

GENESIS 47-48

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 47 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Over the last several weeks we have been looking at the story of Joseph. And, as we have seen, the events that happened in Joseph's life are very interesting. And let me say this, they were not just random chance happenings. It was not just some good luck on Joseph's part, even though it didn't start out that way.

This was the hand of God upon the life of Joseph and God was using Joseph to save Jacob and his family, which would become the nation of Israel down the road!

You remember the story. His brothers who envied him and hated him sold him into slavery at the age of 17. They wanted to get rid of this dreamer of dreams, and they did!

Joseph was sold as a slave down in Egypt, in the house of Potiphar who was the captain of the execution squad for Pharaoh. And even though this was not fair for Joseph, he served faithfully. So much so that Joseph was placed in charge of everything in Potiphar's house because Potiphar trusted Joseph.

In fact, this pagan master saw the hand of God upon Joseph and thus, he was blessed because Joseph was blessed.

Things were going well until Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, but he kept refusing her advances. Day in and day out this went on until one day she grabbed his garment and Joseph fled, leaving his garment in her hand.

Because she did not get what she wanted, she accused Joseph of trying to rape her.

Now Potiphar, knowing his wife and knowing Joseph, he knew something was wrong, that Joseph would never do that and yet his wife, well she must have done this before and Potiphar knew that.

The reason I say that is because Potiphar did not put Joseph to death but placed him in prison, he had to do something and that is the least he could do!

While in prison Joseph once again served faithfully and is placed in charge of the other prisoners, including two new ones, the butler and baker for Pharaoh.

Why were they in prison. The reason was that one of them was trying to kill Pharaoh and he was not sure which one and thus, he placed them both in prison until he could figure it out.

There in prison the butler and baker have a dream and they don't understand it. Joseph, seeing the change in their countenance, asks them what is wrong, and they explain about the dreams they had, and they didn't understand what they meant.

But they knew it was important but why?

Joseph gives glory to God and tells the butler that in three days he will be released and restored before Pharaoh.

The baker, well, in three days he too would be released but he will be put to death. He was the one who was trying to assassinate Pharaoh.

He also tells the butler that when he is released to remember him before Pharaoh, let him know that he did nothing wrong, and he should be released from prison.

But the butler forgets, not for a month or two, but for two full years!

And yet we don't see Joseph upset, slack off in serving there in prison because really, what is the use! No, he serves faithfully!

Now for this butler, he forgot about Joseph until Pharaoh has two dreams and no one could interpret them for him. And Pharaoh also knew that this was important, but he did not know what it meant.

It is then that the butler remembered Joseph and how he interpreted their dreams, and he tells Pharaoh, who calls for Joseph to be brought before him.

Joseph once again gives glory to God and interprets these dreams for Pharaoh.

He tells Pharaoh that these two dreams are speaking of the same event. That there will be seven years of bountiful harvest followed by seven years of severe famine.

Now we see that Joseph did not just give the good and bad news, but he had a solution to help during those years of famine in the land. They needed to collect enough grain during the bountiful years so that during the years of famine, they would have enough food.

And Joseph tells Pharaoh that he needs to find someone who can oversee the collecting of grain during the bountiful years of harvest to prepare for the famine years.

Pharaoh is no dummy, he recognized that the Spirit of the living God was upon Joseph, that he was a wise man. So he places Joseph second in charge over all of Egypt and in charge of collecting the grain during the bountiful years of harvest. And then dispensing the grain during the years of famine!

Can you imagine that! In one day Joseph went from a prisoner to second in charge over all of Egypt! It is the hand of God, and I don't think Joseph changed from being a servant, to being in prison and now, being second in charge over all of Egypt. He served faithfully no matter what position he had. What a lesson for us!

Back in the land of Canaan God is also working on the hearts of Jacob and his sons.

As the famine hits Canaan Jacob sends 10 of his 11 remaining sons down to Egypt to buy some grain but there was trouble when they got there.

Joseph recognized them but they did not recognize him, and he accuses them of being spies.

Now, as we saw, Joseph was not out for revenge but restoration and before they could be restored before God, they would have to repent.

And the brothers of Joseph tell him that they have another brother, Benjamin back home and that was Joseph's full brother, not half-brother.

