

Lesson 10 – 4 July 2010

Jacob at Life's Sunset

Lesson Scope: [Genesis 48](#)

Lesson Focus

Jacob had now been in Egypt for seventeen years. He was sick and on his deathbed. When Joseph heard this, he brought his two sons to see Jacob.

Joseph was not living with his brethren in Goshen. He was with the Egyptians, and his sons were growing up as Egyptians. In his sunset years Israel permanently secured a place for Joseph's sons among the people of God.

The focal point of this chapter is the adoption of Joseph's sons by Israel. Joseph's sons were to each have an equal share of the inheritance with Joseph's brothers. This gave Joseph a double portion of the inheritance.

By faith, Jacob was looking ahead to the redemption of Israel from Egypt. God had promised that his posterity would inherit Canaan, and Jacob firmly believed that promise. Jacob's faith had deepened as he aged.

We see in these scriptures that Jacob exercises deep spiritual vision and insight. We should ponder these questions: Do I have faith like Jacob? Do I have a vision of the work God is doing among His people today? Do I have a vision for my family? Do I appreciate the faithful elderly among us and their vision for the church? We should allow the example of Jacob to inspire us and pass that inspiration on to others in our circle.

"Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Being thankful for God's past blessings and claiming His promises nurture the living faith of aging saints.

Lesson Aim: To see the response of faith in the sunset years.

Theme Verses: [Psalm 90:15-16](#). Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

Lesson Text:

"God Almighty Appeared Unto Me"

Genesis 48:1-7

And it came to pass after these things, that *one* told Joseph, Behold, thy father *is* sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ²And *one* told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. ³And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, ⁴And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.

⁵And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. ⁶And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. ⁷And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.

"I Had Not Thought to See Thy Face"

Genesis 48:8

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who *are* these?

Genesis 48:11-16

And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. ¹²And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. ¹³And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near unto him. ¹⁴And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

¹⁵And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, ¹⁶The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

"God Shall Be With You"

Genesis 48:17-22

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. ¹⁸And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this *is* the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. ¹⁹And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it*: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. ²⁰And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. ²¹And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. ²²Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

Questions for Study

"God Almighty Appeared Unto Me"

1. What was the source of Jacob's strength in his old age?
2. Why did Jacob adopt Joseph's sons?
3. How can we lay the ground work for faith in succeeding generations?

"I Had Not Thought to See Thy Face"

4. For what blessing did Jacob praise the Lord?
5. What blessing did Jacob bestow on Joseph's sons?
6. What spiritual blessings can we impart to the rising generation?

"God Shall Be With You"

7. How did Jacob receive his knowledge of the future?
8. What vision should we have for our people'?

Analyzing the Passage

Jacob, a man who had known some of life's deepest sorrows, now speaks some of his last words. He speaks of God's promise to him at Luz (Bethel) when he fled from Esau (Gen.48:3-4). Jacob had clung to that promise all his life.

Jacob speaks tenderly of Rachel's death (48:7) to Joseph and his sons. God had done more for Jacob than he could ever have imagined (Gen.48:11). He had seen, not only Joseph whom he had thought to be dead, but Jo-

seph's sons as well.

Jacob embraces the faith of his fathers (Gen.48:15-16, 21) and commends this faith to Joseph's sons.

Jacob gives God all the praise for sustaining and preserving him spiritually and naturally through life's hardships (Gen.48:15-16). God was at the center of Jacob's thoughts in this passage. Jacob's parting words were, "God shall he with you" (Gen.48:21).

Jacob's oldest son, Reuben, had lost his birthright by sin (1Chronicles 5:1). Simeon and Levi had also incurred Jacob's displeasure by their conduct (Gen.34:25-31). In this lesson the birthright (a double portion) is given to Joseph as Rachel's oldest son (1 Chronicles 5:1-2). Any other sons of Joseph would receive a portion through their older brothers (Gen.48:6).

John 4:5 refers to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to Joseph.

Principles and Applications

"God Almighty Appeared Unto Me"

1. *Faith strengthens the inner man* (Gen.48:1-2). The young may tend to trust in their natural strength. The middle-aged person might trust in his wisdom and accomplishments. Far too often God needs to take our strength, our wisdom, our health, or our money away so that our faith may fasten on Him. When we by faith realize that God is all we need our inner man can be alive and strong while our natural resources decline.

2. *Faith trusts in the promises of God Almighty* (Gen.48:3-4). To trust is to rest completely upon something. Do we trust God so completely that we lay the full outcome of our lives upon Him" Can we say with Paul. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39), or A know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

3. *Faith lays the so that succeeding generations can experience redemption and a place among God's people* (Gen.48:5-6). Our choices today will make it either easy or hard for our children to accept and appreciate the faith of the saints. If we speak well of sound, spiritual conservative leaders, our children will accept their message. If our children are taught to live simply, they will learn that they do not need the latest technology. When

we do not allow our sons to buy the world's highly esteemed pickups or our daughters to comb their hair in ways that attract attention, we are preparing them to be a part of the great company of faithful pilgrims and strangers.

4. *Faith mingled with the sorrows of life mellows the heart* (Gen.48:7). The unbelieving are hard and cold and shake off the sorrows of life with laughter and jokes. In contrast, as men of faith look over the sorrows of their life, their hearts are soft and tender. Faith blossoms into a sure and longing hope of loved ones in the world to come and of the glorious resurrection together by the work of Christ. The theme of hope was certainly present in the Old Testament although it was less developed than in the New Testament.

