



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 49: 13-22

“Jacob’s Last Words, part II”

TRANSCRIPT

We are drawing near the end of our study of this great book and today our subject is the last part of the 49th chapter, Jacob’s great prophecy with respect to the future of his sons, and so will you turn with me to verse 13 and we will read the remainder of the chapter. Remember just for the sake of background and context of that last time, we looked at the first 12 verses in which some of the words of Jacob concerning some of the brethren are set forth but with great emphasis upon Judah, and Judah is particularly singled out for special Messianic blessing. Jacob had said 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 people.

We pointed out that the word Shiloh, while a personal name, is derived from two Hebrew expressions, one related actually to Acadian but nevertheless which means to him to whom it belongs, that is everything belongs. And the ruler’s staff shall not depart from Judah nor the scepter from between his feet until this one to whom it all belongs comes. And to him shall the obedience of the peoples be. Not to any other thing. The true gathering place is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now in the remainder of the chapter, Jacob continues his prophecies concerning the other brothers and the stress of the latter part of the chapter rests upon Joseph as we shall see. We begin with verse 13,

“Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore; and he shall be a haven for ships, and his flank shall be toward Sidon. ‘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 a burden, and became a slave at forced labor. ‘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.”

Incidentally in this great chapter, the names of the sons have significance and the things that are said about them often are things that are related to their names. Dan means, it comes from the Hebrew word to vindicate or to judge and so we are not surprised to read Dan shall judge his people. Now in verse 18, Jacob utters something that is very much like an ejaculatory prayer and it's right in the midst of these words concerning the brethren, “For Thy salvation I wait, O Lord.” And students of the Book of Genesis are puzzled over this why is that Jacob interrupts the words concerning the brothers with something concerning himself and in the exposition it follows I will suggest one of the reasons why Jacob may have said what he said, but notice that statement in verse 18,

“As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, but he shall raid at their heels.”

Four of the six Hebrew words in this verse, verse 19, are derived from the same root as the word Gad and so Jacob on the spur of the moment in an impromptu way is giving a remarkable poetic prophecy. It comes of course ultimately from the Holy Spirit.

“As for Asher, his food shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties. ‘Naphtali is a doe let loose, he gives beautiful words. ‘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 Jacob speaks about himself here “The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors.”

That’s Jacob’s way of saying I am a more blessed man than Abraham and Isaac. You can see that he has come to understand something of the grace of God to him. I think every Christian in the final analysis feels that God has surpassed himself in blessing in that he has blessed who are so wicked.

““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.”

That word distinguished means separated from in the sense of separated from for special purposes. Distinguished among his brothers. It reminds us of the distinguishing grace of God. Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated. We shall never understand the depths of that, but it is an expression of the distinguishing grace of God. It's in the Bible.

“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil.’ ‘All these are the twelve tribes of Israel Moses continues and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him. Then he charged them and said to them, ‘I am about 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 of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the

field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah.”

Someone this morning after the 8:30 service asked me in the parking lot, why was Leah buried there and Rachel, the wife that Jacob loved, was buried elsewhere on the way to Ephrath on the way to Bethlehem, and I gave a very wise answer. I said I do not know. [Laughter] I think that one thing we can say and this is not the answer to that question. It is obvious that for Jacob, the most important thing is not that either of his wives was buried here, but rather that it was the burial place of Abraham and Isaac because he sees the covenantal connection as the most important thing, even more important than the relationship to Rachel or Leah or of the others.

“‘The field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth.’ When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

This is the same subject as the subject of the message last Sunday morning, Jacob's last words and this is the second installment and final installment of the treatment of the great prophecy that Jacob made with reference to the future of his sons and also with reference to the future of the Messianic age. For the third time, Joseph visits Jacob’s death chamber. He is one of the twelve bearded men who are around the aged form of his father, and how awe-inspiring it must have been as these men here their names called out by the trembling voice of the old man. He reviews their past and also prophesized concerning their future, and when they remember that he is truly God’s man for the revelation of God comes through him, it was a solemn occasion for them.

