

GENESIS 47:27 – 48:22

THE BLESSING OF ADOPTION - 1689 BC

If you could see into the future, your future, would you want to see it? Would you really want to know whom you married, how your children turned out and when you would die? Some people say yes while others say no. I think I could stand a general overview, but I wouldn't want to know specifics. I wouldn't want to count down the days to my death. I wouldn't want to worry about things I couldn't change. Knowing some truths can be a blessing while others could be a curse. I already have enough to worry about with two boys of my own plus a granddaughter.

Well, today we will see that Joseph, will find out about the future of his two oldest boys. They are to be blessed by their grandfather and things will not go according to custom. However, at the same time they will both be blessed in a way that they probably never imagined. That blessing was not really according to custom either.

We are years into the famine now. Israel and his family have settled into their new homes in Goshen. Jacob/ Israel is now well up in years and has lost most of his sight. He isn't that mobile any more, but is still wise and presides over the family as the patriarch.

That is where we pick up today, and as we move through this chapter, I would like for you to contemplate your future and how you will be seen by others. In other words, what will others see as your legacy?

Gen 47:27 So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.

Gen 47:28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

Gen 47:29 When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt,

Gen 47:30 but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."

Gen 47:31 Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

Here we see that Israel would eventually live to the ripe old age of 147. He did not want to be buried in Egypt though. He knew where his home was and he also wanted to be buried with his family. Joseph promised that he would make sure he was buried in Canaan. Joseph will also be buried there. They both knew that Egypt, the world, was not their real home. They were only staying there for a while. They were only pilgrims passing through. We should see things that way also.

Learning to see ourselves as God's imagers, pilgrims that are only passing through this world, and stewards only of what God has given us really puts our lives into a new perspective. It helps us to focus on eternity rather than the present. Or, should I say it helps us to see the present in light of eternity and all it holds.

Gen 48:1 Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, "Indeed your father *is* sick"; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Gen 48:2 And Jacob was told, "Look, your son Joseph is coming to you"; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

Gen 48:3 Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

Gen 48:4 and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you *as* an everlasting possession.'

Israel is very old now. He is sick and weak but he manages to sit up on the side of the bed when he hears that Joseph is coming. The first thing out of his mouth is the promise that God gave him when God blessed him in Canaan. Blessing someone was a part of that culture. It was sort of a passing of the baton. Usually the father would bless his sons and at this time would see to it that there was no confusion as to who would inherit what.

Now Israel recounted the promise given to him by God. We can see from the rest of the chapter that this promise stuck with him all these years. **In fact, it is what sustained him.** Through all that he has been through, even in the times in which he wasn't walking in faith, the promise was there, in the back of his mind. It is that promise we see that figures into his dealing with his sons now, as he approaches his death. I would like to think that my family would be able to look back and say that Dad hung on to his promise or mission from God and carried it out, no matter what came down the pipe. Will people be able to say that about us? **Can we say that we have told our kids about the things we have discussed with God? Have we taken the time to discuss anything with God?**

At any rate, Israel recounts the promise to Joseph and then goes on to bless Joseph's two oldest boys, whom he had from his marriage since he has been in Egypt.

Gen 48:5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

Gen 48:6 Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

Gen 48:7 But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when *there was* but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

What we see here is that Joseph's two oldest boys are being adopted into the house of Israel. They are to belong to Israel just like Reuben and Simeon, Israel's two oldest boys. The rest of Joseph's children would be considered to be in the families of Ephraim and Manasseh. They and their children would be a part of these two boys' tribes. They would not head up their own tribes.

By these two oldest boys having been adopted, this placed Joseph, as far as his inheritance was concerned in the position of being the firstborn. This puts him in the driver's seat so to speak as heading up the family when Israel dies.

In verse 7 we see Israel remarking about the death of Rachel, the wife he loved the most. She was the mother of Joseph and had died while they were traveling from Padan and she was buried just outside of Bethlehem. Rachel, the first and probably only true love of Israel could now look on her son as being like the firstborn, the heir apparent.

Gen 48:8 Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who *are* these?"

Gen 48:9 Joseph said to his father, "They *are* my sons, whom God has given me in this *place*." And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."

Gen 48:10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, *so that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.

Gen 48:11 And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"

Gen 48:12 So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.

Gen 48:13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near him.

