

What Inheritance Do We Have for Our Children?

Genesis 48:1-22

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Introduction:

Last week, we saw how the LORD graciously raised up Egypt for the purpose of being a foster father to the fledgling church.

- At that time, the church was the household of Israel (or Jacob) which was made up of seventy persons—
 - They were the people that God had promised to multiply and bless, and from whom the Messiah who would save the nations was to come.
- The LORD had a special eye upon Israel, and so (at this fragile time in their history), He prepared a place for them in Egypt...
 - a place prepared to nurture them and protect them while they grew into a great multitude...
 - and a place in which they would later be tested and enabled to see the mighty hand of the LORD deliver them from the iron grip of Egypt.
 - You can listen to that sermon if you missed it to see how God, through Joseph, made Egypt to be just what it needed to be to carry out His purposes for Israel.

At the end of that sermon, we saw how declining old Jacob called his son Joseph, who had been exalted to be reign at Pharaoh's right hand,

- and asked him to swear that when he died, he would bury him in Canaan.
- Even though Joseph had attained to such a great height in Egypt, and even though the Lord had made it clear that Jacob's family was to be in Egypt for centuries,
 - by asking for burial in Canaan, Jacob provided a standing reminder to Joseph and the rest of his sons of two great truths:
 - First, that God would, in the centuries to come, return them to that land where they would establish God's kingdom that He would bless...
 - And secondly, that that land was their everlasting inheritance that God would give to him and to his fathers and to his sons—not just when they returned, but as a permanent inheritance in the resurrection.
- His burial there would remind them not to set their final hope in Egypt—or even in Canaan itself, but in the city whose builder and maker is God that is eternal and perfect in righteousness.
 - They were to set their hope in God who promised that glorious inheritance to them.

And today, as we come to Genesis chapter 48, we are going to see how some years later, Jacob, now sick and dying, again meets with Joseph,

- But this time, to secure to him the blessing of the firstborn...
 - to bestow on him and his sons the responsibility to lead the family at this time after he has gone.
- Jacob does this by adopting Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who had been born to Joseph in Egypt.
 - By adopting them, Jacob effectively gives Joseph the double portion of the inheritance that he has for his sons, showing that Joseph is their head.

- Jacob had intended to do this from the beginning because Joseph was the first born son to the wife that Jacob always considered to be his true wife...
 - but as Jacob says in verse 11, he had not thought that he would ever see Joseph again, and now God has shown him Joseph's offspring!
 - You can see how thrilled this decrepit old man is as he bestows his inheritance on Joseph and on Joseph's sons.
- But what does Jacob really have to give to them? What inheritance does he have for them?
 - That will be our focus today—and in looking at that, it is my desire to benefit all of you who know the Lord as your Saviour by showing you the inheritance that you have for your children...
 - And if you have no children, still to show you the inheritance that we all have for ourselves and for the future generations in the church until Jesus returns.
 - It will fill your heart with joyful hope if you understand it!
 - And if you do not know Jesus as your Saviour, it ought to make you decide to come to Him—and then you will have this wonderful inheritance too.
 - Galatians 3:9 testifies that those who believe are blessed with believing Abraham. You don't have to be his physical offspring, only a believer!

So please listen now as I read this passage to you...

- It is Genesis chapter 48.

Genesis 48:1-22: 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. ² And Jacob was told, “Look, your son Joseph is coming to you”; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. ³ Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 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.’ 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. ⁶ Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. 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).” ⁸ Then Israel saw

Joseph's sons, and said, “Who *are* these?” ⁹ And 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.” 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. ¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, “I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!” ¹² So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. 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. 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. 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, 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.”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.¹⁸ And Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father, for this *one is* the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.”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.”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.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.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.”

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy Word.

You can see what is going on here...

- Jacob is adopting these two sons of Joseph so that they are heirs along with Joseph’s brothers—as he says in verse 5.
 - **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.”**
- In this way, Jacob shows, that Joseph is appointed to be the head of his family after he dies.
 - Jacob is thrilled to have such a wise son into whose care he can place his household as they advance toward the fulfillment of all the special promises that God has given them.
- Jacob had wondered how any of his other sons would be able to carry the family into the future with the Lord,
 - but God has shown him that all along He had preserved and equipped Joseph for this.