Thus, Joseph keeps Simeon locked in prison until they return back with Benjamin, their youngest brother.

The only problem is that when they returned home all the money they brought to buy the grain was back in their sacks.

Thus, the man down in Egypt would not only see them as spies, but also as thieves!

Again, God is working, turning up the heat upon them.

And Jacob, when he sees and hears all that is going on refused to let Benjamin go back to Egypt with them and thus, he is writing Simeon off. Simeon would stay in prison down in Egypt forever or become a slave.

And Jacob sees all that is happening to him is working against him when in reality, God was using it for good!

But the famine continues on and the food they got in Egypt is gone and they needed more grain, more food.

So Jacob tells his sons to go back to Egypt and get more grain, but Judah refuses unless Jacob lets Benjamin go with them.

Israel now, not Jacob, places this in the hands of God and His will to be done. Thus, Jacob or Israel is growing!

So the ten sons go back to Egypt and they tell the steward of Joseph all that happened regarding the money being back in their sacks. They are terrified of what the man will do to them now.

But the steward tells them God is in control and that he had placed the money back in their sacks.

Another problem taken care and they are once again on their way home with Simeon and Benjamin, with the food that they needed during this famine.

The only problem is that Joseph told his steward to place his silver cup in the bag of Benjamin, which he did. And as they started their journey, the steward caught up with them and accused them of stealing this cup!

But they are innocent and thus, they tell the steward that if he finds the silver cup in any of their sacks, then that person should be put to death.

They didn't know that it was in the sack of Benjamin!

But the steward tells them no, the one the silver cup is found in will be a slave to the man, to Joseph!

When the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack their hearts sank.

But, instead of returning home they went back to Egypt to intercede for their brother before the man, before Joseph. Far different than what happened years ago with Joseph, they didn't care what happened to him.

And what we saw was that Judah was willing to sacrifice his life for the life of Benjamin, that he would be set free.

It is now time for Joseph to reveal himself to them, he sees their brokenness and how their hearts have changed, and he tells them that he is their brother, the one they sold into slavery years earlier!

Can you imagine the expression on their faces when he told them that he was their brother!

And Joseph tells them that he is not going to harm them. Yes, they meant it for harm when they sold him into slavery, but God was going to use it for good and He did!

You see, God is working at many levels here. He is working on the brothers of Joseph as they were broken and repented, and they then were restored!

Now Joseph tells them to go home and gather together their things and then to return to Egypt bringing with them their father Jacob and all their family, and that is just what they do.

Jacob can't believe that Joseph is alive and before making the journey out of Canaan he stops in Beersheba to make sure the Lord wants him to go down to Egypt.

And there the Lord does instruct him not only to go to Egypt but that one day He would bring them back into the Land of Canaan, into the Promise Land!

As we closed last time, we read in Genesis 46:31-34, **“Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, ‘I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, “My brothers and those of my father’s house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.” So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, “What is your occupation?” that you shall say, “Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,” that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.”**”

Joseph is telling them what to say to Pharaoh and that is where we will pick up our study tonight in Genesis chapter 47, starting in verse 1 as Israel and the children of Israel are going to meet with Pharaoh. Let's jump in and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word!

GENESIS 47

VERSES 1-4

Here we see Joseph introduce some of his brothers to Pharaoh. And Jacob and his family are waiting in the land of Goshen. Goshen was one of the most fertile places in the world and it covered some 900 square miles.

It is located in the northeastern section of the Egyptian Delta and is called "*the land of Goshen*" or the "*country of Goshen.*"

And Joseph's brothers did what they were told. They said they were shepherds. They weren't lying.

Why was this so important?

This was important because the Egyptians did not look favorably on shepherds; they in fact looked down upon them, it was an abomination to them.

And here is where things get amazing to me. The Egyptians separated themselves from shepherds.

Why was that so important?

This was a blessing to the children of Israel for it kept them as one and they were not assimilated into the Egyptian culture. And so they ask for the fertile land of Goshen.

VERSES 5-6

Not only does Pharaoh give them the best land, the land of Goshen, but also he tells Joseph if there are any in his family that are competent, then let them be in charge of his herds.

Why would he do that?

