

CHAPTER 49

This chapter is a prophecy; the likeliest to it we have yet met with was that of Noah, ^{<005>}Genesis 9:25, etc. Jacob is here upon his death-bed, making his will. He put it off till now, because dying men's words are apt to make deep impressions, and to be remembered long: what he said here, he could not say when he would, but as the Spirit gave him utterance, who chose this time, that divine strength might be perfected in his weakness. The twelve sons of Jacob were, in their day, men of renown, but the twelve tribes of Israel, which descended and were denominated from them, were much more renowned; we find their names upon the gates of the New Jerusalem, ^{<012>}Revelation 21:12. In the prospect of this their dying father says something remarkable of each son, or of the tribe that bore his name. Here is,

- I. The preface (v. 1, 2).
- II. The prediction concerning each tribe (v. 3-28).
- III. The charge repeated concerning his burial (v. 29-32).
- IV. His death (v. 33).

<001>GENESIS 49:1-4

JACOB'S PROPHECY CONCERNING HIS SONS

Here is,

- I. The preface to the prophecy, in which,
 1. The congregation is called together (v. 2): *Gather yourselves together*; let them all be sent for from their several employments, to see their father die, and to hear his dying words. It was a comfort to Jacob, now that he was dying, to see all his children about him, and none missing, though he had sometimes thought himself bereaved. It was of use to them to attend him in his last moments, that they might learn of him how to die, as well as how to live: what he said to each he said in the hearing of all the rest; for we may profit by the reproofs, counsels, and comforts, that are principally intended for others. His calling upon them once and again to

gather together intimated both a precept to them to unite in love, (to keep together, not to mingle with the Egyptians, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together,) and a prediction that they should not be separated from each other, as Abraham's sons and Isaac's were, but should be incorporated, and all make one people.

2. A general idea is given of the intended discourse (v. 1): *That I may tell you that which shall befall you* (not your persons, but your posterity) *in the latter days*; this prediction would be of use to those that came after them, for the confirming of their faith and the guiding of their way, on their return to Canaan, and their settlement there. We cannot tell our children what shall befall them or their families in this world; but we can tell them, from the word of God, what will befall them in the last day of all, according as they conduct themselves in this world.

3. Attention is demanded (v. 2): *"Hearken to Israel your father; let Israel, that has prevailed with God, prevail with you."* Note, Children must diligently hearken to what their godly parents say, particularly when they are dying. *Hear, you children, the instruction of a father*, which carries with it both authority and affection, ~~300~~ Proverbs 4:1.

II. The prophecy concerning Reuben. He begins with him (v. 3, 4), for he was the firstborn; but by committing uncleanness with his father's wife, to the great reproach of the family to which he ought to have been an ornament, he forfeited the prerogatives of the birthright; and his dying father here solemnly degrades him, though he does not disown nor disinherit him: he shall have all the privileges of a son, but not of a firstborn. We have reason to think Reuben had repented of his sin, and it was pardoned; yet it was a necessary piece of justice, in detestation of the villany, and for warning to others, to put this mark of disgrace upon him. Now according to the method of degrading,

1. Jacob here puts upon him the ornaments of the birthright (v. 3), that he and all his brethren might see what he had forfeited, and, in that, might see the evil of the sin: as the firstborn, he was his father's joy, almost his pride, being *the beginning of his strength*. How welcome he was to his parents his name bespeaks, *Reuben, See a son*. To him belonged the excellency of dignity above his brethren, and some power over them. Christ Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren, and to him, of right, belong the most

excellent power and dignity: his church also, through him, is a church of firstborn.

2. He then strips him of these ornaments (v. 4), lifts him up, that he may cast him down, by that one word, "*Thou shalt not excel; a being thou shalt have as a tribe, but not an excellency.*" No judge, prophet, nor prince, is found of that tribe, nor any person of renown except Dathan and Abiram, who were noted for their impious rebellion against Moses. That tribe, as not aiming to excel, meanly chose a settlement on the other side Jordan. Reuben himself seems to have lost all that influence upon his brethren to which his birthright entitled him; for *when he spoke unto them they would not hear,* ^{<1422>}Genesis 42:22. Those that have not understanding and spirit to support the honours and privileges of their birth will soon lose them, and retain only the name of them. The character fastened upon Reuben, for which he is laid under this mark of infamy, is that he was *unstable as water*.