So now let us turn our focus to the inheritance that Jacob has for Joseph and his sons.

I. In starting off, I want to show you the irony of the situation!

- A. Here are these two grandsons of Jacob, Ephraim and Manasseh, who have everything the world has to offer.
1. Their father is the vizier of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, and given great authority by Pharaoh to do as he pleases in Pharaoh’s name because he fully trusts him.
 2. Not only that, but Joseph is also very popular with all the people who recognise that he not only saved their lives, but also has dealt very generously with them when he might have greatly oppressed them—so Joseph is secure.
 3. And if all that were not enough, these lads also are blessed with great riches—Egypt, especially her leaders, came out of the famine with great wealth,
 - And it was already a prosperous land that was called the breadbasket of the ancient world.
 - There was technology and art and developed culture, there was education and many other fine things to enjoy.

- These boys had it all, and this is where the irony comes in...
- B. Here is their decrepit old grandfather who is eager to give them an inheritance, but what does he have to give these lads who have everything?
1. You can see his eagerness—it is very touching...
 - a. He is sick and weak, but when he hears that Joseph and his two sons have come to see him, he summons up his strength and sits up on the bed to talk to them!
 - He finds strength that he did not know he had!
 - b. You can see also how he kisses the boys and embraces them as described in v. 10,
 - c. And how he speaks of the thrill of seeing them in verse 11 when he says to Joseph: **I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!**
 - He is obviously very eager to give them this inheritance.
 2. But what does he have to give them?
 - a. Does he have houses and lands?
 - No, he is a refugee who had to leave the land that he did not even own to come and find bread in Egypt.
 - When he lived in Canaan, he had to struggle for the water that he drank and his sons had to wander from place to place to find pasturage for their flocks and herds.
 - He has a burial site and another tract of land that will surely be claimed by the inhabitants of Canaan if it had not already been claimed by now.
 - b. Now you might say, ah yes, but does he not have a family?
 - Well, yes he does—but they are shepherds, a lowly and despised employment in the eyes of the Egyptians...
 - And what do Ephraim and Manasseh know of this family but that they had sold their father into Egypt as a slave in malice to get rid of him?
 - And that the family had been divided and that one of their uncles had taken one of their father's wives and two of their uncles had attacked an innocent city against their grandfather's wishes and that their aunt had been raped?
 - It was not exactly like this family stood out as a model family...
 - In fact, there were probably a lot of families that were a lot more unified and happy than this family.
 - c. What inheritance, then, does this decrepit old man have to give to them?
 - 1) Should these boys glance at each other with a condescending smile as their poor old grandfather supposes he is giving them something special?
 - Are they to humour the old man and be polite as he gives them what he deems to be such a great treasure...
 - an small insecure inheritance that is to be divided for each of them with eleven uncles who are not their brothers?
 - 2) Surely, the Egyptians would have had that condescending smile if they knew about what was going on here!

- They would get a chuckle out of the dear old grandfather.
- What does he have to give to these boys who have everything?

C. And my brothers and sisters, is it not much the same with us?

1. Is the church in our day rich and prosperous?
 - No, church buildings are being turned into apartments by developers.
 - Church attendance is down.
 - We don't have money to support all the missionaries we would like to send.
2. And are we not marginalised by the world?
 - Our voice is neither heard nor consulted by the leaders of our nations...
 - Academics do not respect our academic judgment about history or science...
 - It is more often the source of ridicule.
 - And when it comes to popular opinion, we are seen as obscure, narrow, and ignorant—often as intolerant and out of touch.
3. And that is not all...we are also divided and ungodly!
 - We talk about love, but we are divided into a million factions—
 - Our churches are often characterised by quarrelling ignorant members who wrangle over obscure questions or trivial matters.
 - Our leaders are often caught up in scandals—
 - charged with child molestation...
 - or ministers are found to have spent their time on porn sites—even illegal ones—or to have made moves on the women in the congregation.