Because he saw how Joseph worked, the integrity of his life and how that God blessed him and thus, to Pharaoh, this would be a good deal!

Again, this is a very choice piece of land that Pharaoh gave to the children of Israel and again, this blessing was because of Joseph.

He saved Egypt, he saved many other people from this terrible famine that came upon the land. And out of that we see the whole family of Israel being blessed!

VERSES 7-10

Now this is interesting to me. Who blesses who here?

What we see is that the lesser, Jacob or Israel, blesses the greater, Pharaoh.

You see, to the Egyptians Pharaoh was a god, the human embodiment of Ra or the sun god. But Pharaoh saw how the God of Joseph was living and powerful and thus submitted to the blessings that Jacob gave as they meet and as they departed!

May we do the same and let those around us see that the God we serve is living and powerful and loves them so that they may receive the blessing of salvation into their lives by faith in Christ!

Now as Pharaoh looks at Jacob, he must not have looked too good.

Why do I say that?

Because Pharaoh asks him “**How old are you?**”

That was not a complementary question and Jacob responds back by telling him that he is 130 years old, and life has been hard for him, it has been difficult.

Yes, some of these things he brought on himself, but life is tough in general.

Also, he tells Pharaoh that his life is not going to be as long as his father Isaac's, who lived to be 180 years old, (Genesis 35:28).

He was not going to live as long as his Grandfather Abraham who lived to 175 years old, (Genesis 25:7-8).

It is as the Psalmist said, **“So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.”**

The Living Bible puts it like this, **“Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.”**

Our days are numbered, and some have it harder than others, but in the end, there is that rest we have with the Lord as we are with Him and we receive our eternal bodies that will never fade away and that no one will ask us, **“How old are you?”** because we look so worn and torn!

Now this is important for us to understand. Jacob realized that his father and grandfather and he himself were on a pilgrimage.

You see, this was not their home. Not even the land of Canaan, but heaven!

In Hebrews 11:9-10 we are told of the faith of Abraham as Paul says, **“By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”**

Look at the example of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They lived in a land that God gave them, but they lived in tents, not homes because the only land that Abraham owned was the burial plot for his wife Sarah.

In fact, that word “**dwelt**” in verse 9 of Hebrews chapter 11 is the Greek word PAROIKEO, (par-oy-keh’-o) and it describes a “*resident alien*” or a person who lives in a place but doesn’t have permanent status there.

In other words, they saw this present experience as a pilgrimage, and thus, they “**... waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**” Hebrews 11:10.

Now this word “*pilgrim*” is a word that the dictionary defines like this. “*a traveler or wanderer, especially in a foreign place.*”

That is us folks!

The problem comes when we make this world our home and we get comfortable with the things of the world, a world that is at war with God!

Pastor Chuck Smith put it like this. He wrote,

We don’t belong to this earth, we are just passing through. We are strangers and pilgrims here. It is sad when we start feeling at home in this corrupted society. The more I read the newspaper and watch Television, the more I realize that I am an alien. I don’t belong in this mess. I am a stranger and a pilgrim here, I am just passing on looking for that city whose maker and builder is God [where] I am going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- Pastor Chuck Smith

Amen to that! The problem comes when we do stand against the ways of the world, the morals of the world. As we do we see the world come against us, persecute us, hate us. And then it is up to us where we are going to stand, with the Lord or with this world which is quickly passing away!

And I think we see this more and more, that we don't fit into this world because this world is not our home.

We are aliens and strangers just passing through.

Paul said in Philippians 3:20, **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Thus, the way we talk, the way we dress, the things we do, how we work, what we watch is just evidence to show that we are not of this world, we are from above.

And, like I have said, because of that, the world comes against us, they try to put out our light, and many times we as Christians compromise our faith so we can fit in, blend in with the world!

That is a big mistake.

Again, I use this illustration a lot, but it just works. It paints the perfect picture of what we are to do and what we are not to do!

Think of it like this. A boat cannot function outside the water. But when you put a boat in the water it functions beautifully.

But if water gets in the boat, it is sunk.

We as Christians are to function in this world but if the world gets in us, we too will be sunk!

We are in this world but not of this world or as Paul said in II Timothy 2:3-5, **“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”**

We must fight the good fight of faith and not give in!