(1.) His virtue was unstable; he had not the government of himself and his own appetites: sometimes he would be very regular and orderly, but at other times he deviated into the wildest courses. Note, Instability is the ruin of men's excellency. Men do not thrive because they do not fix.

(2.) His honour consequently was unstable; it departed from him, vanished into smoke, and became as water spilt upon the ground. Note, Those that throw away their virtue must not expect to save their reputation. Jacob charges him particularly with the sin for which he was thus disgraced: *Thou wentest up to thy father's bed*. It was forty years ago that he had been guilty of this sin, yet now it is remembered against him. Note, As time will not of itself wear off the guilt of any sin from the conscience, so there are some sins whose stains it will not wipe off from the good name, especially seventh-commandment sins. Reuben's sin left an indelible mark of infamy upon his family, a dishonour that was a wound not to be healed without a scar, ^{<3162>}Proverbs 6:32, 33. Let us never do evil, and then we need not fear being told of it.

JACOB'S PROPHECY CONCERNING HIS SONS

These were next in age to Reuben, and they also had been a grief and shame to Jacob, when they treacherously and barbarously destroyed the Shechemites, which he here remembers against them. Children should be afraid of incurring their parents' just displeasure, lest they fare the worse for it long afterwards, and, when they would inherit the blessing, be rejected. Observe, 1. The character of Simeon and Levi: they were brethren in disposition; but, unlike their father, they were passionate and revengeful, fierce and uncontrollable; their swords, which should have been only weapons of defence, were (as the margin reads it, v. 5) *weapons of violence*, to do wrong to others, not to save themselves from wrong. Note, It is no new thing for the temper of children to differ very much from that of their parents. We need not think this strange: it was so in Jacob's family. It is not in the power of parents, no, not by education, to form the dispositions of their children; Jacob bred his sons to every thing that was mild and quiet, and yet they proved to be thus furious.

2. A proof of this is the murder of the Shechemites, which Jacob deeply resented at the time (⁴⁹⁵Genesis 34:30) and still continued to resent. They slew a man, Shechem himself, and many others; and, to effect that, they digged down a wall, broke the houses, to plunder them, and murder the inhabitants. Note, The best governors cannot always restrain those under their charge from committing the worst villanies. And when two in a family are mischievous they commonly make one another so much the worse, and it were wisdom to part them. Simeon and Levi, it is probable, were most active in the wrong done to Joseph, to which some think Jacob has here some reference; for in their anger they would have slain *that man*. Observe what a mischievous thing self-will is in young people: Simeon and Levi would not be advised by their aged and experienced father; no, they would be governed by their own passion rather than by his prudence. Young people would better consult their own interests if they would less indulge their own will.

3. Jacob's protestation against this barbarous act of theirs: *O my soul, come not thou into their secret*. Hereby he professes not only his abhorrence of such practices in general, but his innocence particularly in that matter.

Perhaps he had been suspected as, under-hand, aiding and abetting; he therefore thus solemnly expresses his detestation of the fact, that he might not die under that suspicion. Note, Our soul is our honour; by its powers and faculties we are distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts that perish. Note, further, We ought, from our hearts, to detest and abhor all society and confederacy with bloody and mischievous men. We must not be ambitious of coming into their secret, or knowing the depths of Satan.

4. His abhorrence of those brutish lusts that led them to this wickedness: *Cursed be their anger.* He does not curse their persons, but their lusts. Note,

(1.) Anger is the cause and original of a great deal of sin, and exposes us to the curse of God, and his judgment, ^{<162>}Matthew 5:22.

(2.) We ought always, in the expressions of our zeal, carefully to distinguish between the sinner and the sin, so as not to love nor bless the sin for the sake of the person, nor to hate nor curse the person for the sake of the sin.

5. A token of displeasure which he foretels their posterity should lie under for this: *I will divide them.* The Levites were scattered throughout all the tribes, and Simeon's lot lay not together, and was so strait that many of the tribe were forced to disperse themselves in quest of settlements and subsistence. This curse was afterwards turned into a blessing to the Levites; but the Simeonites, for Zimri's sin (^{<154>}Numbers 25:14), had it bound on. Note, Shameful dispersions are the just punishment of sinful unions and confederacies.