TRANS> What do we have to give to our children?

- What does an old grandfather have to leave with them?
- That is the perceived irony of the situation...

II. But now let us look at the reality of the situation!

A. First with Jacob—it is clear that he is not a silly old grandfather who thinks he has something special when he has nothing! He is not out of touch with reality!

1. The holy Word of the Lord shows us in Hebrews 11:21 that this is his crowning act of faith.
 - a. When God's Spirit wants to exhibit Jacob's faith in Hebrews 11, He does not refer to Bethel or even to Peniel where Jacob wrestled with the Angel...
 - but He refers to this incident right here in Genesis 48:
 - **Hebrews 11:21: By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.**
 - b. This is chosen as the high point of his faith because of the very things we have seen...
 - because even though Joseph's sons did have all the finest things in Egypt and Jacob had very little of this world's treasures,
 - Jacob knew by faith that he had treasures that were vastly superior to anything that Egypt had to offer him!
 - c. This great faith was not based upon what he saw or upon what he presently had, but it was based upon what God had promised!

- It was not based upon his own vain imaginations or wishful thinking, but it was grounded firmly in the word of the Lord that endures forever.
 - It was secured to him by God who had made a covenant with his fathers and with him.
2. Jacob knows that all the treasures of Egypt will quickly pass...but that the word of the Lord endures forever.
- His inheritance is not in this present world, but in the kingdom that God has begun in his family that God will uphold in all generations...
 - With his fathers as described in Hebrews, he is waiting for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God, eternal in the heavens...
 - that is, the city whose final destination is heaven—where God is!
 - That is the inheritance that has been secured to him by faith—
 - not faith that tries to conjure up wishes and dreams...
 - but faith that believes what God has promised.
 - God had, as he says in verse 3, appeared to him at Luz to make these promises in which he now trusts.
3. Joseph also believes in the superiority of his father's inheritance.
- a. He comes eagerly to his father when he hears that he is sick, bringing Ephraim and Manasseh with him.
 - You can see that in verse 1—this great vizier of Egypt leaves all of his duties and comes to his father's side.
 - b. And you can see that as soon as Jacob tells Joseph to bring the boys to him that he may bless them (at the end of verse 9),
 - Joseph immediately brings them: Verse 10 says, **“Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.”**
 - And verse 12 repeats again: **So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.**
 - Joseph's bowing here shows his earnest request for his father to bless him in this way...
 - c. The text goes on to show that Joseph takes all of this very seriously...
 - He stations his oldest son Manasseh at his father's right hand and Ephraim, the younger, on the left...
 - and verse 17 and 18, he is said to be displeased (a word of strong grief) when he sees that his father had crossed his hands so the Ephraim is getting the blessing of the right hand...
 - Jacob insists that he knows what he is doing—that Ephraim is to have the greater blessing...
 - The point here is that Joseph does not look at this blessing as insignificant and trivial...
 - He is very much engaged in what is going on here and very concerned that the blessing is properly dispensed.
 - He knows that this blessing is more important than all the wealth and power of Egypt!
- B. Dear Christian brothers and sisters, do you know this?

1. Do you know that the inheritance of God’s kingdom is more important than all that the world has to offer?
 - Our gracious Lord has set up this whole situation with poor old Jacob blessing the grand vizier of Egypt and his sons to teach us this lesson about the value of our inheritance in Christ.
2. Do not be deceived!
 - What you have in Christ is everything!
 - In Him you have eternal life in glory.
 - In the world, you have treasures that will all pass away.
3. Teach your children about the value of this inheritance.
 - Don’t allow them to be deceived.
 - Don’t act as though it is more important that they get a high place in society or a great job or that they have great health...
 - I hate it when parents say, “well, as long as they are healthy” when they ought to say, “Well, as long as they are godly!”
 - I have news for such parents—your children are going to get old and die, but godliness will last forever!
 - Teach your children to value our inheritance in the LORD.
4. And tell your neighbours of this inheritance too...
 - a. Remind each other about it in the church, and when you see that some professing Christian is not cherishing it, go to him and challenge him...
 - b. And for those that are outside the church—
 - Don’t envy them if they have more of this world’s passing treasures...
 - Tell them of your treasures and of their surpassing excellence...the surpassing excellence of our inheritance in the LORD.