Isn't it interesting that they did not worry about houses, buildings, the latest four-legged drive camel, the three-legged ones never really caught on, but they looked ahead to a future city built by God, which is eternal!

What a lesson for us, not to let the things of this world entangle us.

Jesus made that point in Matthew 6:19-24 as He said, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”**

Where is your treasure?

What kingdom are you building up?

Because wherever it is, whatever it is, that is where your heart will also be, your passion in life! May it be the Lord.

VERSES 11-12

Keep in mind that they were not Egyptians and yet Pharaoh gave to them the best of the land and possessions.

You see, God is in control and His plans and purposes will come to pass in spite of us or He can work through us and use us for His glory!

Also, who are the brothers of Joseph and Jacob looking to?

They are looking to Joseph and thus, we do see the dreams that God gave to Joseph come to pass!

Keep in mind that Rameses was not the Pharaoh at this time, but much later down the road. Moses added it because it was more familiar to the people of his day. For example, Julius Caesar conquering France: Gaul was its name then, but the anachronism “France” conveys more meaning to a modern audience.

VERSES 13-14

So the years of famine are upon them and it was a severe famine. And we see that the people bought grain during this famine, but their resources of money would not last forever and we will see what Joseph does to rectify that problem.

The Pharaoh during the time of Joseph was probably Sesostris I.

VERSES 15-26

During times of national crisis, it seems that the people transfer their wealth, their possessions to the government, and that is what we see here.

Now as some read this, they criticize Joseph for treating the people unfairly. That he took advantage of them during a time of great need. They feel that the people became slaves to the state, you might say.

Now please understand that Joseph is not being unfair. He received their livestock, their herds for food, their land for food and the people had nothing else to give, but Joseph didn't leave them out in the cold.

He gave them seed to grow and then put an annual tax on the produce of the land of 20%, they kept 80% for themselves.

Folks, we would rejoice with a 20% flat tax – I think Joseph was very fair and he saved not only the Egyptians, not only his own family, but also many others from many other nations!

And think about this. Joseph did not get rich off of this. He was a servant of Pharaoh and yes, Pharaoh became very rich through this.

But remember, the people came to him for food, he did not force them to!

What would people do in our country today in a situation like this?

They would demand the government to give them free food, free this, free that. They don't want to work for it, they don't want to do anything that might cost them something. But here we see these Egyptians freely put themselves in this position and they were willing to work to provide for themselves.

We also see that here in Genesis 47:21 that after all the land was bought up there in Egypt, that Joseph moved most of the people into the cities where the storehouses were located. It was probably easier to distribute the food that way.

One writer gives us this overview of these verses. He wrote, *“As royal serfs, the Egyptians paid 20 percent to the crown - which was a normal percentage and even low in its day. Forty percent was not uncommon in Mesopotamia. And there are examples as high as 60 percent. The happy result in Egypt was that the coffers were overflowing with foreign wealth, bolstering the economy. As the famine worsened, everyone in Egypt was equitably fed and the twenty percent in taxes? - No one complained about it. Joseph was Egypt’s national hero. They all would have been dead without him.”*

VERSE 27

What we see here is God is growing a nation or birthing a nation. You see, from those 70 people who entered the land, in just 430 years they would come out with over 2 million people – a nation is born!

But that number may be on the low side. One writer gave us this insight. He wrote, *“Henry Morris calculated the initial group of five (Jacob and his four wives) grew into a clan of about 100 in 50 years (the 100 includes the 70 of Genesis 46:27 plus a few wives of the sons not mentioned and grandchildren). That is a growth rate of just over 6% per year. At that rate, there would be several million descendants by the time of the Exodus 430 years later.”* (David Guzik)

God told Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that a great nation would come from their descendants and that is what we will see as we get to the book of Exodus!

VERSES 28-31

Jacob had poor eyesight, he had to be carried to Egypt he was so frail, and yet, he lived for another 17 years in Egypt with his son Joseph.

In Joel 2:25 we are told, **“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten . . .”**

The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“And I will restore or replace for you the years that the locust has eaten . . .”**

Those 17 years that Jacob lost with Joseph have been restored!