^{<108>}GENESIS 49:8-12

JACOB'S PROPHECY CONCERNING HIS SONS

Glorious things are here said of Judah. The mention of the crimes of the three elder of his sons had not so put the dying patriarch out of humour but that he had a blessing ready for Judah, to whom blessings belonged. Judah's name signifies *praise*, in allusion to which he says, *Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise*, v. 8. God was praised for him (^{<125>}Genesis 29:35), praised by him, and praised in him; and therefore his brethren shall

praise him. Note, Those that are to God for a praise shall be the praise of their brethren. It is prophesied that,

1. The tribe of Judah should be victorious and successful in war: *Thy hand shall be in the neck of thy enemies.* This was fulfilled in David, ~~1880~~ Psalm 18:40.

2. It should be superior to the rest of the tribes; not only in itself more numerous and illustrious, but having a dominion over them: *Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.* Judah was the *lawgiver*, ~~1880~~ Psalm 60:7. That tribe led the van through the wilderness, and in the conquest of Canaan, ~~1880~~ Judges 1:2. The prerogatives of the birthright which Reuben had forfeited, the excellence of dignity and power, were thus conferred upon Judah. Observe, “Thy brethren shall bow down before thee, and yet shall praise thee, reckoning themselves happy in having so wise and bold a commander.” Note, Honour and power are then a blessing to those that have them when they are not grudged and envied, but praised and applauded, and cheerfully submitted to.

3. It should be a strong and courageous tribe, and so qualified for command and conquest: *Judah is a lion's whelp*, v. 9. The lion is the king of beasts, the terror of the forest when he roars; when he seizes his prey, none can resist him; when he goes up from the prey, none dare pursue him to revenge it. By this it is foretold that the tribe of Judah should become very formidable, and should not only obtain great victories, but should peaceably and quietly enjoy what was obtained by those victories — that they should make war, not for the sake of war, but for the sake of peace. Judah is compared, not to a lion *rampant*, always tearing, always raging, always ranging; but to a lion *couchant*, enjoying the satisfaction of his power and success, without creating vexation to others: this is to be truly great.

4. It should be the royal tribe, and the tribe from which Messiah the Prince should come: *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come*, v. 10. Jacob here foresees and foretels,

(1.) That the sceptre should come into the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, on whose family the crown was entailed.

(2.) That Shiloh should be of this tribe — his seed, that promised seed, in whom the earth should be blessed: *that peaceable and prosperous one*, or

the Saviour, so others translate it, he shall come of Judah. Thus dying Jacob, at a great distance, saw Christ's day, and it was his comfort and support on his death-bed.

(3.) That after the coming of the sceptre into the tribe of Judah it should continue in that tribe, at least a government of their own, till the coming of the Messiah, in whom, as the king of the church, and the great high priest, it was fit that both the priesthood and the royalty should determine. Till the captivity, all along from David's time, the sceptre was in Judah, and subsequently the governors of Judea were of that tribe, or of the Levites that adhered to it (which was equivalent), till Judea became a province of the Roman empire, just at the time of our Saviour's birth, and was at that time taxed as one of the provinces, ^{<ART>}Luke 2:1. And at the time of his death the Jews expressly owned, *We have no king but Caesar*. Hence it is undeniably inferred against the Jews that our Lord Jesus is he that should come, and that we are to look for no other; for he came exactly at the time appointed. Many excellent pens have been admirable well employed in explaining and illustrating this famous prophecy of Christ.

5. It should be a very fruitful tribe, especially that it should abound with milk for babes, and wine to make glad the heart of strong men (v. 11,12) — vines so common in the hedge-rows and so strong that they should tie their asses to them, and so fruitful that they should load their asses from them — wine as plentiful as water, so that the men of that tribe should be very healthful and lively, their eyes brisk and sparkling, their teeth white. Much of what is here said concerning Judah is to be applied to our Lord Jesus.

(1.) He is the ruler of all his father's children, and the conqueror of all his father's enemies; and he it is that is the praise of all the saints.

(2.) He is *the lion of the tribe of Judah*, as he is called with reference to this prophecy (^{<ART>}Revelation 5:5), who, having spoiled principalities and powers, went up a conqueror, and couched so as none can stir him up, when he sat down on the right hand of the Father.

(3.) To him belongs the sceptre; he is the *lawgiver*, and *to him shall the gathering of the people be*, as the desire of all nations (^{<ART>}Haggai 2:7), who, being lifted up from the earth, should draw all men unto him (^{<ART>}John 12:32), and in whom the children of God that are scattered abroad should meet as the centre of their unity, ^{<ART>}John 11:52.

