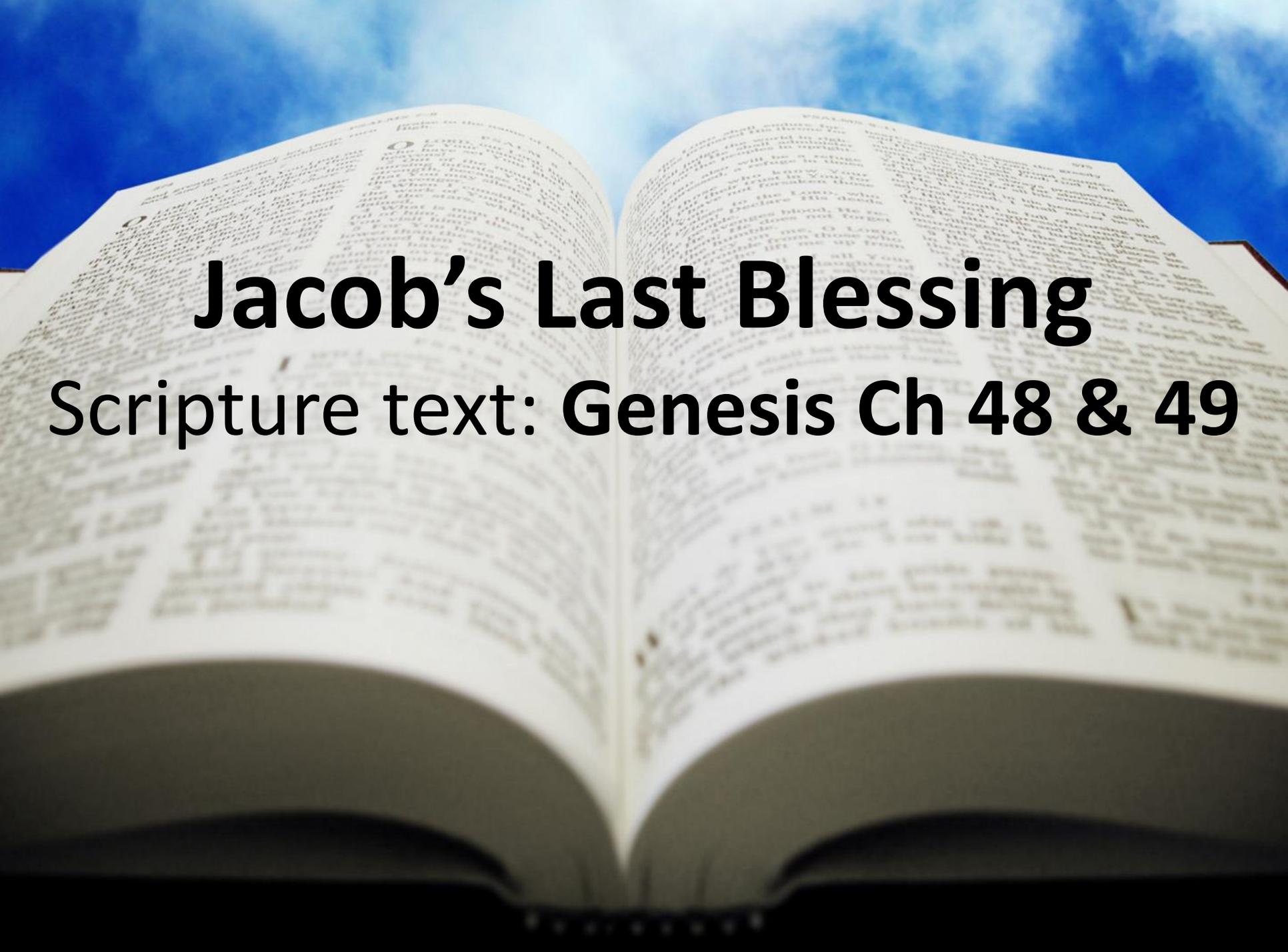


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is out of focus. The background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

Jacob's Last Blessing

Scripture text: Genesis Ch 48 & 49

Out of Jacob's long career, the writer of the Book of Hebrews selected this blessing of Joseph's sons by the patriarch **as his great act of faith (Heb. 11:21)**. It was his reaching out for the continuation of God's promise in the face of death.