I struggled with the years I wasted before I was saved, and the Lord showed me this verse that comforted my heart.

Yes, those were wasted years where I could have been serving the Lord, but the Lord has said that He will restore those wasted years as I walk with Him, and I believe He has in my life, and He will do the same in your life!

Not only that, but during those years before I came to saving faith, the Lord was still working on my life and those things that I learned, then I applied to my Christian life.

I thought of Paul the apostle before he got saved. He was a man who devoured books, wanted to draw close to God but he tried according to the Law, and he could never attain a relationship with God through the Law.

And after he got saved, all that he learned before he was saved, was used to further the Gospel. He knew the Scriptures!

Now we see here that Jacob knows he is going to die and thus, he does not want to be buried in Egypt.

Why doesn't Jacob want to be buried in Egypt?

I believe the reason is as simple as this. This land in Egypt, that was not his home. He wants to return to the land of Canaan; the Promise Land and Joseph swears to his father that he will do what he has asked. Joseph will bring him to Canaan and bury him there.

GENESIS 48

VERSES 1-4

The way this is phrased it seems like Jacob is pretty sick. He knows his time is short and maybe he is a little sicker than he was before. Thus, Joseph is told that his father is not doing well.

And as Joseph goes to see his father, Jacob remembers years earlier when he had the encounter with God at Bethel or Luz.

In fact, he had an encounter with God at Bethel when he was on the run from his brother Esau.

And he had an encounter with God once again when he returned home, back to the land of Canaan. And over twenty years have passed by since that last encounter with God there at Bethel.

And now Jacob is passing on those promises of God that were given to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.

Remember what the Lord said in Genesis chapter 17, “**... ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly. . . . I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.’**” Genesis 17:1b-2, 6-8.

And what God spoke to Abraham was then passed down to Isaac and then to Jacob and now Jacob is passing this information down to Joseph!

And what we see is that God said that He would make them fruitful, He would multiply them, and they would bless other nations – the covenant that God had made.

One other point here and that is Jacob. He is weak, he can hardly stand and yet, when he heard Joseph was coming, he strengthened himself.

Folks, ministry is tough but if you are willing to go that extra mile, God will give you the strength you need to accomplish the tasks He has for you!

VERSES 5-7

We see Jacob adopt the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim. And in doing this he gives Joseph the birthright or the double portion of the inheritance.

Now wait a minute. I thought Reuben was the first born?

If you remember, Reuben and Simeon seemed to have been disqualified for their actions and Jacob blesses the sons of Joseph!

Reuben slept with his father's concubine, Genesis 35:22.

And Simeon murdered the people of Shechem, Genesis 34.

Joseph was the son of his beloved wife Rachel and thus, he extended the birthright to him.

We see this played out for us in I Chronicles 5:1-2 where we are told, **“Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel - he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's”**

So with the adoption of Manasseh and Ephraim, doesn't that make it the 14 tribes of Israel if you count Levi and Joseph instead of the 12 tribes of Israel?

Not at all!

You see, it all depends on how they are listed and there are 20 different ways of listing the tribes in the Old Testament.

The simplest way is leaving out the tribe of Levi, they were the priestly tribe, and they did not inherit any land, the Lord was their portion.

Also, Joseph is not listed, he is replaced by his two sons and thus, you have the 12 tribes of Israel.

And that is how the Bible speaks of them, the 12 tribes of Israel!

One writer gives us this summary regarding the number 12. He wrote,

Therefore as the tribes are listed through the Old Testament, they can be arranged different ways and still remain 12 tribes. There are more than 20 different ways of listing the tribes in the Old Testament.

As a number, 12 is often associated with government or administration in God's eyes.

There are 12 tribes; 12 apostles; 12 princes of Ishmael; 12 pillars on Moses' altar; 12 stones on the high priest's breastplate; 12 cakes of showbread; 12 silver platters; silver bowls; and gold pans for the service of the tabernacle; 12 spies to search out the land; 12 memorial stones; 12 governors under Solomon; 12 stones in Elijah's altar; 12 in each group of musicians and singers for Israel's worship; 12 hours in a day; 12 months in a year; 12 Ephesian men filled with the Holy Spirit; 12,000 from 12 tribes sealed and preserved through the tribulation; 12 gates of 12 pearls in heaven, and 12 angels at the gates; 12 foundations in the New Jerusalem, each with the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb; it's length, breadth, and height are all 12,000 furlongs; and the tree of life in heaven has 12 fruits. The number 12 is special to God.

