

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.”

Introduction

For the casual reader, Genesis chapter 48 seems to be all about Jacob blessing Joseph’s sons. However, if you fast forward with me to Hebrews Chapter 11: v. 21. we will discover something quite remarkable.

²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

Hebrews Chapter 11 is all about highlighting people who were known for their **“faith”**.

The only thing that the writer to the Hebrews highlights about the faith of Jacob is the **blessing of Joseph’s sons**.

So right at the start of this chapter we need to understand that the theme is all about **“faith”**.

Yes, we do have Jacob blessing Joseph’s sons, but his actions in this blessing identify him as a man of great **“faith”**.

I will divide this chapter up into three sections.

1. Jacob adopts Joseph’s sons - v. 3-13.

The text tells us that Jacob was sick, and being about 147 years old, it was likely that he did not have long to live.

Joseph went to see his father and took with him his two sons, the elder son was called Manasseh and the younger son was called Ephraim.

When Jacob saw Joseph with his two sons, he was strengthened and managed to sit up in his bed.

The first thing that Jacob communicated to Joseph was the story about what happened to him many years ago when God appeared to him at "Luz" in the land of Canaan.

There were two incidents of significance for Jacob at 'Luz' which was the old name for "Bethel". I think that we need to identify both of them.

We need to go back to Genesis Chapter 28: v. 10-22 and read about the first event.

Genesis Chapter 28: v. 10-22

¹⁰ Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know *it*." ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!" ¹⁸ Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. ²² And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

Now we need to go forward 25 years in time to **Genesis Chapter 35: v. 9-15.**

⁹ Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said to him, "Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. ¹¹ Also God said to him: "I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. ¹² The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." ¹³ Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. ¹⁴ So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. ¹⁵ And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

The point of Jacob recalling these two incidents was to remind Joseph that he was the person whom God had promised concerning the future of his descendants.

Therefore, only Jacob had the right to decide who would get his blessing.

Jacob had the faith that God would fulfil all of these promises.

Jacob, in faith, had the right and power to bestow blessing upon whom he would choose.

Now we come to the formal adoption.

Turn with me now to verse 5.

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 the original Hebrew, the words read like this.

“Like Reuben and Simeon they will be to me”.

Jacob is saying that these two boys would become NOT grandsons, but “SONS.”

They would displace Reuben and Simeon.

This to us is a very strange thing. Why did Jacob do such a thing?

To answer this, we need to go to **1 Chronicles Chapter 5: v. 1-2.**

And also Genesis Chapter 35 v. 22.

1 Chronicles Chapter 5: v. 1-2.

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; ²yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him *came* a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s—

Genesis Chapter 35 v. 22.

²²And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard *about it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

We are going to look at this issue later in our application, so we will move on to the next revelation.

Jacob realised that Joseph was going to ask him a few questions about this decision, as it might affect his other children.

Jacob anticipated this and answered his first question in verse 6.

In v. 6 we are told that Joseph’s other children would be his own children and they would be incorporated into the tribes of **Ephraim and Manasseh.**

In v. 7 Jacob recalls the death of his wife Rachel, which would have been painful both for Joseph and Jacob.

Remember that Joseph was the first-born son of Rachel.

Now Rachel’s lineage could be extended through Joseph, and now **directly** as Jacob adopts Joseph’s two sons directly, **as his first born.**

We now come to study verse 8-13.

Many Bible scholars believe that the details we are given here where Joseph interacts with Jacob, including his two sons, are very similar to a **formal adoption** process that would have happened at this time.

Verses 8-13 can be taken as a formal surrender of Joseph’s two sons to his father Jacob.

This surrender was for the purposes of the inheritance of the covenant promise given by God.

This was originally given to Abraham and his descendants.

2. Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s two sons – v. 14-20.

We now come to the act of blessing by Jacob upon Joseph’s two sons.

This is another problem that seems, not only strange to Joseph, but also perhaps to Asian thinking concerning the rights and responsibilities of the eldest son.

The first thing we need to understand is that it was normal in these days for the **eldest son in any family to have special privileges and responsibilities.**

The eldest son was considered to be the purest bloodline and the purest representative of any family. So for all of his life so far, Manasseh had lived with the privileges of the first born.

Joseph would have groomed his eldest son in a special way to take over responsibilities from him after his death.

The second thing that we need to understand, is the significance of the right hand.

If you blessed somebody with your right hand, it meant that you were conveying **power and authority to that person.**

The Bible tells us that **Jesus is at the right hand of God.**

(Luke 22: v.69, & Mark 16: v. 19.)

Isaiah talks about God **holding our right hand.**

(Isaiah 41: v. 13)

So when Jacob chose to put his right hand upon Ephraim, the younger son, he was doing something that was **wrong in the culture of the day**.

Jacob **should** have put his right hand upon **Manasseh. He was the first born**.

The question we need to ask is why did Jacob do this?

Why should Jacob do something that seemed totally wrong according to the culture of the day?

In v. 19 we are told the answer.

(19 in the N.L.T.)

¹⁹ But his father refused. "I know, my son; I know," he replied. "Manasseh will also become a great people, but his younger brother will become even greater. And his descendants will become a multitude of nations."

So the answer is that Jacob felt that the greater blessing would be upon Ephraim, the younger son. One thing that we do know from the book of Hebrews was that this act was recorded as the greatest act of "**faith**" on the part of Jacob.

Jacob did not know the future blessing that would come upon the youngest son, but God knew.

Therefore, Jacob **was acting in faith** upon what God had obviously communicated to him.

Jacob didn't trust his own wisdom, that was the culture of the day, he trusted in God's word to him.

This is what "faith" is all about.

Faith is trusting in God's word, even if it goes against our own wisdom and culture.