Gen 48:14 Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

Remember, Israel doesn't see too well. He could probably make out two figurines in the light, so he asked whom they were and Joseph answered that they were his sons. Israel never expected to see Joseph alive after he had been told he was killed in the wilderness, let alone see Joseph's children. That, in it self was a blessing to Israel. Joseph then bowed in honor of his father and positioned the boys according to their ages. Joseph and Israel were facing each other. Now, the right hand was the one that always bestowed the greatest blessing. Therefore Joseph positioned them accordingly. He placed Manasseh on Israel's right side and Ephraim on Israel's left side. However, Israel threw a wrench into the machine when he crossed his hands and gave Ephraim the first; that is greatest blessing even though Manasseh was the first-born. **Can any of you tell me why this blessing was any different than a normal blessing?** Think about it.

Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said: "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,

Gen 48:16 The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Gen 48:17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

Gen 48:18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this *one is* the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

Gen 48:19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

We read in verse 15 that Israel credits God with feeding him even though Joseph was seen as being responsible for this by most people. In 2 Peter, we are told that when we grow in our knowledge of God we also acknowledge Him as responsible for more and more of the things in our lives. Israel does this here. He knows that Joseph was just the human agent God used in order to carry out His plan. We should see these things also.

In verse 16 we see Israel use the term Angel with a capital A. When we see that in the OT we must realize that this is what is called a Christophany. That is an earthly appearance of Jesus before He came as a man in the New Testament. Only God can redeem us, no regular angel can do that. It is at this time that Joseph invokes the adoption of Joseph's two boys. However, Israel crossed his hands and Joseph thought he was making a mistake due to his bad eyesight. In verse 19 though Israel made it clear that he hadn't made a mistake. The younger would be greater than the elder.

This certainly isn't the first time we have seen this. It has happened time and time again here in Genesis. God chooses to use whomever He wishes despite their status in the culture.

1Co 1:27 *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;*

1Co 1:28 *and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,*

1Co 1:29 *that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

There are many times in the Kingdom of God that the person seen as the most qualified is not the one God has chosen. That is good news for all of us that don't have great pedigrees or PHD's. We can still be used by God and in fact many times that is just who He prefers to use.

What was different from this blessing than most is that it is clear that Israel had seen into the boys' future. This was not just a "go forth and prosper" type of blessing. It was done specifically in faith.

Gen 48:20 *So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!' "And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.*

And there we have the blessings as well as some prophecy about these two boys. Ephraim would become the greatest of the tribes that went north after the nation split. In fact that tribe was so large that many times the entire northern 10 tribes were referred to as Ephraim.

I also want us to look at the idea of adoption.

In the NT, the idea of our adoption as sons of God, is developed by the Apostle Paul. He used the term 5 times. Paul spoke of the adoption of Israel as a nation as well as the adoption of believers as individuals.

Adoption means placing one into a family to which he did not naturally belong, so that a child of wrath can become a Son of God.

Adoption means freedom from former relationships particularly from the Law. In other words the other side of adoption is freedom from the Law. Not the police, but the Law of Moses as it pertains to reaching God's standard of righteousness.

Adoption is possible only because of the one doing the adopting.

Adoption means that we have full rights to all the privileges of being in God's family.

All of this is true because of Christ's redemption.

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Gal 4:5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Gal 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Gal 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

So we should rejoice in our adoption but we shouldn't take it lightly.

We have all probably seen or read of the man who made good and left his business or empire to his children. There are some children who continue the legacy and build an even greater empire, whereas there are others that do not honor what their father has given them. They are often spoiled and squander what they were given. They take things for granted and thus their father's legacy dies. That should not be our fate, whether we are talking about our earthly or heavenly father. Let's take our adoption seriously! Let's move our Father's legacy forward by seeking His will and not our own! We have been saved from eternal death through this adoption. Therefore we should be actively seeking to aid in bringing others into this same adoption/ family!

Gen 48:21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.

Gen 48:22 Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Israel speaks of his own death, but he is actually prophesying also. He will die in Egypt and so will Joseph but neither will be buried there. Both of them will have their bones taken back to Canaan.

On top of everything else Joseph's boys would inherit an extra tract of land that Israel had taken from an Amorite. The blessings just kept coming.

We may not know our specific futures, but we do have some control over what is said about us when we are gone. The only way to insure that what is said about us is true is that we obey God in all that we do. **The best thing that can be said about us is that we were after God's own heart.**

So no matter how old you or your children are: or even if you have yet to have any, we can still leave a legacy for those around us to remember as an example. **That is the most important part, how we model our lives after we say we are born again.** Go home and think about that. **Make sure you read ahead also.**