

## The Blessing of Jacob Genesis 48

As with every other chapter in Genesis, there is more to be said than can be said in a single sermon. My hope is that you are diving deeper into the chapter in your CGs and in your personal study.

Is there one memory that sticks out in the life of Jacob?

- He deceived his father.
- He stole from his brother.
- He married the wrong woman.
- He tricked Laban.
- He dreamt of a ladder at Haran.
- He wrestled with God at Peniel.
- He grieved Joseph in Canaan.
- He met Joseph in Egypt where he later died.

When the New Testament considers Jacob and looks for the single event that might summarize his life, the inspired Hebrews author wrote,

Hebrews 11:21 - *"By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff."*

Jacob's life covers Genesis 37-49 but this chapter, according to the NT, is the 'faith event' of Jacob's life that defines the man he not always was, but became (**Phil 1:6**)

### First: A Review

#### a) The Setting – Jacob's Death

Last words are important and some of them have become famous.

Italian artist, Raphael – *"Happy"*

Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin – *"A dying man can do nothing easy."*

Singer/actor, Frank Sinatra – *"I'm losing it."*

Underground Railroad Conductor, Harriett Tubman – *"Swing low, sweet chariot."*

Blues singer, Bessie Smith – *"I am going, but I am going in the name of the Lord."*

This chapter and the next each end with Jacob's last words –

**Genesis 47:29-31** – *And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place." He answered, "I will do as you have said." <sup>31</sup> And he said, "Swear to me"; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed*

**Genesis 49:38-33** - *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him. <sup>29</sup> Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place. <sup>31</sup> There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah— <sup>32</sup> the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites." <sup>33</sup> When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.*

Between the end of ch 47 and the end of ch 49 are the words that Jacob spoke before his death -

- 48 - Jacob's last words to the sons of Joseph.
- 49 - Jacob's last words to his sons.

What we discover is that Jacob left his family an inheritance of blessing that claimed the promises of God even when those promises had not been fulfilled. It is a blessing Abraham gave to Isaac and Isaac passed to Jacob who now blesses Joseph's sons and then his sons. It is a blessing that challenges us to, like Jacob, have faith in God, despite circumstances.

### **Second: Jacob Adopts Joseph's Egyptian Sons - 1-12 (5-6)**

a) Jacob adopts Joseph's sons

Vs 5-6 - *And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. <sup>6</sup> And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.*

v 8-9 - When Jacob saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" <sup>9</sup> Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here."

Vs 11-12 - *And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also."* <sup>12</sup> Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

This is Joseph presenting his sons for adoption, kind of like, "Who gives this bride in marriage?"

#### b) Jacob's rationale for adopting

Vs 3-4 - *And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, <sup>4</sup> and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.' & 7 - *As for me, when I came from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."**

Jacob perceives that Rachel's death hindered the potential of his lineage, but he can extend it by adopting Joseph's sons. Even on his death bed he still believes God will fulfill his word to his grandfather, Abraham, his father, Isaac, through him.

Adoption is not foreign to the Bible. Two famous adoptions are -

- Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses.
- Mordecai, Esther's uncle, adopted her.

**APP:** Consider your own adoption

Romans 8:15 - *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

Galatians 4:4-7 - *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

c) Jacob's blessing of the boys

V 16 - *The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, <sup>16</sup> the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.*

This blessing reflects God's original mandate to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28) as well as God's promise to Abraham Gen 12, 15, 17). These words are repeated in –

*Exodus 1:7 - But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.*

It is because of God's blessing and the fulfillment of his promises to Abraham that the new Pharaoh feared Israel –

*Exodus 1:8-11 - Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup> And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. <sup>10</sup> Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." <sup>11</sup> Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.*

**Second: Jacob Blesses Joseph's Children 13-20**

V 20 - "So he blessed them..."

a) Jacob's physical eyesight

V 10 - *Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see.*

The point is to demonstrate that Jacob has become a spiritual person as he has aged. He is weakening physically but has grown spiritually.