(4.) In him there is plenty of all that which is nourishing and refreshing to the soul, and which maintains and cheers the divine life in it; in him we may have wine and milk, the riches of Judah's tribe, without money and without price, ^{<443>}Isaiah 55:1.

^{<443>}GENESIS 49:13-21

JACOB'S PROPHECY CONCERNING HIS SONS

Here we have Jacob's prophecy concerning six of his sons.

I. Concerning Zebulun (v. 13), that his posterity should have their lot upon the seacoast, and should be merchants, and mariners, and traders at sea. This was fulfilled when, two or three hundred years after, the land of Canaan was divided by lot, and the *border of Zebulun went up towards the sea*, ^{<441>}Joshua 19:11. Had they chosen their lot themselves, or Joshua appointed it, we might have supposed it done with design to make Jacob's words good; but, being done by lot, it appears that it was divinely disposed, and Jacob divinely inspired. Note, The lot of God's providence exactly agrees with the plan of God's counsel, like a true copy with the original. If prophecy says, *Zebulun shall be a haven of ships*, Providence will so plant him. Note, 1. God appoints the bounds of our habitation.

2. It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our lot and to improve it. If Zebulun dwell at the haven of the sea, let him be for a haven of ships.

II. Concerning Issachar, v. 14, 15.

1. That the men of that tribe should be strong and industrious, fit for labour and inclined to labour, particularly the toil of husbandry, like the ass, that patiently carries his burden, and, by using himself to it, makes it the easier. Issachar submitted to two burdens, tillage and tribute. It was a tribe that took pains, and, thriving thereby, was called upon for rents and taxes.

2. That they should be encouraged in their labour by the goodness of the land that should fall to their lot.

(1.) *He saw that rest at home was good.* Note, The labour of the husbandman is really rest, in comparison with that of soldiers and seamen, whose hurries and perils are such that those who tarry at home in the most constant service have no reason to envy them.

(2.) *He saw that the land was pleasant,* yielding not only pleasant prospects to charm the eye of the curious, but pleasant fruits to recompense his toils. Many are the pleasures of a country life, abundantly sufficient to balance the inconveniences of it, if we can but persuade ourselves to think so, Issachar, in prospect of advantage, *bowed his shoulders to bear:* let us, with an eye of faith, see the heavenly rest to be good, and that land of promise to be pleasant; and this will make our present services easy, and encourage us to bow our shoulder to them.

III. Concerning Dan, v. 16, 17. What is said concerning Dan has reference either,

1. To that tribe in general, that though Dan was one of the sons of the concubines yet he should be a tribe governed by judges of his own as well as other tribes, and should, by art, and policy, and surprise, gain advantages against his enemies, like a serpent suddenly biting the heel of the traveller. Note, In God's spiritual Israel there is no distinction made of *bond or free*, ⁵⁰⁸¹Colossians 3:11. Dan shall be incorporated by as good a charter as any of the other tribes. Note, also, Some, like Dan, may excel in the subtlety of the serpent, as others, like Judah, in the courage of the lion; and both may do good service to the cause of God against the Canaanites. Or it may refer,

2. To Samson, who was of that tribe, and judged Israel, that is, delivered them out of the hands of the Philistines, not as the other judges, by fighting them in the field, but by the vexations and annoyances he gave them underhand: when he pulled the house down under the Philistines that were upon the roof of it, he made the horse throw his rider.

Thus was Jacob going on with his discourse; but now, being almost spent with speaking, and ready to faint and die away, he relieves himself with those words which come in as a parenthesis (v. 18), *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!* as those that are fainting are helped by taking a spoonful of a cordial, or smelling at a bottle of spirits; or, if he must break off here, and his breath will not serve him to finish what he intended, with these words he pours out his soul into the bosom of his God, and even

breathes it out. Note, The pious ejaculations of a warm and lively devotion, though sometimes they may be incoherent, are not therefore to be censured as impertinent; that may be uttered affectionately which does not come in methodically. It is no absurdity, when we are speaking to men, to lift up our hearts to God. The salvation he waited for was *Christ*, the promised seed, whom he had spoken of, v. 10. Now that he was going to be gathered to his people, he breathes after him to whom the gathering of the people shall be. The salvation he waited for was also *heaven*, the better country, which he declared plainly that he sought (^{<3113>}Hebrews 11:13, 14), and continued seeking, now that he was in Egypt. Now that he is going to enjoy the salvation he comforts himself with this, that he had waited for the salvation. Note, It is the character of a living saint that he waits for the salvation of the Lord. Christ, as our way to heaven, is to be waited on: and heaven, as our rest in Christ, is to be waited for. Again, It is the comfort of a dying saint thus to have waited for the salvation of the Lord; for then he shall have what he has been waiting for: long-looked-for will come.