It was essentially a swan song, and it is a true swan song. Ancient writers used to say that the swan never sang in its whole life until it was just about to die and that’s how we obtain the

expression his swan song. A person is leaving a ministerial or leaving some work, or he is dying, and the last thing that he says is his swan song, Paul’s swan song the 2 Timothy. And this is Jacob’s swan song.

But in this case, it really is a song because it is a poetic piece. Genesis 49 is a prophecy in poetic form and so this sonnet or this poem that Jacob gives is one that is beautiful and particularly beautiful because it is the last word of this well-known and highly regarded patriarch. It’s characterized by tenderness and severity, and I stress the fact that it is characterized by severity. We have today, if it is possible, overemphasized the fact that God is love. God of course is love, and the Bible states it very plainly, but he is not only love.

Last week I was preaching in Denton every night at a Baptist church and in the course of the studies, which were largely around the prophetic theme, I had occasion to refer back to the Magnificat of Mary and pointed out that the Virgin Mother, if you examine the statements that she makes in that Magnificat, laid stress not only on the mercy of God in giving the son for the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament, but also upon the fact that God is going to judge his enemies, and some of the strongest statements of that particular gospel are made by the Virgin Mother, Mary. You see there is a note of astringency. There is a note of severity. There is a note of strictness in the biblical revelation concerning God. We express it theologically by saying that God is holy and God is just. He is not only love, but he is love. He is just and therefore he must punish sin. Our age is made entirely too much of the love of God in the light of the fact that it is so overlooked the other side of the character of God. There is that note of astringency in him.

Well that Jacob has been glorious before, glorious at Bethel when he was sleeping and saw that great vision of the angels and the ladder; glorious at the Brook of Jabbok when he wrestled with the one whom he thought at first may be a representative of Esau, but whom he discovered later on was the angel of God; glorious at the halting place of Peniel. He is at his best here in this particular song. Few biblical stories of deaths are more beautiful in their simplicity than Jacob’s. We see the power of faith and that was stressed in the last chapter because it is of course the blessing of

Manasseh and Ephraim that the writer of The Epistle to the Hebrews singles out as the great example of the faith of Jacob. He thinks that that’s the highlight of the faith of Jacob, but we see the power of faith here when he requests the sons to be sure and bury him back in the land with Abraham and Isaac, because he recognizes that the promises of God are promises that pertain to the land and therefore the desire to be buried there is an expression of his faith in those promises.

We see also the glory of the exercise of divine love in Jacob because after Joseph was lost, he never seemed to have trusted Joseph’s brothers, but now there seems to be much more openness. In fact, some of the commentators speak of a reconciliation as having taken place and if that is true, there is the glory of love and tenderness that shines forth in the remarks that he makes, but nevertheless truthfulness too.

And there is the expectation of reunion. In the last chapter, we have had reference to the gathering to his fathers or the 47th chapter near the end of that chapter and here we read he breathed his last and was gathered to his people. The burial looked to the possession of the land. So he was buried back in the land.

But the gathering to his people suggested the reunion that he looked forward to: the reunion with Abraham, the reunion with Isaac, and the reunion with others such as Rachel and Deborah who were faithful souls. You see, for Christians the grave is not really the goal of our lives. The sky and the fellowship and communion with the saints is really the goal of our lives. This old piece of poetry gathers around two sons, Judah in the first part and Joseph in the latter. All of the twelve sons are mentioned, but nevertheless the emphasis rests in the first part on Judah, the emphasis in the last part rests upon Joseph and the blessing for Joseph, the latter, the Son of Jacob’s beloved Rachel, is fuller of tender desire and glad prediction than that for anyone that precedes.

