Genesis: Beginning "Good" with God
New Pilgrim Baptist Church Bible Study
Pastor Marcus Jerkins, PhD
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Lesson: God's Faithfulness and the Promise Pt. 2 **(Genesis 48:1-22)**

As Jacob neared the end of his life, he began the process of transition with blessing and laying on of hands. Jacob had received blessings from his father as he transitioned as Isaac had received blessings from his father, Abraham, as he transitioned. The process continued with the passing on of blessings but this was different. Now, the family of Israel had been established, a nation had been born which would produce other nations. Jacob began by adding the sons of Joseph to his family, giving them a place among the sons of Israel. In so doing, he violated many of the cultural principles which gave preference to birth order. But God, in his faithfulness, will do things as he pleases to bring about the purposes he desires.

1. ***Jacob adopts the sons of Joseph*** (Gen 48:1-7)

a. Joseph received word that his father was near death and came to visit his father. He brought his sons with him.
b. Jacob's death called for passing the baton. He will bless his sons in the next chapter more profoundly. Abraham and Isaac similarly passed the baton of blessing (Gen 25:5; 27:1, 27-29; 28:1). But now he chose to bless and add to his family by adopting Ephraim and Manasseh. But in passing the baton, he explained his favor. It was God's strength that carried Jacob to prosperity and he never forgot that. This is an essential part of any passing the baton, explaining how it arrived in your hand. He also explained to Joseph that just as much as his first two children were his, Reuben and Simeon, so too, are Ephraim and Manasseh.
c. Jacob may have mentioned Rachel's death to speak of her fruitfulness. By adopting Ephraim and Manasseh, Rachel's children increase to four.

2. ***God upsets human standards in Ephraim and Manasseh*** **(**Gen 48:8-20**)**

a. Jacob's vision (like Isaac's) was poor and he likely did not know Ephraim and Manasseh by face. When Joseph brought them to him, he needed to ask who they were.
b. The KJV suggests the sons of Joseph were brought from his knees but it was likely that the boys fell down in reverence of their grandfather at his knees and Joseph moved them so that he may prostrate himself at his father's knees. These were significant acts of reverence showing deference for the elders whose care gave life to succeeding generations.
c. Jacob's blessing of the boys involved his calling God "the angel." God often manifested himself as an angel (Gen 32; Exod 3). But the idea is about continuity. The same God who blessed Jacob would now bless and multiply the seed of Joseph.
d. Jacob placed his right hand on Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. This displeased Joseph and he assumed it was because of his father's blindness. But it was because of the calling God had placed on Ephraim. Both would be blessed but not based on birth order. The northern kingdom of Israel, itself, was named after Ephraim (Ezek 37:15-28). God never has to follow human rules when blessing his people. The crossing of the arms is often the maneuver God uses to bless us. God never selects on the basis of human standards: our looks, resources, connections, none of these things determine God's favor.

3. ***Jacob gives Joseph a portion more than his brothers*** **(**Gen 48:21-22): To further the point, Jacob reemphasizes that he had given Joseph a greater portion than his brothers. This was based on God's design and would be expressed through Ephraim and Manasseh.