

Blessings of Jacob – Part I

July 30, 2017

Scripture Reading: Genesis 48:13-21

13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn.

15 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 to this day,

16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,

Bless the lads;

And may my name live on in them,

And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

20 He blessed them that day, saying,

"By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,

'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'"

Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 22 "I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Introduction:

The Word of God says, for people to die once and after that the judgement. For Jacob, that time had come. He was ready to set his house in order. Also he made sure that Joseph received double portion of his wealth. Today's story explains the mystery of Israel's 13 tribes versus 12 tribe mystery.

Genesis 47:29-31 29 When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I lie down 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." 31 He said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed *in worship* at the head of the bed.



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Jacob became very sick. He came to live in Egypt when he was 130 years old and lived in Egypt for 17 more years and now he was on death bed. The inevitability of death, no one can escape it. Every day is a day closer to the cemetery. The longer we live, the higher the chance of our departure. Death is not a period, but a comma in Christian's life! Through the narrow door of death, we enter a new life! It is interesting to note that Abraham's death was mentioned in just one little paragraph. So was Isaac's! Abraham was gathered to his people. Isaac was also gathered to his people. But for Jacob, death was rest with his fathers. They believed that this was not their promised land but theirs in heaven. They were just pilgrims passing through. Jacob facing death is described in detail in almost three chapters!

Yet, Jacob wanted to be buried in the same land where his fathers died. He knew that Messiah would return and raise him up! He wanted to be quickened with his fathers! But had he listened to Jesus he would have understood fully. Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still. He is not God of dead like Thanatos, and Hades, but He is the God of living. For us to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!

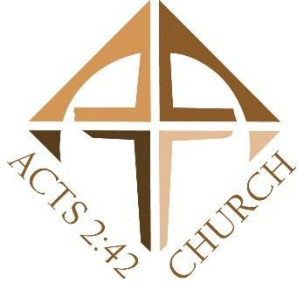
After this, Jacob worshipped the Lord! Jacob totally surrendered his life toward his creator. Constant surrendering is constant worship! He leaned on his staff and worshipped. We must do that also. I love the hymn that goes like this:

My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay,
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand!

We must surrender and that is what worship is all about.

Now before I talk about Joseph's children, Manasseh and Ephraim I want to ask you a quiz question: how many tribes are there for Israel? We are always told twelve, right. Is Manasseh a full separate tribe? Yes! Is Ephraim a separate tribe? Yes! As of this passage, the Israelites will have actually 13 tribes instead of twelve. How? In this story, Jacob adopts both the children of Joseph as his own and instead of giving just one share to Joseph alone, he makes it a double portion! Ephraim, Manasseh and ten of the others possessed the Land. But Levi tribe did not get a land. Instead the Lord was their portion!

Before we can go into Jacob's blessings for his children, we must ask this question: how reliable man's blessings and cursing are. If the man's blessing is in line with God's will, it will happen. Otherwise it will fall to the ground. We should go back and verify Isaac's blessing for Jacob!



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Genesis 27:28, 29.

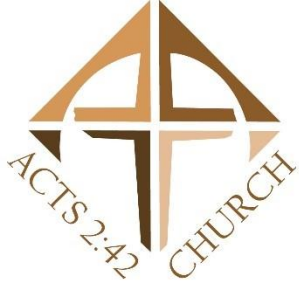
28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine;
29 May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;
Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you."

If you look into this blessing carefully, exactly opposite thing happened! Instead of abundance, he was facing famine. He was indeed blessed in Laban's house, but his brother did not bow down to him. Actually he was the one who bowed down to Esau. The point I am trying to make is that, do not take man's blessings and cursing as Word of God. Sometimes, it aligns with Word of God and it happens exactly, but other times they may fall down to the ground without much accomplishment. Now Jacob is ready to bless his children. Let us see some of his blessings today!

Joseph brought his two children, Manasseh and Ephraim! Joseph made Manasseh stand on Jacob's right side, and Ephraim, the younger one on the left side. In Middle East and Asia, the left hand is used to touch unclean objects, and the right hand was always kept clean. But Jacob here crossed his hands and switched the right hand to Ephraim, and the left palm was on Manasseh. Joseph told him not to. Yet Jacob insisted on placing his right hand on Ephraim. Let us see his blessings now.

Gen. 48:15, 16. 15 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 to this day,
16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;
And may my name live on in them,
And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Jacob called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and his own personal God who has been his Shepherd! He identified His God exactly! He has to be the very same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Yes, that particular God has been his shepherd and he lacked nothing! Jacob as shepherd realized that.



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Isaiah 40:11 “He tends His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those who have young!”