**APP:** What a spiritual blessing senior saints, grandparents, and older people, are and can to the church and to younger people!

b) Jacob's spiritual perception

1 – His Reflection – He sees God clearly

V 15-16 - *And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, <sup>16</sup> the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

Note: This is the first time in the Bible that God is referred to as a shepherd.

The blessing is based on three truths about God -

- 1 - *The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked.*
- 2 - *The God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day.*

**APP:** We too must personalize our faith

- 3 - *The angel who has redeemed me from all evil (Is he remembering Peniel?)*

2 – His Choice – He 'sees clearly' how God works

In another lifetime, Jacob deceived his nearly blind father in order to gain God's blessing. But he has learned that God intended to bless him, the younger, over his older brother, Esau, and he now passes on that faith lesson.

*<sup>13</sup> And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him*

Manasseh is the older and should have been under Jacob's right hand but Jacob reverses it.

*V 17 - When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. <sup>18</sup> And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." <sup>19</sup> But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations."*

Jacob is proving himself aware of the way God chooses people.

- God chose Abel over Cain.
- He chose Abraham over Nahor.

- He chose Isaac over Ishmael.
- He chose Jacob over Esau.
- He will reject Saul, the 1<sup>st</sup> king of Israel for David, the 2<sup>nd</sup> king.

All throughout Scripture God is rejecting the 1st birth and accepting the 2<sup>nd</sup> birth.

- (God has rejected Israel, his first son, and adopted the church, making us his children).

It's not surprising then, when Jesus tells Nicodemus, "*You must be born again.*" (John 3:7).

**APP:** 1 - It requires spiritual eyesight to know that we must be born again.

2 – Our spiritual eyesight should increase as we age.

Over time, Jacob's faith has learned God's ways; to bless the younger over the older and to keep his promises even in the death of those to whom the promises were made.

Jacob has seen it. He believes it, and he acts accordingly.

c) His blessing

By blessing Ephraim and Manasseh as his heirs, Jacob grants Joseph a double blessing.

The son who was lost is not simply found but blessed beyond measure. We may think our loved ones are 'lost' to us but, in reality, they are blessed beyond measure.

### **Third: Jacob's Faith Bestowal 21-22**

a) v 21 - Jacob dies with hope.... "*but God*"

b) v 22 – He gives Joseph an extra portion of land, even though he knows Joseph is in Egypt –

**Picture of Joseph's tomb** - "mountain slope" = HB/portion = Shechem, where Joseph's tomb is located. (You just can't make this stuff up. It's too good and verifiable).

Jacob makes Joseph promise that he will bury him in Canaan –

**Genesis 49:28-33** - All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him. <sup>29</sup> Then he commanded them and said to them, "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup> in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place. <sup>31</sup> There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah— <sup>32</sup> the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites." <sup>33</sup> When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

Even though Joseph died in Egypt, he too had the faith of his father and prophesied that God would take Israel out of Egypt and take them to the land he had promised Abraham. In fact, Jacob and all his sons died in Egypt, but the Bible tells us that only Jacob and Joseph were buried in the Promised Land.

**Genesis 50:22-26** - So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. <sup>23</sup> And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own. <sup>24</sup> And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." <sup>25</sup> Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." <sup>26</sup> So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

**Exodus 13:17-19** - When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." <sup>18</sup> But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle. <sup>19</sup> Moses took the bones of Joseph with him...

**Joshua 24:32** - As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

God is indeed, faithful beyond the grave.

**IMP:** Where do we see Jesus in all of this?

Everything we do and have, stops with the grave. But the resurrection of Jesus proves God's promises transcend the grave.

This is what Paul meant when he said in 2 Corinthians 1:20 *"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him."*

God's promises are death-proof.

Just like Israel in Egypt, the tomb becomes a womb for us.

### **Conclusion:**

When the writer of Hebrews says, *"These all died in faith,"* (Hb 11:13), it is certainly true of Jacob.