"I Had Not Thought to See Thy Face"

5. *Faith rejoices in the goodness of God* (Gen.48:8, 11). We are not worthy of the goodness of God. We are unprofitable servants. Faith enables us to see the goodness of God even in circumstances that would cause carnal men to become bitter.

Men often become proud or take glory to themselves as they experience God's goodness. But the man of faith receives the blessings and goodness of God with thanksgiving and humility.

6. *By a living faith, the older help the younger appreciate and enter into God's covenant* (Gen.48:14-16). There is much the elderly cannot do. There is more that they can do. By prayer and example they can lead the coming generation to trust in God and to find peace, rest, and joy in Christ. They are an example of assurance of salvation in the face of death. They are an encouragement in adversity, support in weakness, and a counselor in perplexity. They are a testimony of God's grace for life's trials. They praise God for His preserving power against Satan's attacks. They teach, promote and defend the doctrines and practices of the Word. They have an active interest in the spiritual life of the church.

7. *Our faith will impart a blessing to our children and grandchildren* (Gen.48:14-15). The blessings of God come through a covenant relationship with Him. We must instill in the generation a deep sense of our rising need of God's grace and sustaining power. Our hope of future good lies only in God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant and in our loyalty to the conditions of the covenant.

"God Shall Be With You"

8. *Faith gives the godly a vision for the future* (Gen.48:17-21). Do we have a vision of a faithful church? Do we have a vision of young people growing up in purity and sobriety, getting married and raising a family with the burden for a godly seed? Do we have a vision of our people living in simple, godly homes and working in simple Occupations? Where there is no vision the people perish!

9. *Faith is confident of God's continued presence with His people* (Gen.48:21). Men of faith may die in peace because they know that God will be with their posterity as He was with them.

Important Teachings

1. Faith strengthens the inner man (Gen.48:1, 2).
2. Faith trusts in the promises of God Almighty (Gen.48:3, 4).
3. Faith lays the groundwork so that succeeding generations can experience redemption and a place among God's people (Gen.48:5, 6).
4. Faith mingled with the sorrows of life mellows the heart (Gen.48:7).
5. Faith rejoices in the goodness of God (Gen.48:8, 11).
6. By a living faith, the older help the younger appreciate and enter into God's covenant (Gen.48:14-16).
7. Our faith will impart a blessing to our children and grandchildren (Gen.48:14, 15).
8. Faith gives the godly a vision for the future (Gen.48:17-21).
9. Faith is confident of God's continued presence with His people (Gen.48:21).

Answers to Questions

1. What was the source of Jacob's strength in his old age?

Faith in God's promises, the joy of God's blessing on his life, and the precious memory of Rachel strengthened Jacob's soul as life neared its close.

2. Why did Jacob adopt Joseph's sons?

Joseph's sons had grown up as Egyptians so far. Jacob wanted them to have their place among God's people. He wanted the blessing of Abraham and Isaac, which he had received, passed on to them. He wanted them to place their faith in God's promises. Further, Reuben as the oldest had forfeited his birthright by sin. Joseph, as the oldest son of Rachel, was given the birthright. When Jacob gave Ephraim and Manasseh equal portions with his own sons, the tribe of Joseph received a double portion of the inheri-

tance.

3. How can we lay the groundwork for faith in the succeeding generations? We must have our children communicate and fellowship with older faithful saints. We must keep a living faith in God's promises constantly in the minds of our children. We must prepare them to walk in the ways of those gone before who have left a good example. The lifestyle we live, the churches and families with whom we fellowship, the books and tapes we have, and the way we use or misuse our money will lay the groundwork for either faith or failure.

4. For what blessings did Jacob praise the Lord?

Jacob had been reunited with Joseph and had seen Joseph's sons. God had given Jacob natural provisions and spiritual strength. God had been faithful in keeping His promises to Jacob.

5. What blessings did Jacob bestow on Joseph's sons?

Jacob pronounced on them God's blessing to Abraham and Isaac and also the blessing God had promised him. He desired for them the same relationship with God that he enjoyed. He joined them with God's covenant people.

6. What spiritual blessings can we impart to the rising generation?

Parents should impart the blessing of fervent family worship. Children should live in homes filled with Christian rest, not challenging authority or standards. Church life should be the center of family living. Children are blessed who grow up with a deep appreciation for the doctrines and practices of the church and for godly ancestors. Parents must help their children live with Christian assurance. Children must know the peace and joy of deep faith in God and commitment to His Word and His church.

7. How did Jacob receive his knowledge of the future?

Obviously, Jacob received his knowledge of the future by divine revelation. Jacob's worship and faith opened his heart to communion with God.

8. What vision should we have for our people?

We should envision a people who are Biblical in doctrine, loyal to Mennonite practice, sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, and burdened for the lost. We should have a vision of unselfish living that gives all we can of time and resources for the needy of the world both physically and spiritually.

Most of all, we must be a people with tender consciences who can be guided by spiritual appeal rather than by force.

Summarizing the Lesson

God had appeared to Jacob at Bethel and blessed him. Jacob's life, so typical of men, seemed to rise and fall. Sometimes he seemed to be facing life alone. Sometimes he reached to true heights of spiritual power. As Jacob's life neared its close, his spiritual power reached its climax and his prophetic vision enlarged. May God grant us a growing faith that will bring our souls safely to rest. May He grant us an expanding vision for the spiritual welfare of our posterity.

Research Guide

1. First Chronicles 5:1-2 explains the change of the birthright from Reuben to Joseph.
2. See Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32; and John 4:5-6 for references to the parcel of ground Jacob gave to Joseph.