Jesus is very much referred to as shepherd but always with an adjective. First in John 10:1 He is described as “good shepherd.

1 Peter 2:25. Jesus is described as chief shepherd! The author in Hebrews calls Jesus as “that great shepherd of the sheep!

Shepherd needs to be very patient, and watchful, and hardworking!

Sheep are high maintenance animals! They are timid and easily frightened. Sheep can be cruel and competitive. The larger and stronger will take the best grazing spots and drive others from there. They are constantly infected by parasites, and insects. They are not clean animals. They don't wipe themselves like cats. 😊Worst of all, they graze land to death, eating grass to the soil and then even pulling the root from the ground eating the roots! You must move them constantly. Otherwise, the land will become bald like my head...😊

Jesus is our good shepherd who laid down His life for us, as great shepherd He rose from the grave and brought us the eternal life. As chief shepherd, Christ returns to reward those who are faithful. We all need to shepherd someone in our life like that!

We must be faithful shepherd like Jesus to others.

We must be diligent, prudent, and wise in our job.

We must be patient like Him!

We must be self-sacrificial like Him!

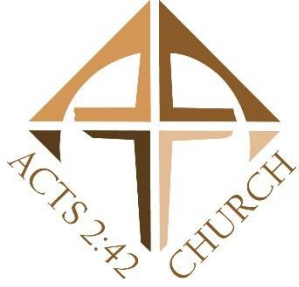
Jacob learned so much through shepherding! No wonder he called God as his shepherd!
(Moses, and David too.)

Jacob said, “bless the lads, and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac!

We are all anxious about continuing our family tradition, and family name and we are very proud of it. If Abraham's name should live in us, we must also walk in faith as Abraham did!

Jacob also blessed them so that they may multiply exceedingly.

Joseph again tried to tell his father that he was keeping the right hand on the younger one and not the older one.



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Genesis 48:17-19. 17When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." 19But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

But Jacob refused to follow Joseph's request. He said that the younger brother Ephraim shall be greater than the older one and his descendants will be multitude of nations!

More over Jacob said,

Gen. 48:20. 20He blessed them that day, saying,
"By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,
'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'"
Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

These two tribes to become the envy of Israel. They will start blessing one another, May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!

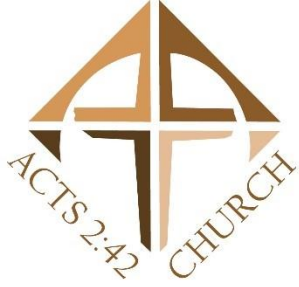
Is that so? Anytime I ask a Jew, what tribe he belongs to, they will say Levi, Judah or Benjamin! No one cares to say, I belong to Ephraim or Manasseh!

If we read numbers chapter 1 we can see the actual census. Lo and behold, you will see Ephraim and Manasseh competing for the bottom spots, and Judah was the largest with over seventy thousand young men. We must be careful about fulfillment of man's blessing vs God's blessing. But at times, God's blessing accurately unfolds through his people also! E.g. Judah tribe, and the Messiah coming through him!

The final verses in this chapter can be confusing. It seems Jacob always considered Joseph as his real oldest son from his actual only true wife, Rachel. So Joseph was promised double portion. Other wives were more like concubines.

Genesis 48:21, 22 21Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 22"I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

This double portion became a sticky issue when Joshua conquered the land of Canaan and divided among the tribes. Were Manasseh and Ephraim considered full tribe or half tribes? This is home work for you. Try to search the Scripture and find out!



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Here Jacob told Joseph that God will be with you. We must comfort all God's children likewise! It is a sure promise!

In Genesis 28:15 God appeared to Jacob and said, I am with you. Jacob was a fugitive. He ran for his life. He lost everything, his family and property. At that time, the Lord appeared and said, I am with you! What a comforting message! I am sure, some of us are becoming edgy, and despondent because you have come so far from your parents, and you are lonely, running scared. But the Lord is telling you, I am with you! Do not be afraid!

God later on appeared again to Jacob in Genesis 31:3 and said, I will be with you! Jacob believed it by faith, and he was never forsaken,

Then Jacob says in Gen. 35:3. God has been with me! He tasted His presence when he was blessed in Laban's place. He tasted it when he wrestled with Him. He tasted it personally when Esau became a close brother again and forgave Jacob!

Now in Gen. 48:21 Jacob told Joseph, "God will be with you! This bold statement can come from the people who have indeed experienced His hand over and over again. Only after experiencing His salvation we can say it boldly to others, The Lord will be with you!"

We must testify God's presence in our life, and give hope to others, God will be with you! Let us comfort one another by saying the Lord will be with you, and He will complete our journey, and He will take us to His heavenly eternal home!

Pastor Daniel Israel