IV. Concerning Gad, v. 19. He alludes to his name, which signifies a *troop*, foresees the character of that tribe, that it should be a warlike tribe, and so we find (^{<3118>}1 Chronicles 12:8); the *Gadites were men of war fit for the battle*. He foresees that the situation of that tribe on the other side Jordan would expose it to the incursions of its neighbours, the Moabites and Ammonites; and, that they might not be proud of their strength and valour, he foretels that the troops of their enemies should, in many skirmishes, overcome them; yet, that they might not be discouraged by their defeats, he assures them that they should *overcome at the last*, which was fulfilled when, in Saul's time and David's, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly subdued: see (^{<3158>}1 Chronicles 5:18, etc. Note, The cause of God and his people, though it may seem for a time to be baffled and run down, will yet be victorious at last. *Vincimur in praelio, sed non in bello* — *We are foiled in a battle, but not in a campaign*. Grace in the soul is often foiled in its conflicts, troops of corruption overcome it, but the cause is God's, and grace will in the issue come off conqueror, yea, *more than conqueror*, (^{<3157>}Romans 8:37).

V. Concerning Asher (v. 20), that it should be a very rich tribe, replenished not only with bread for necessity, but with fatness, with *dainties, royal dainties* (for the king himself is *served of the field*, ^{<3159>}Ecclesiastes 5:9), and these exported out of Asher to other tribes,

perhaps to other lands. Note, The God of nature has provided for us not only necessities but dainties, that we might call him a bountiful benefactor; yet, whereas all places are competently furnished with necessities, only some places afford dainties. Corn is more common than spices. Were the supports of luxury as universal as the supports of life, the world would be worse than it is, and that it needs not be.

VI. Concerning Naphtali (v. 21), a tribe that carries struggles in its name; it signifies *wrestling*, and the blessing entailed upon it signifies prevailing; it is a *hind let loose*. Though we find not this prediction so fully answered in the event as some of the rest, yet, no doubt, it proved true that those of this tribe were, 1. As the loving hind (for that is her epithet, ^{<3159>}Proverbs 5:19), friendly and obliging to one another and to other tribes; their converse remarkably kind and endearing.

2. As the loosened hind, zealous for their liberty.

3. As the swift hind (^{<1833>}Psalm 18:33), quick in despatch of business; and perhaps,

4. As the trembling, timorous in times of public danger. It is rare that those that are most amiable to their friends are most formidable to their enemies.

5. That they should be affable and courteous, their language refined, and they complaisant, *giving goodly words*. Note, Among God's Israel there is to be found a great variety of dispositions, contrary to each other, yet all contributing to the beauty and strength of the body, Judah like a lion, Issachar like an ass, Dan like a serpent, Naphtali like a hind. Let not those of different tempers and gifts censure one another, nor envy one another, any more than those of different statures and complexions.

^{<142>}GENESIS 49:22-27

JACOB'S PROPHECY CONCERNING HIS SONS

He closes with the blessings of his best beloved sons, Joseph and Benjamin; with these he will breathe his last.

I. The blessing of Joseph, which is very large and full. He is compared (v. 22) to a *fruitful bough*, or young tree; for God had made him fruitful in the

land of his affliction; he owned it. ^{<OHIS>}Genesis 41:52. His two sons were as branches of a vine, or other spreading plant, *running over the wall*. Note, God can make those fruitful, great comforts to themselves and others, who have been looked upon as dry and withered. More is recorded in the history concerning Joseph than concerning any other of Jacob's sons; and therefore what Jacob says of him is historical as well as prophetic. Observe,

1. The providences of God concerning Joseph, v. 23, 24. These are mentioned to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Jacob's faith and hope, that God had blessings in store for his seed. Here observe

