GENESIS 44:18-34 (JUDAH'S IMPASSIONED PLEA)

Introduction: When a man and a woman come together as husband and wife, one traditional part of the vow they take is that they will be with each other from that day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death parts them.

This goes back to the premise that they are now one flesh and that nothing should separate that bond. On the other hand, there is no vow to be taken for becoming a son or a brother. These things come by nature and are often beyond our control. But the bond of family members should be as strong as the bond of the parents.

Marriage is chosen by man in the presence of God, but family is given by God for one another. And yet, throughout the Bible, we see warfare, not protection, between family members. Cain slew Abel. Esau threatened to kill Jacob. Absalom killed one of his brothers and then overthrew his father, King David.

And these are but a few of the many examples found in Scripture. Where love and harmony should prevail, jealousy, hatred, and bitterness arise. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and because of this, his brothers hated him and sold him off as a slave.

But every time someone follows through with such an action, the Bible shows a response from God. He is not unaware of what occurs among the sons of men and He never lets such an offender off without justice being served. Each receives the consequences of his own actions.

Judah participated in selling Joseph and he along with the brothers are now reaping the consequences of what they did. But he, as the spokesman for them, now has the chance to make things right - even if it costs him his own freedom.

Collectively, the Jewish people, whether they know it or not yet, have and continue to reap the consequences of what happened to Jesus 2000 years

ago. Individually, they can - as Hebrews says - "go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." (13:13)

But as a nation, they will eventually have to make a choice to stand for Christ, even if it seems that it will cost them everything. We don't have the finer details, but we do have the overall picture. They will, in fact, do the right thing in the end.

Text Verse: For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Romans 11:30-32

This is the richness of God's work in human history. He called Israel as a people for Himself. Eventually, through disobedience they were set aside so that the mercy of Christ might come to the Gentiles. Someday, we will be taken out at the rapture and God's mercy will again be extended to Israel.

That time is certainly drawing near as we can tell from events in the world we live in, all centering on Israel. We are a people in anticipation of great things because we are a people who stand on, and trust in, the promises and the prophecies of God's superior word. We have more pictures of what lies ahead in our sermon verses today and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Without Benjamin, You Shall Not See My Face (18-23)

The words which will now be spoken by Judah are beyond proper description. Any comment on their substance will lack in conveying the emotion, in grasping the humility, or in comprehending the magnitude of what he will speak.

And the reason for this is that they now picture a moment in history which has been anticipated, truly, since the fall of man, but more especially since the naming of Israel there on the bank of the Jabbok River as he traveled back to Canaan from Padan Aram.

It is Israel who strives with God - either for God or against God, but yes, Israel strives with God. Later, there was the selection of Judah as the kingly line. It is Judah who speaks for all Israel and it is Israel's King, Jesus, who descends from Judah who has authority over them as they strive with God.

Scholars have struggled to properly put into words their feelings about the next 17 verses, but here are some of their comments -

It is "one of the masterpieces of Hebrew composition" according to Kalisch. It is "one of the grandest and fairest to be found in the Old Testament" states Lange. Lawson says it is, "A more moving oration than ever orator pronounced." Inglis remarks that it is, "One of the finest specimens of natural eloquence in the world"

Jamieson, Faucett, Brown says that, "...consisting at first of short, broken sentences, as if, under the overwhelming force of the speaker's emotions, his utterance were choked, it becomes more free and copious by the effort of speaking, as he proceeds. Every word finds its way to the heart; and it may well be imagined that Benjamin, who stood there speechless like a victim about to be laid on the altar, when he heard the magnanimous offer of Judah to submit to slavery for his ransom, would be bound by a lifelong gratitude to his generous brother, a tie that seems to have become hereditary in his tribe."

This is a truth that has been and continues to be revealed. Judah is speaking on behalf of Benjamin to Joseph. And in all three, there is the relation to Christ. Jesus descends from Judah. Joseph pictures Christ as the Supreme ruler, and Benjamin pictures Christ, first as the suffering servant and then as the Son of the Right Hand.

It is Judah, picturing the Jews, who is now offering himself to the One who once took their place. Joseph has claimed Benjamin as the one who will serve him in this gentile land and it is Benjamin from whom the apostle Paul came who wrote the words which speak of the authority of Christ who rules, even over the gentiles.

Everything overlaps and everything points to the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

And now, there is the sudden transition where Judah speaks out to be made captive to the One he once agreed to sell off as a slave after having first thrown Him into the Pit. It is Judah and Joseph; it is the Jews and it is Jesus.

¹⁸ Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you *are* even like Pharaoh.