You see you can see even in Jacob’s blessing the shining forth of the human being in the midst of the prophecies of God for Scripture comes to us from the Lord God. It is the word of God but it comes to us through men and it is preserved from error by virtue of the activity of the Holy

Spirit, but it is human and you can see the human aspects of Scripture in the fact that right here, Jacob gives this great blessing for Joseph for he was the son of his beloved Rachel.

Enshrined in these words, the Joseph that we want to stress is the truth that strength for conflict comes from contact with the strength of God. In fact that’s a teaching of Holy Scripture that is found all through Scripture. In 2 Samuel, I believe it's chapter 22 and Verse 35, we find an expression of it very early. There we read “He trains my hands for battle, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze,” and the picture that is given there is of a person handling a bow and arrow, but of God doing the training so that one who really shoots the arrow is the Lord God.

Now in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul expresses this most fully and most completely and I think standing near the end of the progress of divine revelation, we should expect this when he says finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. So be strong in the strength of God’s might. Put on the whole armor of God.

You see the picture is of a solitary man who has a bow and arrow in his hand and the enemies are about him and the arrows are flying thick and fast around him, but his bow remains firm because well, there are two people to reckon with, not just one. For standing back behind this individual who is trusting the Lord God is the Lord God himself who has his hands also upon the bow and arrow and is really firing it so that the enemies of the Lord discover when they fight with Christians that they are fighting not with one man, but with two. That’s the truth that is expressed in that prophecy of Joseph most plainly it seems to me.

Now let’s lead up to it by turning to consider the last words that Joseph utters to the half-brothers, that is those that he has not yet mentioned. He has already given some prophecies concerning Reuben, Simeon and Levi and Judah, but now he begins with Zebulon and has some words for him and we are going to just look briefly at this because we don’t have time to consider these half-brothers in very much detail. I want to spend most of my time on that more lengthy section or lengthier section which has to do with Joseph.

He says something about Zebulon in Verse 14. Zebulon shall dwell at the seashore. Now someone immediately if he knows something about the way the tribes were placed in the land will say wait a minute, Zebulon didn’t even touch the seashore in his territory, and that is true. That little preposition rendered “at” in the New American Standard Bible is one that in Hebrew is just as easily rendered “toward,” and this of course it surely should be rendered here in that way. “Zebulon shall dwell toward the seashore and he shall be a haven for ships and his flank shall be toward Sidon.” He was close but he did not touch the sea.

Issachar is next mentioned. “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.” So Issachar is mentioned as strong but mentally lethargic and un-ambitious. One of the commentators has made a rather interesting statement. He has said that this reference to between the sheepfolds suggests something else. It was the custom of the shepherds to throw the manure out between the sheepfolds and so between the sheepfolds was the place where the manure was lying and it was customary for donkeys to lie down there because it was much warmer than elsewhere and if that is the force of that then the reference is to Issachar wallowing in filth for his own comfort. That’s possible.

It's impossible it seems to me to be sure about that, but Dan is mentioned next. Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. This is a complimentary statement, but the remainder about Dan being a serpent, well there is doubt about that. If it is a complimentary statement, the reference is to Dan’s ability to overthrow those who wrongfully antagonize him and just as a serpent often terrifies a horse, so Dan would terrify those who sought to antagonize him and so the prophecy is of his successful reply to attacks against himself.

On the other hand, the word Dan means “vindication” and so if this is an uncomplimentary reference, Dan is to be a serpent and the serpent is often an uncomplimentary type of animal, then the reference is to the fact that there is no vindication in Dan but rather violence and treachery just like we should expect from a serpent. Incidentally, the rabbis making a note of the fact that Dan was

a serpent thought that possibly the antichrist should arise from the tribe of Dan and some Christian expositors have fallen for that interpretation because in the Book of Revelation in chapter 7, when the prophecies with regard to the 144,000 are mentioned there, it is said that 12,000 from each of the tribes should make up the 144,000 Israelites who are Jehovah’s witnesses there and the tribe of Dan is missing, and so some have thought well the reason for that is because from the tribe of Dan there comes wickedness and apostasy and therefore it is left out in that chapter of the Book of Revelation.