(1.) Joseph's straits and troubles, v. 23. Though he now lived at ease and in honour, Jacob reminds him of the difficulties he had formerly waded through. He had had many enemies, here called *archers*, being skilful to do mischief, masters of their art of persecution. They hated him: there persecution begins. They shot their poisonous darts at him, and thus they sorely grieved him. His brethren, in his father's house, were very spiteful towards him, mocked him, stripped him, threatened him, sold him, thought they had been the death of him. His mistress, in the house of Potiphar, sorely grieved him, and shot at him, when she impudently assaulted his chastity (temptations are fiery darts, thorns in the flesh, sorely grievous to gracious souls); when she prevailed not in this, she hated him, and shot at him by her false accusations, arrows against which there is little fence but the hold God has in the consciences of the worst of men. Doubtless he had enemies in the court of Pharaoh, that envied his preferment, and sought to undermine him.

(2.) Joseph's strength and support under all these troubles (v. 24): *His bow abode in strength*, that is, his faith did not fail, but he kept his ground, and came off a conqueror. The *arms of his hands were made strong*, that is, his other graces did their part, his wisdom, courage, and patience, which are better than weapons of war. In short, he maintained both his integrity and his comfort through all his trials; he bore all his burdens with an invincible resolution, and did not sink under them, nor do any thing unbecoming him.

(3.) The spring and fountain of this strength; it was *by the hands of the mighty God*, who was therefore able to strengthen him, and *the God of Jacob*, a God in covenant with him, and therefore engaged to help him. All our strength for the resisting of temptations, and the bearing of afflictions,

comes from God: his grace is sufficient, and his strength is perfected in our weakness.

(4.) The state of honour and usefulness to which he was subsequently advanced: *Thence* (from this strange method of providence) he became the *shepherd and stone*, the feeder and supporter, of God's *Israel*, Jacob and his family. Herein Joseph was a type,

[1.] Of Christ; he was shot at and hated, but borne up under his sufferings (^{280B} Isaiah 50:7-9), and was afterwards advanced to be *the shepherd and stone*.

[2.] Of the church in general, and particular believers; hell shoots its arrows against the saints, but Heaven protects and strengthens them, and will crown them.

2. The promises of God to Joseph. See how these are connected with the former: *Even by the God of thy father Jacob, who shall help thee*, v. 25. Note, Our experiences of God's power and goodness in strengthening us hitherto are our encouragements still to hope for help from him; he that has helped us will help: we may build much upon our *Eben-ezers*. See what Joseph may expect from *the Almighty*, even *the God of his father*.

(1.) He shall help thee in difficulties and dangers which may yet be before thee, help thy seed in their wars. Joshua came from him, who commanded in chief in the wars of Canaan.

(2.) He shall bless thee; and he only blesses indeed. Jacob prays for a blessing upon Joseph, but the God of Jacob commands the blessing. Observe the blessings conferred on Joseph.

[1.] Various and abundant blessings: *Blessings of heaven above* (rain in its season, and fair weather in its season, and the benign influences of the heavenly bodies); *blessings of the deep that lieth under this earth*, which, compared with the upper world, is but a great deep, with subterraneous mines and springs. Spiritual blessings are blessings of heaven above, which we ought to desire and seek for in the first place, and to which we must give the preference; while temporal blessings, those of this earth, must lie under in our account and esteem. *Blessings of the womb and the breasts* are given when children are safely born and comfortably nursed. In the word of God, by which we are born again, and nourished up (^{402B} 1

Peter 1:23; 2:2), there are to the new man blessings both of the womb and the breasts.

[2.] Eminent and transcendent blessings, which *prevail above the blessings of my progenitors*, v. 26. His father Isaac had but one blessing, and, when he had given that to Jacob, he was at a loss for a blessing to bestow upon Esau; but Jacob had a blessing for each of his twelve sons, and now, at the latter end, a copious one for Joseph. The great blessing entailed upon that family was increase, which did not so immediately and so signally follow the blessings which Abraham and Isaac gave to their sons as it followed the blessing which Jacob gave to his; for, soon after his death, they multiplied exceedingly.

[3.] Durable and extensive blessings: *Unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills*, including all the productions of the most fruitful hills, and lasting as long as they last, ²⁵⁴⁰Isaiah 54:10. Note, the blessings of the everlasting God include the riches of the everlasting hills, and much more. Well, of these blessings it is here said, *They shall be*, so it is a promise, or, *Let them be*, so it is a prayer, *on the head of Joseph*, to which let them be as a crown to adorn it and a helmet to protect it. *Joseph was separated from his brethren* (so we read it) for a time; yet, as others read it, *he was a Nazarite among his brethren*, better and more excellent than they. Note, It is no new thing for the best men to meet with the worst usage, for Nazarites among their brethren to be cast out and separated from their brethren; but the blessing of God will make it up to them.