The burning anger of the Lord against Israel when they stray is noted from Exodus all the way through to Malachi. Judah is making a petition to Pharaoh that his anger not burn against him as he spoke. Remembering that Joseph pictures Christ will help us keep this passage in perspective.

Judah notes that Joseph is "even like Pharaoh." The deity of Christ cannot be missed here. Pharaoh means "Great House" and it is a picture of the rule and authority of God from heaven. Thus, as the Geneva Bible says, Joseph is "Equal in authority" to Pharaoh.

The Pulpit Commentary notes that he is "invested with the authority of Pharaoh, and therefore able, like Pharaoh, either to pardon or condemn." Thus, this passage, given by God in His word, is meant to show us, very clearly, an early picture of both the deity of Christ, and to imply the doctrine of the Trinity.

Albert Barnes, who doesn't speak of the connection between Joseph and Christ, still shows us that the deity and humanity of Christ are both pictured in Joseph. On this verse he says that Judah "will surmount the distinction of rank, and stand with him on the ground of a common humanity." Surely the Incarnate Christ, fully God *and* yet fully Man, is the picture we are to see here.

Let your anger not burn against your servants, O Jesus
For though You are God, you are also a Man
We appeal to You to have mercy upon us
Our weakness You shared and so surely... You understand

¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'

Much of what we will see in the next verses is a repetition of what has already been seen in the preceding passages. It is recounted by Judah, speaking on behalf of all of Israel, to Joseph. As we go through these verses, keep remembering who each person pictures.

It is the Bible's early hints to us that some great day, Israel will stand up for and defend the Servant who once suffered for them. There will be a change in heart which seems impossible in our world today. And yet as surely as lemons make you pucker, it will happen.

They will have to be brought to such a state that there is no other option left, but to call out and defend their once-crucified Messiah. Judah now reminds Joseph that when they first met, he had asked if they had a father or brother.

If I were to give my best attempt at clarifying what this is pointing to, it would be a debate in Israel, after the rapture of the church, concerning a group of Messianic Jews - Jews who had accepted Christ; meaning the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation.

Remember, Judah and the brothers don't know who Joseph is, but they are being asked to defend Benjamin - their youngest brother. He then pictures those who are in Christ. These Messianic Jews would be those who have received the gospel of Christ, but only those after the rapture.

²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of *his* old age, *who is* young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'

"Yes, we have a father. He is old." In this picture, Jacob is Israel, but not the individual tribes. He is the collective Israel - throughout the ages and of all who have issued from him, including Joseph and Benjamin. He is the people who strive with God.

Judah says, there is one child of his old age. But the term he uses isn't the

same one which once described Joseph. That was *ben zequmin hu* - "a son of old age to him." That pictured Jesus, the wise Son. In this verse, Benjamin is called *yeled zequnim qatan* - "child of his old age, a little one."

This then is surely speaking of the Messianic Jews of the tribulation period, a little group who have called on Jesus as the Son of the Right hand, again pictured by Benjamin. Also in this verse, Judah tells Joseph that his brother is dead, when speaking of Joseph.

This is a complete misunderstanding of the situation - both of Judah speaking to Joseph and the Jews of the future speaking of Christ. Because they misunderstand that Joseph is actually alive, he says that Benjamin "is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him."

Both Joseph and Benjamin were born of Rachel. Throughout the stories of her life, she pictured New Testament grace. Judah believes Joseph is dead and so only Benjamin is left and his father loves him. It is Benjamin - those Jews who received Christ during the future tribulation, that are beloved and favored in Israel.

Judah, picturing the Jews, doesn't yet believe in Christ, but will they be willing to stand up for these believers who are a part of the nation of Israel, at the expense of their lives? This is the test of the tribulation period. And this is what Israel of the future will face.

²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'

Judah glosses over the accusation Joseph made that they were spies and speaks only about Benjamin and his favor in Joseph's sight - "Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him." To set one's eyes on another actually means to grant them favor and care.

And this is what the Bible shows us about the 144,000 in Revelation. There it says in Revelation 7:4 - "And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed:"

Then in Revelation 9:4, speaking of a plague of locusts on the earth it says, "They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."

Joseph has determined to care for Benjamin during the famine, Jesus will, during the tribulation, care for those whom He as sealed. Again, it is all pointing to Jesus and those in Israel who belong to Him.

²² And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.'

This verse becomes clear when viewed from the lens of prophecy. Israel would in fact die if something were to happen to Benjamin. Without a faithful remnant, there would be no Israel, but God has promised there always would be one and He will save those faithful Messianic Jews of the tribulation period.