Now if you go back and look there are I think about 20 references in the Bible, maybe more, in which lists of the tribes are given and I believe that it is rare to find any one order and any same names of the tribes being listed in any of those places. There is a great deal of variation in them. No contradiction, but a great deal of variation. So we make nothing of that.

In the midst of this, there comes this ejaculatory prayer in verse 18 “For Your salvation I wait, O Lord!” These are the words of Jacob. Now I wonder why Jacob said this right in the midst of these words to Dan and to Gad and to Asher and Naphtali, why did he suddenly break forth in this word of prayer, “For Thy salvation I wait O Lord!” Well did you notice the mention of the term heels in verse 17 and did you notice the mention of the term heels in verse 19 and did you notice the mention of serpent in verse 17?

Now what would be suggested by a man of God, the man through whom the revelation of God comes, God’s representative at this point, for the patriarchs were that, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, He spoke to men through those men in those days, what would that have suggested to them? Well they knew about the prophecy of Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15 about the serpent and about the woman and about the heel, and it seems to me that it is possible that that is what Jacob has in his mind as he is giving these words that have to do with heels and have to do with the serpent, he remembers now I will put enmity between you the serpent and the woman and between your seed and her seed, he shall crush your head and you shall crush him as to the heel.

And so it is possible that Jacob here in the inspiration of the guidance of the Holy Spirit utters this petition in acknowledgement of his faith that he is waiting for the salvation of the Lord

that is to come through the seed of the woman that is to crush the head of the serpent. But who in the process will have his own heel, a reference to Calvary and the suffering there, have his own heel crushed by which he offers the redemption. Well I suggest that that not is certainly the interpretation, but I just suggest that that would account for Jacob’s expression of praise and prayer.

Now he says some words about Gad in verse 19, and he uses over and over again one Hebrew root. He says [indistinct, Hebrew] and you can see that four of the six Hebrew words in this sonnet are derived from the one root Gad or God. When I was studying many-many years ago, I have told you many times that I was a major in Latin and the classics and I took eight years of Latin - - four years in high school and then again four years in college -- and when I was in high school, we studied Virgil. And I can still remember one line in Virgil that made a great impression on me and it stuck with me down through the years. You see, these terms [indistinct, Hebrew] and so forth are designed to be in Hebrew, expressions verbally of the thought that is involved in them, but it has to do with galloping horses and so [indistinct] is supposed to sound like that of which it speaks, sound like galloping horses, and if you say it fast enough, you can see that there is that play on words.

Well in Virgil there is a famous line which I remember at least; it's *Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum* and it too has to do with galloping horses and you can just hear the horses gallop when you say it. *Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum*. I know you remember your Latin and you'll know exactly what I am talking about there, but that is exactly the way this is written here. It is designed to express verbally the thought.

Then he comes to Asher. Asher’s name means happy or lucky, and he is to have a fruitful area north of Carmel, not in California incidentally though that would be quite fruitful, too, Carmel along the seacoast, but this is Mount Carmel, but it was a fruitful area and Asher or Lucky or Happy is to have that area. Incidentally in Deuteronomy when Moses is talking, he mentions oil there, but the oil there is not the pipeline that goes through that area at the present time in spite of some of the things that prophetic Bible students have said. This is olive oil, not the kind of oil by which your little car is operated.

And finally he comes to Naphtali before he comes to Joseph and he says with reference to Naphtali, Naphtali is a doe let loose, he gives beautiful words. The meaning of that is very obscure, but since our Lord came to the borders of Naphtali according to the Book of Matthew and preached the gospel there, it's entirely possible that encompassed within the meaning of the beautiful words are those goodly beautiful words that our Lord spoke when he came and ministered the gospel in his days.

