text is a parallel and sort of an expansion to the terminology of Genesis 49:10. If that's the case, it would mean that the *shiloh* in Genesis 49:10 is not a proper name, but it's this "he to whom it belongs" idea. Whether you translate it "Shiloh comes," or "he to whom it belongs comes," makes no difference as far as the messianic character of the statement. In either case you're pointing forward to the one to whom the scepter rightly belongs whether you call that person Shiloh or "he to whom it belongs."

In Meredith Kline's commentary, the *New Bible Commentary Revised Edition*, he comments on this verse, "Judah will continue to be the royal house, until he to whom it, that is, the scepter of kingship, belongs comes." So Genesis 49:10 is a significant verse in the context of this movement of redemptive history because here you have not only the narrowing of the promise from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, now to within Jacob, the tribe of Judah, but you also have the introduction to this idea of kingship into this unfolding of the promise. A king is going to rise out of Judah. Any questions or comments?

Davidic King and Christ [Already but not Yet]

I think the idea is that it's a continuing line even though there may be some gaps in the actual having of a person sitting on the throne of David, you might say. Certainly there was between 586 B.C. and the coming of Christ. But with the coming of Christ, it's true, some people were looking for Him to take up that role of the Davidic king and in a very political way, expel the Romans and establish His kingdom, which He didn't do in a political sense. Nevertheless He certainly did come as the Son of David. It seems to me He inaugurated the kingdom, at least in a provisional way of course and in a spiritual way. We'll see the more complete, fuller manifestation of that later.

But that raises another issue with respect to the kingdom: as to whether it was established in some sense in the first coming of Christ, or waits to be established in the

Second Advent. There are those who say that it was established at the First Advent and don't even see any fuller realization of it except in the eternal state. There are others that say that it wasn't established at His First Advent and every aspect of it remains yet to be realized. It seems to me that the Bible takes a middle ground on that- it's here in one sense, but it's still coming in another sense. It's here, but it's not in its fullest and the fullness has yet to be realized. But I think the point, to get back to the question, is, there's going to be an enduring dynasty that will last, this promise is elaborated on with David's promise, that "your house will last forever," David is told, that really is the same idea.

Shiloh could be the person or the place, could go either way. It served as the location of the ark, for a relatively short period of time during the time of the Judges and was destroyed, probably by the Philistines. The ark never returned there. Even the location of Shiloh was somewhat disputed. I think it's probably better to say, "until Shiloh comes" or on the analogy from Ezekiel, "until he comes whose right it is"- one of those two rather than "he who comes to Shiloh."

G. Joseph

1. Genesis 37:2 – Toledoth

Alright, G. on your sheet is "Joseph," and 1. is Genesis 37:2. This is another of those structural dividing points in the book of Genesis, because you notice Genesis 37:2 says, "This is the account of Jacob." Now that's from the NIV which somewhat obscures the Hebrew of that phrase. The King James says, "These are the generations of Jacob." Remember we discussed that phrase, and in Hebrew it's the *toledoth*-- "generations of." What it's saying is: here's a new section and the idea is, what is to follow is what's going to come out of Jacob. You have a new period beginning, in which you find the expansion of the chosen line into a people or nation. Because from this point on the focus is not just on Jacob, certainly not just on his personal experiences, even though those are involved, but on the events that prepared for the forming of the people or nation of Israel. That, of course, involves Joseph being sold down into Egypt by his brothers, the famine arising,

and eventually the whole family having to go down into Egypt to be preserved, with the food that had been set aside there. That, of course, is the means by which Israel and the family of Jacob go down into Egypt where they become a nation. They spend that 430 years in Egypt.