3. The faith of Joseph – v. 21-22.

For Joseph to agree to go ahead with his father's plan of adopting his two sons would require a lot of faith and trust in God.

In human terms it was madness.

If Joseph identified his two sons with the despised Hebrew shepherding people, his sons would lose all their future employment possibilities.

Remember Joseph was second in command in Egypt.

He had the highest position and could get any job for his sons if they were Egyptian, but not if they were part of the community of Shepherds in Goshen.

However, Joseph agreed with his father concerning the promises of God.

Joseph agreed that God had begun to build a great nation that would one day return to the land of Canaan.

It took **a lot of faith on the part of Joseph**, who was in the most privileged position in Egypt.

In v. 22 we are told that Joseph accepted a gift from his father by "faith".

The gift was an extra portion of land in Canaan.

In other words, Joseph would get more land than his brothers.

When somebody gives us a "**gift**" it is something tangible that we can see.

Even if it is money or a voucher to buy ourselves a present, it is nevertheless the resources to buy that present.

In the case of Joseph, there was no real evidence of this gift.

I am sure that he believed his father's promise concerning this gift, but in order for Joseph or his family to receive this gift, they would need to return to the land one day to **claim this gift**.

Therefore, Joseph must have had "**faith**" in the promise of God to send his family back to Canaan one day.

Actually it would not happen for 400 years, so Joseph must have recorded this incident in a book for future use.

The evidence that he did is here in v.22.

It was recorded somewhere.

Application

There are two clear applications in this Chapter. The first is **faith** and the second is **adoption**.

Let us deal with "Faith" first.

In the context of our passage today, “**faith**” was believing in the promises of God concerning the **land and blessing of a nation**.

It is very important that we understand this word “**faith**” as it is explained in the Bible.

Faith is the one thing, above all others, that Jesus Christ recognised as being the most important.

The “**Gentile Woman**” in Mathew Chapter 15: v. 21-28 had **perseverance**,

the “**Soldier**” in Matthew 8: v. 5-13 had **humility**, the **blind man** in Mark 10: v. 46-52

had great **sincerity**.

But what Jesus saw and rewarded in each of these cases was **faith**.

Faith was the foundation for all the spiritual character mentioned in **2 Peter 1: v.5-7**.

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

So what exactly is “Biblical Faith”?

In order to have Biblical faith, there are three things that are needed.

1. **Knowledge**. -

Psalm 9: v. 10

¹⁰ And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.

Romans 10:17.

¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Faith is not believing a thing without evidence. Biblical faith rests upon the best of evidence, namely the Bible, God’s word. This is in spite of any cultural thinking of the day, whatever country or culture that we come from.

2. **Assent** – this word means believing in the heart.

It is one thing to have knowledge about the Bible, but it is a separate thing to actually believe those things in your heart.

The rich young ruler in Mark 10:v.17-22 that we learnt about last week, had knowledge of the **10 commandments**, but he didn’t believe in his heart that there was a better life available to him, if he surrendered his riches to the poor and followed Jesus.

True Biblical faith must involve a touching of your heart deep down.

3. **Appropriation** - The final aspect of true Biblical faith is the actual appropriation of the things that you know and really believe in your heart.

John 1: v. 12.

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

A gift is only a gift when you receive it.

You can refuse a gift, even if you know about the person and are aware of the gift.

Jesus tested people in the area of appropriation.

Turn with me to **John Chapter 8: v. 30-31**.

³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

Jesus knew people’s hearts and he knew that true faith is expressed in actions.

James Chapter 2: v. 14-18 (New Living translation)

¹⁴ What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?¹⁵ Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing,¹⁶ and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? ¹⁷ So you see, faith by itself

isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. ¹⁸ Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

So if you claim today to be a born again Christian believer, then at some time in your life, you must have understood about Jesus Christ and the God of the Bible and the message of salvation.

It must have touched your heart in some way.

You must have been convicted of your sin, and finally actually asked Jesus to forgive you and received his forgiveness and love into your heart.

If you are not a Christian yet, then perhaps one or two of these strands of faith are missing.

You may have the **knowledge**, but it has **not yet touched your heart**.

Ask God to touch your heart about these things.

You may have had your heart convicted, but you haven't actually taken a step of faith and received Jesus Christ into your heart.

If that is the case, why not today?

You can stay behind at the "Lift Prayer" sign and pray with somebody and ask Jesus Christ to forgive you and come into your heart.

Remember it is **a gift that God wants to give you**, you are the one refusing the gift, not God.

The challenge for every Christian is **to continue in "faith"**.

This is a challenge for all of us who have tasted the glory of God.

We must continue to **"grow" in our "faith"** and this involves us taking small steps of faith along the way.

The Bible tells us to **"grow" in "grace" and in the "knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This requires faith.**

The second application is concerning "Adoption".

Jacob wanted to adopt his grandsons into his family.

The boys were Egyptians through their mother and probably did not have any real understanding of the promises made by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning the special nation that God was about to populate.

In British Law, once a child is adopted into a family, that child will grow up and have all the rights and privileges that any other child would have, if they had been born through the seed of the father and through the womb of the mother.

In other words, once a child is adopted into a family, there is no difference between that child and any other child of that family.

To Jacob, it was important for Joseph's two sons to be included into God's family as heirs of the promise concerning the land and the nation.

Now when you become a Christian, you are **"Adopted"** into God's family.

This means that you have all the privileges as a child of God, together with everybody else within the family of God.

God adopts those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1: v. 3-8 in the N.L.T.

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

You can claim ALL of the promises that God has declared that concern you personally.

This may take you a lifetime to discover all of these promises, so why not start now?

Amen.