II. The blessing of Benjamin (v. 27): *He shall raven as a wolf*; it is plain by this that Jacob was guided in what he said by a spirit of prophecy, and not by natural affection; else he would have spoken with more tenderness of his beloved son Benjamin, concerning whom he only foresees and foretels this, that his posterity should be a warlike tribe, strong and daring, and that they should enrich themselves with the spoils of their enemies — that they should be active and busy in the world, and a tribe as much feared by their neighbours as any other: *In the morning, he shall devour the prey*, which he seized and divided over night. Or, in the first times of Israel, they shall be noted for activity, though many of them left-handed, ²⁵⁴⁵Judges 3:15; 20:16. Ehud the second judge, and Saul the first king, were of this tribe; and so also in the last times Esther and Mordecai, by whom the enemies of the Jews were destroyed, were of this tribe. The Benjamites ravened like wolves when they desperately espoused the cause

of the men of Gibeah, those men of Belial, ^{<0214>}Judges 20:14. Blessed Paul was of this tribe (^{<610>}Romans 11:1; ^{<308>}Philippians 3:5); and he did, in the morning of his day, devour the prey as a persecutor, but, in the evening, divided the spoil as a preacher. Note, God can serve his own purposes by the different tempers of men; *the deceived and the deceiver are his*.

^{<048>}GENESIS 49:28-33

DEATH OF JACOB

Here is,

I. The summing up of the blessings of Jacob's sons, v. 28. Though Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were put under the marks of their father's displeasure, yet he is said to *bless them every one according to his blessing*; for none of them were rejected as Esau was. Note, Whatever rebukes of God's word or providence we are under at any time, yet, as long as we have an interest in God's covenant, a place and a name among his people, and good hopes of a share in the heavenly Canaan, we must account ourselves blessed.

II. The solemn charge Jacob gave them concerning his burial, which is a repetition of what he had before given to Joseph. See how he speaks of death, now that he is dying: *I am to be gathered unto my people*, v. 29. Note, It is good to represent death to ourselves under the most desirable images, that the terror of it may be taken off. Though it separates us from our children and our people in this world, it gathers us to our fathers and to our people in the other world. Perhaps Jacob uses this expression concerning death as a reason why his sons should bury him in Canaan; for, says he, *"I am to be gathered unto my people, my soul must go to the spirits of just men made perfect: and therefore bury me with my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and their wives,"* v. 31. Observe,

1. His heart was very much upon it, not so much from a natural affection to his native soil as from a principle of faith in the promise of God, that Canaan should be the inheritance of his seed in due time. Thus he would keep up in his sons a remembrance of the promised land, and not only would have their acquaintance with it renewed by a journey thither on that occasion, but their desire towards it and their expectation of it preserved.

2. He is very particular in describing the place both by the situation of it and by the purchase Abraham had made of it for a burying-place, v. 30, 32. He was afraid lest his sons, after seventeen years' sojourning in Egypt, had forgotten Canaan, and even the burying-place of their ancestors there, or lest the Canaanites should dispute his title to it; and therefore he specifies it thus largely, and the purchase of it, even when he lies a-dying, not only to prevent mistakes, but to show how mindful he was of that country. Note, It is, and should be, a great pleasure to dying saints to fix their thoughts upon the heavenly Canaan, and the rest they hope for there after death.

III. The death of Jacob, v. 33. When he had finished both his blessing and his charge (both which are included in the commanding of his sons), and so had finished his testimony, he addressed himself to his dying work.

1. He put himself into a posture for dying; having before seated himself upon the bed-side, to bless his sons (the spirit of prophecy bringing fresh oil to his expiring lamp, ²¹⁹Daniel 10:19), when that work was done, *he gathered up his feet into the bed*, that he might lie along, not only as one patiently submitting to the stroke, but as one cheerfully composing himself to rest, now that he was weary. *I will lay me down, and sleep.*

2. He freely resigned his spirit into the hand of God, the Father of spirits: *He yielded up the ghost.*

3. His separated soul went to the assembly of the souls of the faithful, which, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity: he was *gathered to his people*. Note, If God's people be our people, death will gather us to them.