2. The Events of Joseph's Life

Alright, 2. is "The Events of Joseph's life." I've sort of outlined it in your outline sheets. I'm not going to go through this chapter-by-chapter, but a few comments on some of his points. Schultz has a summary on page 37 on the events of the life of Joseph, discussing Genesis 37 through 50. I might just say that the Joseph narratives are some of the most dramatic in all literature. Now I think there's something significant happening here as far as redemptive history is concerned, but even apart from that, people who look at these narratives just from the standpoint of their literary artistic value, tell us that these are some of the best narrative stories that you will find in all of literature. Of course, there's a lot of drama there, Joseph is sold by his brothers, put in prison unjustly, he interprets the dreams of a butler and a baker and then of Pharaoh. He rises to be a ruler in Egypt. Then you have the brothers come in and all that interchange between the brothers. Joseph eventually reveals himself as to who he is.

So you notice on your sheets, 37- he's taken to Egypt. Then chapters 39-41: from slave to a ruler, his imprisonment, the interpretation of dreams. In prison he meets the cupbearer of the Pharaoh and the baker of the Pharaoh. They had some dreams and he tells them that the cupbearer is going to be restored to his position and that the baker is going to be killed and that's exactly what happens. He tells the cupbearer, when you are restored remember me, speak to Pharaoh for me. The cupbearer completely forgot. Two years later Pharaoh has a dream and then he remembers, oh there was that fellow back there in prison that knew how to interpret dreams. So Joseph is called in to Pharaoh and interprets the dream of the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows and the withered grain and the prosperous grain, the seven years of prosperity and abundance and the seven years of famine. He tells Pharaoh that you really need to plan ahead during the seven

years of abundance. Pharaoh then seeks out someone to do that and he again turns to Joseph.

There's a lesson there from the other side, of course, God's providence is in all this. But this matter of forgetting things that are important for other people- it is a very easy thing to do. Some little thing that you could do that would be of enormous significance for someone else, it is very easy just to completely forget that and not take it seriously. There are no consequences for you, but big consequences for the one forgotten.

c. Joseph's Encounters with His Brothers – Gen. 42-45

Alright, C. is "Joseph's Encounters with His Brothers, Genesis 42-45." The first journey into Egypt is without Benjamin. Remember Benjamin was the second son of Rachel. Rachel was the favorite wife and Joseph was the first son after a long time of barrenness. Finally, Joseph was born, Jacob loses Joseph, and then Benjamin's born, and in childbirth Rachel dies. Benjamin then becomes the father's favorite. So when these other brothers go down into Egypt, Benjamin stays with Jacob, and doesn't go down. But Simeon is detained by Joseph because he inquired and found out about Benjamin, and he says, the way you can show me you're not really spies is you go back and get Benjamin and bring him back with you. When the brothers go back and report that to Jacob, it's very difficult for Jacob to say that Benjamin can go. He finally agrees to it. In the second journey, Judah becomes assurance for Benjamin and eventually Joseph identifies himself.

Then the children of Israel settle in Egypt. Goshen is given to them as a place to live, then you have Jacob's blessings, Jacob's death and burial in Canaan, where they take him back up into the land of Canaan for burial. Now that is just a brief resume of the flow of these narratives. I want to say something about the significance of these events in the context of redemptive history and we'll go back in and look at certain sections of this.

Joseph's Family Dreams

A typological interpretation is that Joseph is an almost sinless man, pointing forward to Christ. There may be certain typological connections between Joseph and Christ but I think you have to be careful with how far you go with it. In Genesis 37:2, maybe this puts a different light on Joseph, but maybe not much, it reads “Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers. He brought their father a bad report about them,” his brothers. Now here you have one brother coming back with bad information, a snitch or tattletale of sorts. Then when you go down to verse 5 you read, “Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, ‘Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.’ His brothers said to him, ‘Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?’” Of course, there’s irony in this because they do bow down later in the story. “And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “‘Listen,’ he said, ‘I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, ‘What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?’ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.” It seems to me through all that, his attitude is one of putting it on pretty heavy toward his brothers. Now true, I think God was revealing something to him in a dream that later was going to come to pass, but it seems to me that his attitude wasn’t all that it could have been in how he spoke of these things to his brothers and father.