Well now that brings us to the last words to Rachel’s sons, Joseph and Benjamin. He has just a word for Benjamin. It's a word about Benjamin being a great fighter. Benjamin is the tribe from which Saul came and then the Apostle Paul.

But Joseph is singled out for long and significant mention. There is an impressive eloquence in these words addressed to Joseph because they range over the present, back into the past and then not only back into the past but they move to the one who stood behind Joseph in the past, God and the specific mention of some of the great titles of the Lord God.

And then he ranges on from the past into the future and so it's a beautiful prophecy and very significant. He says “Joseph is a fruitful bough” a healthy thriving fruitful vine and that fruitful bough is designed to express the depth of character of Joseph and also the wide influence of Joseph. Isn't it striking that Joseph here is likened to a fruitful vine and that suggests all of the things that are suggested by our Lord's use of the metaphor of the vine. He said “I am the vine, ye are the branches” and then he unfolded the ways in which a believing man may become fruitful, but it's all found in essence here as he says Joseph, you are a fruitful bough.

And we think of all of the things that are necessary for the bearing of fruit in the great vine. There is of course the necessity for careful pruning. That's probably the most important thing in vine culture. Proper pruning and proper pruning is probably the most important thing in the culture of the saints of God and the experiences of life, which the Holy Spirit takes us into and through are designed to be the means by which he prunes us that we may bear more and significant fruit. The vine bears fruit when it abides in the root and of course, we bear fruit, the Lord Jesus says, when we

abide in him. We don’t struggle and we don’t work and we don’t fight and we don’t scheme in order to bear fruit. We bear fruit when we rest in him and allow the life that flows up from the root to manifest itself in and through us.

A person abides when he dwells and he doesn’t have to go around noticing whether he is abiding or not. Abiding simply means to dwell. Now all of you in this room probably dwell in some particular place, most of you in some home. You don’t go around your house all the time and trying to be sure that you are in your house. You don’t say now I am in the house, now in the living room, in the dining room, I am in the house now. I’ve got to keep reminding myself I am in the house. No, you know you are in the house and you take that for granted and you notice it when you go out, not so much while you are in.

Well now when we abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, we rest in him. We don’t have to struggle to be sure that we are in him. We rest in him and we allow the Holy Spirit to work, for the Holy Spirit works in every single believer to sanctify them. That’s one of the great promises of sovereign grace; that is, that when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, every single believer is immediately indwelt by him. That’s the teaching of Paul in the Ephesians 1. It’s the teaching of Paul in Romans Chapter 8. It’s the teaching of the Book of Acts in several of the chapters there. It’s the teaching of our Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John through the ministry of the apostle. It’s the teaching of the New Testament.

The moment that we believe in Christ, we are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and we are also taught that just as our salvation is of the Lord, so our sanctification is of the Lord and therefore it is a sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit which he carries on and he carries it on if you are a true believer, and not only that my dear Christian friend, but he is going to successfully carry it all because every single believer is going to ultimately be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you may struggle and fight and make it as difficult as you possibly can for the Holy Spirit, but let me assure you if you really belong to him, he is going to win the battle and you are going to be conformed to him. Now if you are not a believer, well that’s another matter but for

believers the Holy Spirit works sovereignly and continually. It carries its work out through the word of God, through the experiences that we have, through the ordinances, through the sitting at the Lord’s Table, through the work of baptism, all of these things are means of sanctification but it is the Holy Spirit who carries it out. What a beautiful figure, a fruitful vine!

Now the next picture of Joseph is of Joseph’s standing with the arrows of the enemies flying by him. The archers bitterly attacked him and shot at him and harassed him. Now Jacob is speaking about the treachery of the enemies of Joseph because when we think of a man who is upright, when he comes and he takes his sword out and says now I want to fight with you a little bit. He’s like the Arminian who comes to the Calvinist and says I am an Arminian, I would like to discuss things with you, well I don’t mind that because I think we can win all of those battles. What I don’t like is the Arminian who hides over in the bushes and shoots an arrow at you and you turn around and say where are you.