III. So just what does Jacob have? What do you have? What is this inheritance?

A. See how Jacob describes his inheritance—and learn!!!

1. First, see how he describes it as a kingdom with an everlasting inheritance!
 - In verse 3-4, it says: **Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 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.’ ”**
 - a. I refer to it as *a kingdom* because the LORD tells Jacob that He is going multiply him into a multitude of people.
 - This, of course, is the reiteration of the same promise that the LORD had made to Abraham and Isaac before.
 - They are to become a great nation, and nations will come to them for blessing and be joined to them from the whole world.
 - b. And this kingdom will not be one that passes away.
 - Verse 4 says that the LORD is giving them and their descendants the land where Jacob was—the land of Canaan—as **an everlasting possession**—that is, an everlasting inheritance.
 - This family was to inherit this land forever...

- They will be raised up at the last day to inherit this land forever.
 - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did not inherit it, and neither did Ephraim and Manasseh during their whole lifetime...
 - And it was not just that in a few hundred years their offspring would inherit it for a few years until Assyria and Babylon came and took it away.
 - It was rather that God would raise them up at the last day to inherit it forever—when it is renewed in the new heavens and the new earth.
 - We are told in the New Testament, that it is not only the land of Canaan, but the whole earth that the saints will inherit!
 - It will be completely renewed as a new heaven and new earth without the curse.
 - And we will be renewed to be forever free from sin and death.
 - Egypt will pass away, but this inheritance will endure forever.
- c. And you see how secure this blessing is.
- God Himself appeared to Jacob at Luz (or Bethel) to promise it to him.
 - There was no doubt about it.
 - This inheritance is secured by God's own oath and covenant promise.
- But there is more that is said about this blessing.
2. It is an inheritance that promises that God will be our God.
- a. The whole human race was cut off from God by our sin.
 - We don't know Him as God or trust Him as God or enjoy Him as God.
 - We are estranged and blinded by our sin.
 - b. This inheritance is wonderful because God comes to us personally so that we can walk before Him!
 - Jacob speaks of God as the God before whom his fathers Abraham and Isaac walked in verse 15.
 - They lived before the face of God, in the presence of God.
 - He was reconciled to them—He accepted them even though they were sinful men and took them into His care so that they walked before Him.
 - c. There is nothing better than this—and it has only begun in this life.
3. To walk before God involves two marvellous things that Jacob speaks about that we enjoy even in this present time when we have this inheritance...
- a. First, he says that God has fed him all his life to this day (v. 15).
 - The word *fed* is a translation of the word *shepherded*.
 - It includes guiding us, leading us, and yes, feeding us.
 - Jacob could look back and see how God had stuck with him over all the years.
 - Jacob had not always trusted God as he should, he had not always done right, but still, the Lord had been with him.

- He had taught him and worked in his life and over the years he had deepened Jacob's trust and worked in him the very strong faith that we see here.
 - He had delivered him from Laban and Esau and in many other ways.
 - Jacob had come to know the Lord as a God of all grace and power—a God that he could fully trust.
 - He had learned to delight in the LORD as his God.
 - He has rejoiced to learn of God's wisdom and glory—he had walked before God and God has shepherded him all the way to prepare him for future glory.
- b. But Jacob also speaks of the Angel.
- He calls this Angel **the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil** in verse 16.
- 1) When God appears to His people in the Old Testament, He is often referred to as the Angel of the LORD.
 - This term is used to refer to Christ because He is the mediator between God and His people—He is the one who comes to us to redeem us.
 - a) In Malachi 3:1, Jesus Christ is called the Angel of the covenant who suddenly appears in His temple.
 - b) And in Exodus 23:20-21, He is the Angel who led them through the wilderness.
 - In 1 Cor 10:4, we are told that this Angel is Christ.
 - 2) And look at how He is described by Jacob here in Genesis 48:16!
 - as the Angel who redeemed Jacob from all evil!
 - a) This is an inheritance in which we have God Himself as our redeemer!
 - This redeemer is the go-el—that is the word that is used here.
 - He was the nearest relative who came to bail you out whether you were fallen into debt or sold into slavery,
 - And if someone killed you, he was the one who came to avenge your blood—that is, to deal with the murderer in your behalf.
 - He was your near relative, so he did whatever had to be done to look after you!
 - b) And this is an inheritance in which the go-el is Christ—the redeemer is God's own Son!
 - God Himself becomes the near relative and He does all that must be done to redeem us from all evil.
 - How lovingly and beautifully and wisely and completely and perfectly does Jesus Christ fulfill this role!
 - Just think what it is to have Him in this role!
 - c) And we have now seen what the Angel has *now* done to redeem Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh...and all who enter His kingdom!

