

Genesis: Lecture 28: Jacob's Blessing of Judah, Joseph

Author: Dr. Robert Vannoy

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Robert Vannoy explores Jacob's patriarchal blessings in Genesis 49, focusing on the prophetic and messianic significance of the blessings pronounced upon Judah and Joseph. Vannoy analyzes the explicit prediction of a future royal dynasty in Israel through the imagery of the scepter, and examines the translation difficulties surrounding the word 'Shiloh' in Genesis 49:10 by comparing it to Ezekiel 21:27. Additionally, the lecture outlines the narrative of Joseph's life in Egypt, noting its literary quality, typological connections to Christ, and role in redemptive history through the preservation of the chosen family.

Outline

I. Course Progress and Opening Comments

- A. Lecture progression: ahead of schedule, transitioning from Isaac and Jacob to Joseph
- B. Pedagogical note: pacing of the course depends heavily on class discussion and student interaction

II. Jacob's Blessings in Genesis 49

- A. Nature of the patriarchal blessings
 - 1. Inspired and programmatic pronouncements for the descendants' futures rather than mere personal wishes
 - 2. Divine revelation of the future of the individual tribes of Israel
- B. Judah's Blessing (Genesis 49:8-12)
 - 1. Rite of firstborn and the line of promise transferred to Judah ('your brothers will praise you')
 - 2. Royal elements and kingship
 - a. Scepter and ruler's staff as explicit symbols of royal authority and royal line
 - b. Royalty anticipated in Genesis 49, Numbers 24 (Balaam), and Deuteronomy 17 (law of the king)
 - c. Historical establishment of kingship under Saul and David pointing forward to the Messiah (Christ)

d. Rightful nature of kingship: positive in God's plan, though requested for the wrong reasons in 1 Samuel

3. Translation difficulties of Genesis 49:10

- a. 'Ruler's staff' (NIV) vs. 'lawgiver' (KJV) in translating the Hebrew term
- b. 'Until he comes to whom it belongs' (NIV) vs. 'until Shiloh comes' (KJV)
- c. Keil's view of 'Shiloh': derived from shalom (rest), denoting the Messiah as the 'bearer of rest'
- d. Objections to Shiloh as a proper name/title: absent from early versions and elsewhere in Scripture
- e. Parallel in Ezekiel 21:27 (Hebrew v. 32): 'until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs' as an expansion of Genesis 49:10

C. Theological implications: 'Already but not Yet' of the Kingdom

- 1. Provisional establishment of the kingdom at Christ's First Advent, with full realization at the Second Advent
- 2. Historical role of Shiloh as the temporary resting place of the ark during the period of the Judges

III. The Joseph Narrative (Genesis 37-50)

A. Genesis 37:2 as a structural dividing point (Toledoth)

- 1. Shift from individual patriarchal stories to the development and formation of the nation of Israel
- 2. Preservation of Israel through Joseph's journey and the family's 430-year settlement in Egypt

B. Narrative quality and major events of Joseph's life

- 1. Outstanding dramatic and artistic storytelling value recognized in general literature
- 2. Slave to ruler, imprisonment, dream interpretation (butler, baker, Pharaoh), and planning for famine
- 3. God's providence contrasted with human forgetfulness (e.g., the cupbearer)

C. Joseph's encounters with his brothers (Genesis 42-45)

- 1. Journeys to Egypt and Benjamin as the father's favorite son after the loss of Joseph and death of Rachel
- 2. Judah's pledge of surety for Benjamin
- 3. Settlement in Goshen, Jacob's final blessings, and Jacob's burial in Canaan

D. Character evaluation and typological significance

- 1. Joseph's human flaws (attitude in sharing family dreams, bringing bad reports of his brothers)

2. Caution from N.H. Ridderbos on the New Testament's silence regarding Joseph as an explicit type
3. Themes of humiliation and exaltation as a parallel pointing to Christ's preservation of His people

IV. Significance of the Events in Redemptive History

- A. Tension between Joseph's temporary prominence and Judah's role as the promised seed
 1. Leah vs. Rachel rivalry continuing through their children
 2. Judah's intervention to sell Joseph rather than kill him
- B. Judah's character and the line of Christ
 1. Parenthetical narrative of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38
 2. Birth of Perez and Zerah
 3. Perez as the direct genealogical link to David and Christ (Ruth 4, Matthew 1)
 4. Demonstration of God working out His redemptive purposes in spite of human sin