Well now when a person uses a bow and arrow, the idea of treachery is involved in it and so here are the treacherous errors of the enemies fired at Joseph, the archers of envy, the brothers who had been so envious of the blessing that God had bestowed upon him through his dreams, the arrows of temptation by which he was tempted through Potiphar's wife, magnificent standing in the strength of the Lord God, a man is frequently able to withstand one test and another single test, but the constant daily test and temptation to adultery was a tremendous test, but Joseph by the power of God stood firm.

Then there was the archer of slander when Potiphar's wife became angry because he did not yield. It reminds me of what one of the commentators has said concerning George Whitfield. Mr. Whitfield was a very noble man, but he stood in his den, was the butt of all kinds of jeers and scoffs of about 50 years and his only answer was a blameless life. Whenever anybody stands up and proclaims the sovereign grace of God, you can be sure there are going to be some arrows fired at him. He is going to be the object of envy. He is going to be the object of slander. Anybody can

think up some things to say about people who are speaking the truth of God. It's very easy to do it and it's very easy to spread them about.

Mr. Spurgeon has some good words here. He says, you know, there is not a man that stands at all prominent, but what any fool in the world can set afloat some bad tale against him. It's a great deal easy to set a story afloat than to stop it. If you want truth to go round the world you must hire an express train to pull it; but if you want a lie to go around the world, it will fly. It's as light as a feather, and a breath will carry it. It goes on to say some other things about that, but a lot of that is very true.

Now in the midst of the arrows, he says concerning Joseph that his bow remained firm and his arms were agile. Now here he is strong and supple of hand and arm and the arrows are flying about him, but Joseph stands firm and his bow remained firm. Now what is his secret? Well his secret is expressed in the words that follow. His arms were agile from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob and so the picture here is of a man who is standing and the arrows are flying about him, but God is the source of his strength, God is his champion and not only that, there is a beautiful figure here.

It reminds me of course of William the Conqueror who had a bow that no one could handle but William himself, and this kind of bow is one that apparently only Joseph can handle. It's that strong. But the picture is of God who comes up like a father with a little child. A father teaching a little child to handle a bow and arrow and so he puts the bow down there and he takes the little boy and he says now son I want to teach you how to handle a bow and arrow.

So he said you put your left hand right here and then you put your right hand right here with the arrow in it and then you pull it back and the poor little boy can hardly hold the bow up and he cannot pull it at all, and so the father reaches down over him and he puts one hand over the little boy's hand here on the bow itself, then he puts the other hand on the arrow above the little boy's hand and encompasses it and he folds it back for him and shoots it. That's the picture here. He says his bow remained firm from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob.

It reminds us of that story of Elisha near the end of his life. When he was dying and he was in the bed, he called to Joash, the wicked king. They were going to fight some battles and so Joash came and Elisha said, get your bow and so Joash got his bow and he said now pull the bow back and then Elisha who was very feeble and old very much like Jacob here. In fact, there are a lot of parallels between that incident and this one. Elisha goes over and he puts his hand on the bow. He puts his hand on Joash’s hand and he says now shoot, let it fly, and so he shoots it out of the window and he says, “The deliverance of the Lord,” and what he is trying to say to Joash is that the battle is the Lord’s and he is going to win some battles.

And he also tells Joash to do something else, and Joash throws some things down and he stops before he should have and Elisha says, you should have gone on, you would have won a lot more battles, you are only going to win a few now. I think it was about three. But the idea at the back of it is that battles are won by the Lord God. They are won when we stand in the strength of God.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the evil one. We stand in the strength of the Lord God. So he is strong and firm and his bow is firm on account of the hands of the Mighty One. Now notice He is described as the Mighty One of Jacob; He is a real God; He is a divine being; He is a mighty one; He is very familiar because He reaches over Joseph and encompasses him in His arms. Joseph has a personal relationship with Him and then it's covenantal strength.