²³ But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.'

It was Joseph's plan to test his brothers through Benjamin. And God will test Israel through the Tribulation period, ensuring the safety of His sealed Jewish servants. Israel will never know the truth of who Jehovah is, meaning Jesus, unless Benjamin is safe among the brothers. It is only through accepting Christ that we can know God.

Without Benjamin then, he says "you shall see my face no more." If you consider this from the cherished high priestly blessing of Israel, it makes all the sense in the world

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

The LORD bless you, <u>and you may He keep</u>
This is my prayer for the Lord to do
May His face shine with a light on you with, a light radiantly deep
And may His grace your soul renew

May the countenance of the Lord upon you be lifted up
And may His peace be found in your heart and soul
May you forever have an overflowing cup
And may you remember that surely the Lord is in control

Only in Christ is this possible because only Christ is the Lord.

II. The Father's Love for Benjamin (24-29)

²⁴ "So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.

Judah explains that the brothers passed on what they were told to say. They didn't hide or try to circumvent the situation, but made it plainly clear to Jacob. But, Jacob dismissed the matter at first...

²⁵ And our father said, 'Go back and buy us a little food.'

Instead of telling the whole story, Judah tells where Jacob simply wanted them to return to Egypt for more food. When he said this, he used the term "grain" not "food." There was no point in calling it grain because there was *only* a need for food, not grain to plant.

But food comes from grain and the grain is the word of God which speaks of the Bread of Life, Jesus. They are tied together in the Bible. Without the word, there is no Jesus and without Jesus there is no life. This is what we see pictured here and they tell their father as much...

²⁶ But we said, 'We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face unless our youngest brother *is* with us.'

We can't be sure what will cause the nation of Israel to protect the Messianic Jews in the Tribulation, but they will. Maybe it will be the two witnesses mentioned in Chapter 11 who will convince them. Whatever it is, they will know that this group must go with them as a nation. Without them, they will not again meet the Lord.

This is dealing with something which will really happen someday. We're looking forward and it's difficult to pinpoint the specifics, but the overall message is clear. It is key to understanding the reconciliation of Israel and their long-estranged Messiah.

Once again, the Incarnation of Christ is also pointed to in this verse. Judah calls Joseph "the man" in his presence. Instead of calling him the lord of the land, the governor, or the ruler, he calls him the man. This then isn't used to diminish him, but rather to exalt his manhood. Again and again, it is all pointing to Christ.

²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;

Judah relays to Joseph what Jacob told them. In essence, he says, "Sons, you know about Rachel and you know about her two sons." Again, Rachel pictures New Testament grace and both sons picture Christ and His work, immediate and on-going.

Joseph, whose name comes from two words - *asaph* and *yoseph*, pictures Jesus' work of taking away the reproach of the Law and adding in Gentiles to the people of God. Benjamin pictures Christ in His suffering and then Christ in His exaltation. Together, these two contrast, and yet the confirm the work of Christ.

²⁸ and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since.

Anybody? Isn't this verse the work of Christ in a nutshell. "The one went out from me, and I said 'Surely he is torn to pieces.'" This is exactly the passion of Christ. He was torn for our healing. He was crucified for us. But

for Israel collectively, they "have not seen Him since." There isn't a word which doesn't shout out Christ. It is all about Him.

In this verse, Judah uses the term *tarof toraf* - "torn, torn." It is the exact same expression used in Genesis 37:33 which was 17 sermons ago, when Joseph's bloodied garment was presented to Jacob. The heartache never diminished, the memory never faded, and the picture of Christ endures 2000 years later. How Israel longs for his Son...

²⁹ But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'

Judah finishes his quoting of Jacob with the pitiful sound of his father's voice still ringing in his ears. "If I lose Benjamin, I will die." This old man will go to the grave in death as a result of a broken heart. This is Judah's appeal to the humanity of the ruler of Egypt. "Though you are great on the earth, you are also a human. Please hear my concern for our father."

You shall bring my gray hair with sorrow to the grave Should I lose Benjamin my beloved son Only through his protection will you, my life save He is the life of Israel, yes he is the one

Without a faithful remnant of those who trust Jesus
Israel will perish and God's promises would fail
But there is hope in the Son of the Right Hand for us
In Him we are secure and against us nothing can assail

III. Let Me Stand in the Place of Benjamin (30-34)

³⁰ "Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad *is* not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,

Judah is preparing to make his final appeal and he sets it up with these words. If I come back and Benjamin isn't with us. And if my father's very life is tied to Benjamin... then...