- David Guzik, Genesis 48

VERSES 8-12

I want you to see here the respect that Joseph has for his father Jacob.

Joseph is an adult, married with children and yet he bows before him.

And not only Joseph, but we see Manasseh and Ephraim bow before Jacob. Keep in mind that they are in their twenties and look at the respect they showed Jacob. They are on their knees before him.

Now for Jacob or I should say Israel here, his eyesight was poor, he had a hard time distinguishing what was before him.

And he may have seen shadows or outlines of two young figures with Joseph, but he is not sure who they are.

Thus, Joseph tells him that these are his two sons.

And as poor as Israel's eyesight was, as we are going to see, spiritually speaking he could see clearly.

Folks don't let your physical ailment cloud your spiritual eyes!

VERSES 13-14

Keep in mind that the right hand was the place of honor, of strength, of help.

Look at these Scriptures and you will see what I mean.

In Exodus 15:6 we see the idea of the right hand being strong, "**Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces.**" I think that is pretty clear. The right hand of power!

Then, in Psalm 16:11 we see that the right hand was the place of favor as we are told, "**You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**" Here we see that the right hand is the place of favor as we are with the Lord and in that relationship, we find everlasting pleasure!

We see in Psalm 20:6 that the right hand is the hand of help or as David put it, "**Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand.**" God is there to help us, and nothing is too hard for God, we can rest in Him.

What is interesting to me is that we see Jesus seated at the right hand of power. In Mark 14:62 we are told, “**Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’**” What that tells me is that Jesus is God and thus, He is here to help us because He is all powerful, and we are His and thus, we can rest in Him because nothing is too hard for Him to do for us! Thus, we see that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, the place of power!

Now here in Genesis chapter 48, keep in mind that Manasseh was the firstborn. Because he was the firstborn of Joseph, he should get the blessing of the firstborn and Ephraim was the second born of Joseph, and he would also get a blessing, but not of the firstborn.

The problem we see here is that Israel crosses his hand and places his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh.

Just the opposite of how it should be.

Is this old man confused, making a mistake?

Remember his eyesight was very bad and maybe he could not see who he was placing his hand upon.

Not at all!

In fact, notice what it says in Genesis 48:14 regarding what Israel was doing here. We are told, “**... guiding his hands knowingly ...**” You see, he knew what he was doing.

Let’s read on and see what Israel has to say.

VERSES 15-16

Keep in mind that Israel is blessing Joseph here through his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

And thus, Israel gave the blessing to both sons but Ephraim; the son of the right hand received the greater portion of the blessing.

Both were blessed but Ephraim was the greater tribe, even to the point of having the name Ephraim represent the Northern Kingdom of Israel, all ten of those tribes! (Isaiah 7:8, 17, 11:13).

Now, in this blessing we see two fascinating points. Let me explain.

First of all, the words, “**fed me**” are the Hebrew word *RAAH*, which is the first time we see God spoken of as a shepherd. That is what the word *RAAH* means.

Phillip Keller, in his book, *A Shepard Looks at Psalm 23* speaks of his life experience as a shepherd, and he says this.

I recall quite clearly how in my first venture with sheep, the question of paying a price for my ewes was so terribly important. They belonged to me only by virtue of the fact that I paid hard cash for them.

It was money I earned by the blood and sweat and tears drawn from my own body during the desperate grinding years of the depression. And when I bought that first small flock I was buying them literally with my own body which has been laid down with this day in mind.

Because of this I felt in a special way that they were in very truth a part of me and I a part of them.

There was an intimate identity involved which though not apparent on the surface to the casual observer, nonetheless made those thirty ewes exceedingly precious to me.

But the day I bought them I also realized that this was but the first stage in a long, lasting endeavor in which from then on, I would, as their owner, have to continually lay down my life for them, if they were to flourish and prosper.

Sheep do not ‘just take care of themselves’ as some might suppose. They require, more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.