NT Does Not Mention Joseph as a Type of Christ

So I think Joseph was a man like all other men who had his good and his bad traits. I do think there are certain aspects of his life that may well have a typological

significance. The man I studied with in Holland, who is N. H. Ridderbos, I think I mentioned that earlier. Herman Ridderbos wrote *The Coming of the Kingdom* and *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. N. H. Ridderbos was an Old Testament scholar and N. H. and Herman were brothers. Then there was the father J. Ridderbos who was also an Old Testament scholar. He was the father of two sons, both of whom taught in the seminary. N. H. was professor at the Free Amsterdam University in Old Testament, under whom I studied. He said that the New Testament does not refer to Joseph as a type- this is a caution. But it does seem that in the Joseph story the theme of humiliation and later exaltation finds a higher realization in the person of Christ. Joseph as Christ preserves God's people from destruction. But then he adds, there are limits. Some treatments seem to border on allegory in finding detailed correspondences and that's where he sort of backs off and I think that's a healthy thing to do.

3. The Significance of These Events in the Context of Redemptive History

Joseph Temporarily Becomes Prominent although Judah is the Promised Seed

Let's move on to number 3. "The Significance of These Events in the Context of Redemptive History." I want to make just two points here. That first one is, Joseph temporarily becomes prominent, although Judah is the promised seed. Now in these stories, it appears that the tension between Leah and Rachel is continuing in their children, because the first four sons of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah are involved in selling the son of Rachel to the Midianite traders, by which he gets taken down to Egypt. Now it's true, however, that Judah is the one who proposes to sell Joseph rather than kill him in Genesis 37:27, "Come let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, after all he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." Reuben, it appears, really wanted to free him, because in verse 21, "When Reuben heard this he tried to rescue him from their hands, 'Let's not take his life,' he said." Then, "'Throw him into this cistern in the desert but don't lay a hand on him.' Reuben said this to rescue him and to take him back to his father." But when he came back, verse 29, he finds that Joseph isn't there and he tore his clothes and went back to his brothers and asked his

brothers, “Where can I turn now?” So it does seem that Reuben really wasn’t too much a part of that. But in any case it does seem that a measure of this conflict is continuing in the children.

Genesis 38 Judah and Tamar – Perez

In addition, Judah’s conduct in the next chapter, chapter 38, which is sort of a parenthesis in this sequence of narratives about Joseph, is not the character you might expect, out of the one through whom that promised line is going to continue, because chapter 38 tells of Judah’s relationship with Tamar, who was Judah’s son’s former wife. Her husband, Judah’s son, died and at a certain point she didn’t have another husband and the other son of Judah was not willing to perform that Levirite obligation with respect to her. Judah is out on the road and sees her, mistakes her for a harlot and has a sexual relationship with her, out of which children are born. You read in verse 16, “Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, ‘Come now, let me sleep with you.’” Verse 24, “Three months later Judah was told, ‘Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution and as a result she is now pregnant.’ Judah said, ‘Bring her out and have her burned to death!’ As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. ‘I’m pregnant by the man who owns these,’ she said, ‘See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are.’ Judah recognized them and said, ‘She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn’t give her to my son Shelah.’ And he did not sleep with her again.” |

Perez and Christ’s Line

But the children are born and you read in chapter 38, verse 29, “But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, ‘So this is how you have broken out!’ And he was named Perez. Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah.” The interesting thing is that Perez becomes a link in the line from Judah to Christ. If you look at Ruth 4:18-22, at the end of the book of Ruth, you read, “This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,

Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.” So in the line down to David you find Perez. Over in Matthew chapter 1 where you have the genealogy of Christ, verse 3, “Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.” So it’s not the sort of conduct you might expect, but we have seen that a number of times. God works His redemptive purposes out in spite of the sinful acts of man. During this time Joseph is prominent. He is sold by his brothers, but that serves ultimately to preserve the children of Israel and bring them back together again.

I see my time is about up. We’ll have to stop here. I’ll pick up at this point next quarter- “The Significance of These Events in the Context of Redemptive History.” We’ve looked at one point: Joseph temporarily becomes prominent, although Judah is the one who will fulfill the promise and prophecy.

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