- Our go-el, our kinsman redeemer, has gone so far for us that He has actually borne our transgressions on the cross.
- He has paid the full debt of our sin and redeemed us by His own blood—but taking the punishment Himself so we can be released from it penalty and inherit everlasting life in glory...
- And He is going to come again to judge the world and when He does, He will destroy Satan and all his servants and He will cast them into the Lake of Fire and we will be set free from them forever in the new heavens and the new earth.
 - And then, not only our bodies will be redeemed, but the whole creation will be redeemed by this kinsman redeemer!

TRANS> What an inheritance Jacob has to give to his grandsons!

- There is nothing to compare with it.
- My brothers and sisters, this is your inheritance!

B. The LORD is beautifully managing His kingdom, raising up leaders as He chooses.

1. Jacob here speaks as a prophet as he blesses Ephraim and Manasseh.

- The Lord is raising up the house of Joseph to lead His people in Egypt.
- He had raised up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and now Joseph with his sons Ephraim and Manasseh.
 - Jacob's other sons would also have the inheritance, and as we shall see next week, it is through Judah that the Messiah would come...
- But at the present time the LORD is showing that He has chosen Joseph to lead them during this time when they are to multiply in Egypt.
 - His choice has already been made clear by the turn of events, but here it is sealed by the blessing of Jacob as a prophet.

2. And you can see that it is God's doing...His choosing.

a. I have already mentioned how Joseph objected when Jacob put his right hand on Ephraim, the younger son...

- And how Jacob assures him that it was deliberate because Ephraim was to have the greater blessing...
 - In verse 19, he says to Joseph: **"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."**
- But not like Jacob and Esau where Esau was cut off—
 - both will receive a blessing in the kingdom—
 - but Ephraim is to have the greater blessing.
 - God has chosen Him to lead His people into the future.

b. How comforting it is to see that it is not up to us to raise up leaders to carry the church from one generation to the next!

- The LORD is taking care of that.
 - He chooses them according to His good pleasure.

- It is ultimately He who is the head of His church and who looks after us and who redeems us by the Angel of His presence!
 - The church will never perish under His care and direction!
 - From generation to generation, He will shepherd her and he will lead her until Jesus comes again.
- c. That is why Jacob can say with confidence, (in verse 21),
- **“Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.”**
 - If it were up to Jacob, they would be in great trouble—for he is dying, but it is up to God...
 - We are to recognise those who rule among us and to give thanks to them and honour them for the sake of their work and submit to them,
 - but ultimately our trust is not in our leaders but in God who raises them up and gives them to us in every generation...
 - We are secure because He is looking after us.

Conclusion: It may not look like we have much...

- In the last verse Jacob gives them this little tract of land in Canaan which he could hardly even be said to presently possess...
 - But he is giving them an everlasting inheritance in God!
- And *that* is what is what you have to pass along to your children dear child of God.
 - There is nothing to compare with this in all the world!
 - See that you cherish it and see that by the grace of God you lead your children to cherish it also.
 - This is what you have to give to them in the Lord and you need nothing more.
 - If they have this, they have everything.
 - If you have nothing but the shirt on your back and you leave them this, you have left them with the greatest treasure of all.
 - How thankful you can be on your death bed if you can impart this to them.