

## Jacob blesses Joseph

- Genesis 48
- Vic is a good and faithful teacher of the Word. Thank you, Vic, for blessing us with your message from chapter 47 last Sunday. Today we look at another blessing, the one that Jacob will give to Joseph as he blesses his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. The chapter starts with “After this,” and so you have to answer the question, “After what?” After Jacob has made Joseph swear that when he dies, Joseph will not bury him in Egypt but take him back to Canaan so that he can lie with his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. That vow asked for and given leads us to the penultimate chapter of Jacob’s life. The last thing he will do, in the next chapter, is bless his 12 sons before he breathes his last breath. But before that, he will surprise Joseph in this chapter with a powerful promise and a prophecy about his two sons born in Egypt. Let’s look at this chapter under three main points: Adoption, Blessing, and Prophecy.
- **Adoption (verses 1-7)**
- When Joseph heard his father was sick, he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and went to see his father. They are listed correctly by Moses in verse 1, as Manasseh was the older and Ephraim the younger. They were born, according to chapter 41, before the famine began. If this is the time of Jacob’s death, that would make them each at least 19 years old, maybe 20 and 19. But we cannot say for sure. They seem to be little guys who may even sit on Jacob’s knees as he blesses them. If so, then there is a gap of years between chapters 48 and 49.
- Jacob speaks to Joseph about the time God appeared to him in Luz, which he renamed Bethel, “house of God.” God promised Jacob that he would make him fruitful and give him a land for his offspring. Then he does something surprising. He says Joseph’s two sons, “Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine.” Surprising that he switched the names, so the younger is listed first. Maybe Joseph chalked that up to, “Ok, dad is old and can’t remember which one is older.” But that wasn’t it; more on that later. But *most surprising* is that he says these two will now be considered sons of Jacob, even as much as Reuben and Simeon are his sons! In fact, they were possibly considered replacements for Reuben and Simeon, since these two older boys disqualified themselves from leadership earlier. Jacob goes on to say that the other children that Joseph has will also be counted in the inheritance that comes to Ephraim and Manasseh. This adoption changed the history of the nation, and Ephraim greatly contributed to that history. For example, Ephraim was the tribe from which Joshua will come, the man who was trained under and then stepped into the place of leadership for Moses and took the people of Israel into the promised land. In fact, Ephraim is used as a synonym for the nation of Israel often in the Old Testament.
- If you look up the 12 tribes of Israel in the Old Testament, you will find a lot of variations in how they are listed. We know Jacob had 12 sons, but Levi is often not listed because it was the priestly tribe that did not receive an inheritance of land. Joseph is sometimes listed and other times Ephraim and Manasseh. The list in Revelation includes Joseph and Manasseh, but not Ephraim and Dan, probably because those tribes became the centers of idolatry for the Northern Kingdom, as mentioned in 1 Kings 12. But at this point, the two sons of Joseph will be blessed. That leads us to...
- **Blessing (verses 8-16)**
- Jacob’s question to Joseph in verse 8, “Who are these?” as he is looking at his two grandsons is explained in verse 10, where Moses tells us his eyes were dim. Sounds like Jacob was nearly blind, just as his father Isaac was when Jacob stole away Esau’s birthright. Joseph’s answer should be part of every birth certificate for boys: “These are my sons, whom God has given me.” Add this to your baby books: *This is my son, a gift from God. OR, This is my daughter, a gift from God.* A child, which comes in one of two genders, is a miracle of God, given by God, and he or she belongs to God. We just get them for a few years to love and to teach and prepare to release. What an incredible joy it was last week to

release our son Judah to start his own household with Bethany, the beginning of their own family of faith!