Now I know some of my friends, particularly my Arminian friends, they don’t like that term covenant because that suggests distinguishing grace, but notice he says from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, these were the patriarchs to whom were given the covenantal promises and so this is covenantal strength. Its strength that arises out of those unconditional promises that God has given ultimately to all of his elect, and then he goes on to say, from there is the shepherd.

That’s the first reference incidentally to the noun shepherd. Jacob has said back in chapter 48, the God who has been my shepherd or who has fed me all my life to this day and there it's the verb, but this is the first mention of the term shepherd in the noun form in the Book of Genesis and it is the source of the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. It's a beautiful reference to our Lord Jesus Christ who is the shepherd. When the true shepherd came on the scene, they let the arrows of envy, the arrows of temptation, and the arrows of slander fly against him and the first thing that happened when he appeared among the authorities of his day was the Sadducees and Pharisees took a good look at him, the religious leaders of the day, and said this is the false shepherd and they sought to put him to death, but he is the shepherd.

What does a shepherd do incidentally? Well he feeds the flock. He guides them from pasture to pasture. He also protects the flock. He guards the flock and these are the things that this shepherd does. He is further described as the Stone of Israel. This is the first mention of the Lord as a stone and ultimately it finds expression in the New Testament statements both of stone and rock. You remember when Peter was asked by the Lord Peter whom do you apostles say that I am? Who do you say that I am? Peter said “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.” Jesus replied thou art Peter, a little pebble and upon this rock, upon this cliff, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. That great truth I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The rock.

Well that’s the firmness of foundation, the foundational truth of the Messiahship and eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the saving work that he would accomplish in doing the work of the servant of Jehovah in shedding his blood. So he is the Stone of Israel. And a rock was a place of protection too. They didn’t have houses like we have to which we could flee, but if a great rock was over there on the side of the hill and extended out over the side when the storms and tempests came, they ran under the rock and there they received protection and they hid there. Isaiah speaks about it in some of his figures in chapter 32 and we sing about it Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide

myself in Thee. So he is the stone of Israel and it is by virtue of his atoning work that we may hide under him forever.

And that the last words are of the rich blessings bestowed upon Joseph, a magnificent view of the earth as the source of all of God’s physical wonders and so Joseph is to have fruitfulness, fruitfulness that comes from the rains, fruitfulness that comes from the waters in the heart of the earth, fruitfulness in his family from his wife and also from his children, and that lastly Jacob speaks about the last charge to them and then he dies. It’s a great lesson in that charge, but we have already said something about it.

I want simply to notice the death of this great patriarch. We read in verse 33 that he breathed his last and was gathered to his people. Now breathed his last does not have anything in common with our Lord Jesus Christ’s breathing of his last. In the case of our Lord’s breathing, it was voluntary. You can see it in the way its expressed in the Gospel of John. There the text says that he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Men don’t die that way. Men die by the spirit leaving them and their head collapsing. But in the case of our Lord, he bows his head, gives up his ghost. He is in full control of his death, but Jacob is a man and he dies as men die, involuntarily, but the text says that he was gathered to his people.

Now some of the Old Testament scholars of our day say that we must not think that the prophets and the patriarchs had any understanding of what life after death really was. I beg to differ. In spite of the high regard that I have for some scholars, I think that we cannot say that this means anything other than that there was a recognition on the part of Jacob that he would be conscious in the life beyond this grave, and furthermore that he would recognize those with whom he had come to dwell and so there is consciousness and there is recognition, recognition of the fathers Abraham and Isaac with whom he would be reunited.