The words of this passage are so striking and real to us that it is as if we are in the room with the actors as the dialogue is spoken. One scholar of the Bible, Dr. Jackson, says this about the account -

"For it is plain that every circumstance is here related with such natural specifications, as if Moses had heard them talk; and therefore could not have been thus represented to us, unless they had been written by His direction who knows all things, fore-past, present, or to come."

In other words, either this story is completely false and made up, or it could only have been uttered by the Holy Spirit who so carefully revealed the words to us that we seem to live them as they come to our own senses. And if the Holy Spirit uttered them, as He in fact did, then they were selected and passed on because God wants us to see Jesus in them.

This is the only possible explanation for the detail and the specific wording which would actually be otherwise unnecessary to give for the overall meaning of the account. The life of Jacob is tied up in the Son of the Right Hand - Benjamin. Without Him, there is no hope and only the expectation of death. As we will now see...

³¹ it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is* not *with us,* that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

If Benjamin doesn't return to Israel, there will be no Israel. It is that clear. It is clear in this account when speaking of Jacob, and it is clear in the Bible when referring to Israel the nation. In Christ, there *is life*, without Christ there is only the grave, which in Hebrew is the word *sheol* - the place of the dead.

The term *sheol* is used only four times in the book of Genesis and all four are referring to Jacob and his sorrow concerning his sons - first Joseph and then Benjamin. This use of the word *sheol* these four times is not coincidence.

The number four in the Bible consistently speaks of God's creative works. He is known by the things that are seen. But four times, it has been revealed that without the Son, there is no revelation of God through sight. There is only the absence of it in death.

Not until the book of Numbers will the word *sheol* be used again. We have been given a specific look into the work of Christ in creation and also the resulting *lack* of that type of revelation in death right here in this passage about Jacob and His sons Joseph and Benjamin; about Israel and Jesus.

³² For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him *back* to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.'

Judah promised and Judah will now work to make good on his promise. Someone must bear the blame for all evil actions. The sentence will be carried out in either the one who causes them or in a substitute, but the Bible shows that justice must be served.

Judah said that if evil befalls Benjamin, he will bear the blame and he will do so for, as the Hebrew says it, kal ha'yammim - for all the days. It is a term which means as long as the days last he will bear the blame.

It is a picture of salvation. We can either stand for the Son of the Right Hand or we must face the blame on our own. There is no middle ground in Christ and there is no partial admission into heaven. It is all Christ or it is no Christ. Judah must stand for himself or stand for Benjamin. Which will he do?

³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

The great Bible scholar of the 18th century, John Gill, had the imagery right in this verse, but he had the actors wrong. Here are his comments -

"In this Judah was a type of Christ, from whose tribe he sprung, who became the surety of God's Benjamin's, his children who are beloved by

him, and as dear to him as his right hand, and put himself in their legal place and stead, and became sin and a curse for them, that they might go free, as Judah desired his brother Benjamin might."

John Gill rightly saw the substitution, but he missed the overall picture and therefore he misinterpreted *who* was the type of Christ and who Judah was picturing. It's probable that he had no idea that Israel would ever be a nation again or that they would be back in the land God promised them.

Christ descends from Judah, and He fulfilled the law as a Jew. But it is Joseph and Benjamin who are the sons of Rachel and thus the sons who picture Christ.

Benjamin is being made the substitution for the wrong they had done - Gill got it backwards. They sold off Joseph and it was Benjamin who received the cup, not them. *They*, not he, are now under the test to take responsibility for their own wrong actions.

What Judah is proposing now is in *defense* of Benjamin, not the other way around. Jesus has already stood in defense of them. They now need to acknowledge that. Matthew Henry rightly saw Christ in Joseph in his thoughts about this passage -

"Jesus, the great antitype of Joseph, humbles and proves his people, even after they have had some tastes of his loving-kindness. He brings their sins to their remembrance, that they may exercise and show repentance, and feel how much they owe to his mercy."

Once the actors are rightly identified, then the pictures start to become clear. It's all about Jesus and His many roles in redemptive history. At this time, the church age has ended and it is all focused on His relationship with Israel. The exciting thing is that we are living in the time when these final pictures will be fulfilled.

³⁴ For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

Judah finishes up this most beautiful monologue with these words. In essence, "I would far rather stay here as your slave than face what catastrophe will come upon my father if Benjamin isn't there with me."

His eyes couldn't bear, his heart couldn't endure, and his mind couldn't accept the misery that his father would display at the loss of Benjamin. This is his final plea and this is where his words end. Now it will be up to the ruler of the land to decide his fate, the fate of Benjamin, and that of Israel.