- Joseph brought his two sons to Grandpa, and Jacob kissed them and embraced them. Blake and Seth, my two oldest grandsons, are now going come up and help me demonstrate this deep embrace and kiss. ☺ Jacob expresses his deep gratitude and joy that not only did he get the unexpected blessing of seeing his son Joseph all grown up, but he gets to see his two sons as well. Grace upon grace! Joseph then takes his boys off Jacob's knees and then Joseph, this vice regent of a nation, before whom thousands of men had bowed over the years, falls to his knees and puts his face on the ground out of respect for his father. His position of power did not diminish the deep reverence and great love he had for his father.
- Then Joseph took his boys and made sure he put Manasseh, the older, in front of Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim in front of his left hand. Maybe he thought, *Dad may be confused as to which is older, but that's ok. I will make sure Manasseh gets the double-portion.* And that's when the third surprise happened. Jacob crossed his arms so that his right hand was on *Ephraim's* head and his left on Manasseh's! The writer of Hebrews tells us this was the one act of Jacob's that put him in the hall of faith! "By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff." (Hebrews 11:21) Derek Kidner writes "Once more the firstborn's blessing is destined for the younger brother, but now there is no faithless scheming or bitter aftertaste. It is an object-lesson in quiet responsiveness and faith."
- Look at verse 15, "And he blessed Joseph and said..." Do you see that? Jacob is blessing Joseph by giving a double-blessing to his sons. Charles Spurgeon wrote, "There is no greater blessing we parents could receive than that God would bless and give favor to our children." Yes, and amen! I have no greater joy, John wrote, then to hear that my children are walking in the truth. (3 John 4) That's the joy that every parent looks for. Our greatest blessing is to see our children follow Christ with all that they have.
- And look at Jacob's blessing. At the end of his life, he sees clearly that all of it was grace, all of it was God. This is not a testimony of a self-made man boasting in what great works *he* has done. No. This was praise for God alone, the one who is faithful even when we are not. What does he say about God?  
1- **God of my father.** You may or may not have a spiritual heritage in your family you can point to. If you do, thank God for that. If you don't, thank God for the spiritual fathers and spiritual mothers he placed in your life and you watched and learned from their walk with God. And men, YOU become the one your children will see as the spiritual patriarch of your family. 2- **God is my shepherd.** When we come to Christ, we begin to understand that truth, that he was there all along. The Lord *is* my shepherd, the people of faith can say, and he always was. He guided me to salvation by grace through faith and has walked with me ever since. 3- **The angel redeemed me from evil.** Here Jacob is recalling, most likely, the wrestling match at Peniel after which he said, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." (Genesis 32:30) But there were so many times in Jacob's life, and yours and mine, when God spared us and delivered us from evil, and these were turning points for us where even if we walked with a limp afterward, it was with a steady gait and direction toward God.
- Jacob ends his blessing with a prayer that the same God that has blessed him so much would bless these boys and "grow them into a multitude in the midst of the earth." That's when Joseph speaks up...
- **Prophecy (verses 17-22)**
- Joseph may have had his eyes closed, but he notices as Jacob finishes his blessing that he has his arms crossed. "No, Dad," he says as he takes his father's right hand off Ephraim's head to move it over to Manasseh's, "*this is the firstborn. Put your right hand on him!*" Jacob may have smiled when he said, "I know, my son, I know." *Boy, do I!* They will both become a people and be great, just like your uncle Esau and I are. Here he speaks prophetically, pronouncing that the younger brother will be greater, and "his offspring shall become a multitude of nations." Again we see that Jacob has adopted these

two grandsons as sons and given them preeminence over his natural firstborn. So much so that he says it will become a blessing in Israel to say to someone, "God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh." To this day, Jewish fathers who follow the Torah will pronounce this blessing on their sons, as Shabbat is coming to a close.

- The chapter closes with Jacob telling his son that he is about to die. But he says, "God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers." Again we see the blessing of God on his people over the generations. Joseph of course will not see the promised land, and neither will his sons. But God is faithful and will keep his word for them and for us. I like what Spurgeon said about this final promise in Genesis 48: "If Abraham dies, there is Isaac; and if Isaac dies, there is Jacob; and if Jacob dies, there is Joseph; and if Joseph dies, Ephraim and Manasseh survive. The Lord shall never lack a champion to bear his standard high among the sons of men. Only let us pray God to raise up more faithful ministers day and night. We have plenty of a sort, but, oh, for more that will weigh out sixteen ounces to the pound of gospel in such a way that people will receive it. We have too much of fine language, too much of florid eloquence, and little full and plain gospel preaching, but God will keep up the apostolic succession, never fear of that. When Stephen is dying, Paul is not far off. When Elijah is taken up, he leaves his mantle behind him." -Charles Spurgeon
- Amen! What can we take away from this passage? 1- It is a father's great privilege and responsibility to bless his children with his love, his embrace, and his words of affirmation. 2- The Lord is our Shepherd and our Redeemer. Now and forever. 3- The Lord raises up standard bearers in his time and in his way. We can trust him completely in this.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another