There are people I mentioned this last week, but there are people who say do you think we will recognize our friends when we get to heaven? And one Bible teacher that I know said why of course you will, surely you will have as much sense up there as you have down here. We are not

going to have to be introduced to everybody when we get there. When I get to heaven, I am not going to have to be introduced to the Apostle Paul. Peter is not going to come over to me because we are members of the same family. Remember his name was Peter son of Jonah, Jonas, Jonas is John, Peter son of John, Peter Johnson. We are in the same family.

He is not going to come over to me and say, Lewis I want to introduce you to Paul and so he is going to take me over to Paul and would say now Paul you are the apostle of sovereign grace in the 1st Century. I would like to introduce you to the apostle of sovereign grace in the 20th Century. Here is Lewis Johnson. [Laughter] We are not going to have to do that. It's just something that occurred to me on the spur of the moment at the end of the preceding message and everybody seem to get a great kick out of it. I think they really thought that -- imagine you as the apostle of sovereign grace -- I don't know, but I think that Paul is going to say well, hello Lewis. We are going to know one another there.

There would be something involved in the body, the glorified form that we have that will enable us to know who Paul is and who Peter is and who Elijah is and Jacob, and I have grown fond of this man that I have read and studied about so much in the past few weeks. When he was gathered to his people, he enjoyed the fellowship and the communion that he had with those whom he knew and understood. The critique of each one of these with the recall of the salient points of their past and of their future anticipates the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. It's a very solemn thing my dear Christian friend to realize that there is coming a time when you believers, you believers will have to stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and the Lord God will go over your life too. And he will go over it in love and mercy but also with the astringency of the prophets, of Mary and of Joseph, and those things that are flaws that are not produced by the Holy Spirit, for those you shall receive no reward.

Those things that are produced by the Holy Spirit through you as you have abode in Christ, then you shall receive a reward for them, but you must stand and hear your name called and you shall be called to account for the life that you have lived. It must have been a very solemn thing that must

have caused a great deal of trembling for those brothers to appear before Jacob. How much more to appear before our Lord Jesus Christ?

Well I close because our time is gone on the note of the divine activity, the strength that we have can only come from contact with the strength of God and in the light of his names, he is the mighty one of Jacob. He is the shepherd. He is the Stone of Israel. He is the God of the fathers. We can trust him.

If you are here in this audience and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you that if you do not believe in him the Scriptures say that your destiny is the lake of fire. The Bible does not mince words. It states that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All therefore are under the judgment of sin, both the penalty and guilt of sin, and if there is not some provision made, you shall die in your sins.

The Bible also tells that Jesus Christ has died for sinners. He has offered the blood sacrifice by which sinners may be saved and that sacrifice stands as a memorial of the love and justice of God and through the Holy Spirit, He moves in the hearts of men convicting them of their sin and they flee to the city of refuge, the true ship, city of refuge the Lord Jesus Christ and receive as a free gift everlasting life. You cannot work for it. You do not join the church for it. You do not pray through for it. You do not come down for it. You don’t raise your hands in a meeting for it. All of these things are devices of Evangelists not following Holy Scripture. The Scriptures say believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. We can trust his word and we can trust his power to save as you are brought to the knowledge of your sin by the Lord Jesus Christ. We invite you to come. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Receive the forgiveness of sins as a free gift. May God help you to come. Let’s stand for the benediction!

[Prayer] We are so grateful to Thee Lord for these ancient prophecies and chapters from the Word of God and we do pray that if there are some in this audience who have not come yet to the shepherd, the Stone of Israel, the Mighty One of Jacob, may they come this morning. What better

conclusion to the study of Scripture than for some soul to turn from sin by the grace of God to the Savior who died for sinners and receive as a free gift, everlasting life.

May they say, O God, I know I am a sinner. I have fled from You for many days and weeks and months, but I want to come and receive as a free gift everlasting life. By Thy grace, I come, I do believe that Christ died for sinners. I take the salvation offered through him. How wonderful Lord for someone to come to Christ right now. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us as we part.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.