For two thousand years, the Jewish people have looked to their own righteousness as codified in the Talmud. There is no room for Christ because they believe righteousness comes from self before God, not from God upon undeserving self.

But Judah's actions in this passage today show that the Jews will someday get it. They will speak on behalf of the Son who is of greater affection to God than they are. It is not about the Law; the Law can save no one. It is about Christ who fulfilled the Law.

It is all about Christ who fulfilled the law for me
I know that I have no righteousness of my own
But because of Him I am saved forever, eternally
And so to the world my desire is for His glory to be known

Judah was determined to sacrifice his own freedom for the sake of Benjamin and Jacob. And the Jews as a nation will someday be willing to do the same. When that day comes, Jesus will appear to them in all His glory. This is what we will see when we look into the next chapter of Genesis.

Time and time again, we see one common theme running throughout the Bible - whether it is Israel or the Gentiles, God continues to pursue us even when we turn from Him. Among other reasons, the book of Genesis is given is to show us how we got into the mess we're in and then to give us pictures of how God will work in history to get us out of it.

Without understanding these pictures, we can still be built up in our faith, but when we see *why* God chose each story and the many details and words He selected to tell them, we get a fuller understanding of His immense wisdom and control over history.

And we also get a sense that all of that wisdom and power is being directed toward securing a group of people for Himself, from Jew and Gentile - to be a praise and glory to Him for all eternity. If you haven't yet called on Jesus and if you aren't sure of your eternal destiny, let's settle that today.

Closing Verse: Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy,
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!

15 Make us glad according to the days *in which* You have afflicted us,
The years *in which* we have seen evil.

16 Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children. Psalm 90:14-16

Next Week: Genesis 45:1-15 (The Lord is Revealed) (112th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

An Impassioned Plea

Then Judah came near to him and said:
O my lord, please let your servant speak
A word in my lord's hearing, instead
This is an unusual situation, one quite unique

And do not let your anger burn against your servant For you are even like Pharaoh In this I am observant

My lord asked his servants, saying Have you a father or a brother too? And we said to my lord, the matter portraying

We have a father, an old man, as we then told you

And a child of his old age, who is young; His brother is dead, and left alone is he Of his mother's children, who from her sprung And his father loves him with great affection, you see

Then you said to your servants Bring him down to me That I may set my eyes on him Yes, bring this young absentee

And we said to my lord "The lad cannot his father leave For if he should leave his father he would die And thus we too would grieve

But you said to your servants
Unless your youngest brother comes down with you
You shall see my face no more
These words I speak are true

So it was, when up to your servant my father we went That we told him the words of my lord The message you had sent

And our father said, making us frown Go back and buy us a little food But we said, "We cannot go down This course of action is just not good

If our youngest brother is with us in that place
Then down we will go
For we may not see the man's face
Unless our youngest brother is with us, as you know

Then your servant my father to us said You know that my wife two sons to me bore

And the one went out from me, he is dead I know that I shall see him, nevermore

And I said, "Surely he to pieces is torn"

And I have not seen him since
I saw the bloodied coat that he had worn

But if you take this one also from me today or on the marrow And calamity befalls him as his older brother You shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow To the grave in my affliction, not that of another

Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father And the lad with us is not Since his life is bound up in the lad's life I know he will be completely overwrought

It will happen, when he sees that the lad is not With us, that he will die in that spot

So your servants will bring down
Of your servant our father the gray hair
With sorrow to the grave
His body we will bury there

For your servant became surety
For the lad to my father, saying in this endeavor
If I do not bring him back to you, then surely
I shall bear the blame before my father forever

Now therefore, please I speak this word Let your servant here remain Instead of the lad as a slave to my lord And let the lad go up with his brothers once again

For how shall I go up to my father If the lad is not there with me too?

Lest perhaps I see the evil that would come Upon my father, this I plead to you

The heartfelt plea of Judah has now been spoken
The words of a caring brother and loving son
In them is the sure and blessed picture and token
Of the Jews when they call out to the Righteous One

He is the Son of the Right Hand of God
The One who first suffered on the hill of Golgotha
And we remember Him every moment as on this earth we trod
And anxiously we call out Come Lord, yes, Maranatha

Even so we call out, Come Lord Jesus
As we live our lives in anticipation of that glorious day
When He shall return and receive those of us
Who have trusted in Him for our sins to pay

Praise be to thee O God, all hail Jesus' name We will for all eternity Your glorious work proclaim

Hallelujah and Amen...