It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways . . . Our mass mind (or mob instincts), our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance.

Yet despite these adverse characteristics Christ chooses us, buys us, calls us by name, makes us His own and delights in caring for us.

- Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, pp. 20-21

That truly is the heart of God for us and thus, that blessing of God shepherding over them must have been a great comfort and brought them great joy as it should do with us!

Jacob saw the hand of God upon his life as he looked back. He saw how God cared for him like a shepherd will care for his sheep. And, like I have said, God does the same with us.

Spurgeon put it like this. He wrote, *“The old man’s voice faltered as he said, ‘The God which fed me all my life long.’ The translation would be better if it ran, ‘The God which shepherded me all my life long.’”*

We also see the word, **“redeemed”** or *GAAL*, (gawal) in the Hebrew. It speaks of a kinsman redeemer, someone who can buy or purchase us back.

Here we see a beautiful picture of Christ who has come to release us from the bondage of sin that has us entangled with no way out except through Christ. He bought us back, purchased us with the shedding of His blood, His death on the cross of Calvary! He is our kinsman redeemer!

It is the pre-incarnate Christ who has taken care of Israel and spared him from evil.

As we come to the New Testament, we see that the writer of Hebrews takes both of these ideas into its verses when Paul says, **“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”**

Hebrews 13:20-21.

That is our God!

VERSES 17-20

Joseph thinks his dad is making a mistake, he is old, he can't see and thus, Joseph tries to help him out.

But Israel knew exactly what he was doing. He makes Ephraim receive the blessing of the firstborn as Jeremiah 31:9 tells us, **“They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn.”**

It is not that God forgot about *Manasseh*. In fact, Israel says that Manasseh would become **“a people.”**

But for *Ephraim*, he would become **“a multitude of nations.”**

What is interesting to me is that we see this reversal of the birth order once again. This is the fifth time in the Book of Genesis that we have seen this.

The first time we saw this was when God chose Abel over Cain.

Next, we see that God chose Isaac over Ishmael.

Then it was Jacob over Esau.

And don't forget Joseph over Reuben.

And now we see Ephraim over Manasseh.

It is as one writer said, *“When Joseph saw that his father was blessing Ephraim over Manasseh, he protested. But Jacob’s words, I know, my son, I know, expressed the confidence of his faith: he was blessing according to the divine plan, not according to normal custom. He had learned that in spite of what man attempted to do God had blessed him, the younger. This he now carried forward to Joseph’s sons. Years later Ephraim became a leading tribe in the Northern Kingdom, much superior to the tribe of Manasseh, as Jacob had predicted.”*

What I want you to understand is that this idea of being the firstborn in the Bible is not always speaking of the first out of the womb. It can also mean a position of pre-eminence.

We see this with David, he was not the firstborn of his brothers. In fact, he was the last! And yet he was the one that was made King over Israel!

VERSES 21-22

Here we see the passing on of the torch you might say, from Israel to Joseph.

Of this Spurgeon tells us, *“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.”*

Each of you are that person that God can and will use, if you let Him!

Joseph did get a double portion because the blessing went to his two sons.

Now, in regard to this ridge of land that Israel took from the Amorites, we don't know when this took place. But Israel gave it to Joseph and over 430 years later the descendants of Joseph would occupy this land!

As I begin to close this evening, look at how Jacob, or I should say Israel has grown. In this we see the completed and wonderful work regarding Jacob's recognition of God's presence in his life, 147 years of God working!

- ***I am with you*** (Genesis 28:15): God gives the young believer every possible assurance of His presence and grace.
- ***I will be with you*** (Genesis 31:3): God expects the growing believer to trust He will be with us, even when we only have the promise of His presence.
- ***God . . . has been with me*** (Genesis 31:5): God gives a glorious testimony to the mature believer, able to say how God has been with us, even when we haven't felt His presence in the way we wished.

- ***God will be with you*** (Genesis 48:21): God gives the mature believer the opportunity to encourage others with the promise of God's presence.

Israel told Joseph that God would bring them back into the land one day. The land that He had promised to them, the land of Canaan.

Folks, God is coming back to take us home one day and what God has promised us He is more than able to bring to pass!

Thus, let us be **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”** Titus 2:13-15.