On his deathbed, he gathered the promises of God around him like he would gather blankets to warm him and based on those promises, he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh and gave Joseph property back in Canaan, land where Joseph was eventually buried after Israel left Egypt, wandered in the wilderness and entered the Promised Land.

Jacob could see 400 years into the future. His story would not end in Egypt any more than your story ends on this earth. There is a land beyond this one.

How does the Bible challenge us?

*Hebrews 12:1-2 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,*

(Let's clear this up...)

- 4 Jacob and Joseph are not witnessing our race, cheering us on.
- 5 They are witnesses to God's sovereign providence cheering God's faithfulness.

Because we see that God was faithful to each one of these OT people,

*let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Will you do that today?



## Community Groups:

- 1 – Review Jacob's life
- 2 – Where did Jacob demonstrate faithlessness?
- 3 – Where did Jacob demonstrate faith in God?
- 4 – Why might the writer of Hebrews have highlighted this moment in Jacob's life?
- 5 – Why did Jacob adopt Ephraim and Manasseh?
- 6 – Why might Moses have mentioned Jacob's poor eyesight?
- 7 – How are we adopted into God's family and what does it mean?
- 8 – Why did Jacob switch the boys and bless Ephraim over Manasseh?
- 9 – What NT implications exist in God choosing the younger over the elder?
- 10 – What does that 'switching' say about Jacob?
- 11 – How does Jacob's blessing reflect the Genesis mandate and the Abrahamic covenant?
- 12 – Review the 3-fold basis of Jacob's blessing in vs 15-16. Why is this important?
- 13 – What does Jacob's bequeathal of property in Canaan say about him? His faith?
- 14 – How does 1 Corinthians 1:20 give us confidence in God's word, even beyond the grave?

## Daily Devotion:

**Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Read Gen 48:1-4 & 7.** Gen 48 opens with Jacob reviewing his life. What specific events does he recall? If you were writing a record of your encounters with God, what incidents would you record? Do that today. Then, consider using your phone, tablet, computer, or a paper journal to start an ongoing record of God's interventions in your life. Take time today to tell someone what you have thought of today.

**Tuesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>. Read Gen 48:4-8, Ro 8:15, Gal 4:4-7.** Why does Jacob adopt Joseph's Egyptian sons? In addition to our new birth, why does God adopt us? What are the privileges of adoption? How does understanding your adoption give you security?

**Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Read Gen 48:9-17.** Why is Jacob's poor eyesight mentioned in this passage? In vs 15-16, on what 3-fold basis does Jacob know that God will bless Jacob's blessing? Are you a 1<sup>st</sup> generation Christian or were you raised in a Christian home? Today would be a good day to call your parents, and/or grandparents, and praise them for leading you in Christ. What responsibilities are yours as a 1<sup>st</sup> generation Christian? What actual steps are you taking to pass on your faith? Today would be a good day to review your life and ensure that your faith doesn't end with your death.

**Thursday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. Read Gen 48:18-20 & John 3:7.** Why did Jacob bless Ephraim above Manasseh? Recall other times in Scripture when God blessed the 2<sup>nd</sup> born. What spiritual lesson is God teaching you? Have you been born again? Why is being born again so important? How could you use this section in the Bible to help someone understand how God rejects the 1<sup>st</sup> birth and their need to be born again? Look for an opportunity to do that.

**Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>. Read Gen 48:21-22 & Gen 50:22-26; Ex 13:17-19 & Joshua 34:32.** What words in this text express Jacob's faith to fulfill his Abrahamic promises? What did Jacob express in giving Joseph land back in Canaan? Think about what specific promises God has made you. How has he demonstrated faithfulness to his Word? Perhaps you could find a place to write the promise and then a brief word of how God fulfilled/kept it. As you contemplate Jacob's blessing to Joseph and all his sons, such a journal might bless your children, grandchildren, friends, etc.