

February 18-Genesis 49

Genesis 49 records for us the last words of the patriarch Jacob. As was customary in those days, Jacob gathers his around him as his death approaches for one last blessing and prophecy. Of particular interest is verse 10 as Jacob prophesies regarding his son Judah “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” (v. 10). Undoubtedly, even those who were present on this day of blessing would understand the gravity of Jacob’s prophecy about Judah. Judah’s place among his brothers is unparalleled as his lineage would, evidently, produce those who would rule all people. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament we find this prophecy to be true. Men like the great kings David and Solomon were descendants of Judah. In fact, the name Judah was associated with the royal line of kings but what Jacob was prophesying (whether he knew it or not) did not end with earthly kingdoms. In fact, in Matthew 1 we read that Jacob’s prophecy would have eternal ramifications.

In the first chapter of his gospel, Matthew picks up where Jacob left off, “Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers” (v. 2) and then on down we read “and Jesse the father of David the king” (v. 6) and then on down a little further we see “and Jacob (not to be confused with Jacob in Genesis) the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.” (v. 16). This New Testament text reveals to us a truth that is almost always found in Old Testament prophecy, namely that they find their ultimate and most meaningful fulfillment in Christ. To be sure, there were certainly days in the history of the people of Israel in which many may be tempted to look at Jacob’s prophecy and declare it to have been proven false. Certainly the days of David and Solomon were mostly glorious days of triumph and blessing but there were also periods, often extended periods, in which no man ruled Israel. God’s people spent years and generations in bondage and slavery in places like Babylon. In those days it seemed as if the ruler’s staff had most certainly departed from Judah’s line. However, in Matthew 1 we read that Judah’s descendants ultimately lead, humanly speaking, to the great Messiah and ruler of the universe. In Christ we have a redeemer and King who will always reign. There is coming a day in which “every knee shall bow , in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10-11). It will be on that day that Christ will show the world what is already true, specifically that He is the eternal ruler of all.

While we do not know the day or time of Christ’s return, the Christian today already recognizes that Jacob’s prophecy in Genesis 49 was completely accurate! God knew His plan from the start and Genesis 49 is ample evidence of the fact that this is true. In closing, one of the arguments made against the fact that Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies and therefore He must have been the Messiah is that He orchestrated all of these events. Some people say that Jesus made a decision early on in His earthly life that He was going to fulfill all of the prophecies about the Messiah and so He just made sure His life was modeled after those prophecies. Now, He certainly could have done that with SOME prophecies but this is a great example of a prophecy that He could not have orchestrated if He were just a simple man even if He wanted to do so. The Bible testifies consistently and convincingly that only God could have orchestrated His plan of redemption through Jesus Christ His Son. As we read texts like Genesis 49 may we take a moment and thank God for His sovereign plan of redemption! Praise Him that He has chosen to allow us to personally know Him the great and eternal ruler of the universe.