Ironically this is the very thing he had once accomplished by deception (Gen. 27). Once more the blessing would be given to the younger, but this time there was not scheming or bitterness. It was an act of faith.

Genesis 27:21-25 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, **to know whether you are really my son Esau or not.**" So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, **"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."** And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. He said, **"Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am."** Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

Jacob spent the last 17 of his 147 years with Joseph in Egypt, so he had his favorite son the first 17 years of Joseph's life and then the last 17 years of his own life. Knowing that he was to die, the aged patriarch **called Joseph** to his bed (Genesis 47:31) that **he might bless his two sons.**

Hebrews 11:21 By faith Jacob, when dying, **blessed each of the sons of Joseph**, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

The two boys were at least in their early 20s (see 41:50 and 47:28). Jacob claimed the boys as his own, comparing them in status with his firstborn, Reuben and Simeon. (We will see in 49:5–7 that Simeon and Levi would disappear as separate tribes, so that Ephraim and Manasseh would take their places.)

Genesis 41:50-52 Before the year of famine came, **two sons were born to Joseph**. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn **Manasseh**. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." The name of the second he called **Ephraim**, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Genesis 47:27-28 Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. And **Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years.** So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.

So **Ephraim and Manasseh** are not little children, they are young adults. They were little boys when Jacob came to Egypt, now 17 years later as Jacob was about to die, they are young adults, in their late teens early 20's.

Genesis 48:3-6 And 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 company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.' And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; **Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine**, as Reuben and Simeon are. And **the children that you fathered after them shall be yours**. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

Jacob gave the birthright to Joseph by elevating Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons (41:51–52), **to the rank of firstborn sons**, thus giving a **double portion to Joseph**. They thus replaced Reuben and Simeon, Jacob's first two sons, born to Leah.

1 Chronicles 5:1-2 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, **but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel**, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son; though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, **yet the birthright belonged to Joseph**),

The recognition of Joseph's sons would have an effect on the apportioning of the land of promise years later in the days of Joshua (Josh. 16–17). Jacob's elevation of the sons of Joseph was prompted by his recollection of **Rachel, his favorite wife, who died in the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 35:16–20).**

Genesis 35:18-20 And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father **called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem),** and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day.

When Joseph presented his two sons to the aged patriarch, **the blessing was pronounced.** Like Isaac, Jacob gave this blessing when his eyesight was failing. **But in the blessing Israel crossed his hands so that his right hand was on Ephraim's head and his left on Manasseh's ... even though Manasseh, the firstborn, would normally have been blessed with the right hand.** This was Jacob's decision in spite of Joseph's direction.

Joseph, like so many others, **expected God to work in a certain way**, but found that He is often pleased to work differently and sometimes even unconventionally. But faith recognizes that God's ways are not man's ways. **It took Jacob a lifetime of discipline to learn that fact**. But he learned it, and now he blessed the younger over the elder. For four consecutive generations this re-versed pattern was followed: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and Ephraim over Manasseh.

Genesis 48:15-17 And 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 long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.**" When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

Genesis 48:18-20 And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." But **his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations."** So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

In his blessing on Joseph, **Jacob used a threefold invocation of God** (v. 15): (a) the God who was in covenant with his fathers Abraham and Isaac (a fact that steadied Jacob's faith many times, Gen. 28:13; 31:5, 42; 32:9; 46:3), (b) the One who had been his Shepherd (cf. 49:24; Ex. 6:6; Ps. 23:1; Isa 59:20) all the way, and (c) the Angel (cf. comments on Gen. 16:7) who delivered him from all harm. The Hebrew word *gā'al*, translated "delivered," **expressed the protection and reclamation Jacob experienced from trouble**. With these remarkable descriptions of God, Jacob prayed for God's gracious blessing on the boys. Here one catches a glimpse of Jacob's faith.

(a) the God who was in covenant with his fathers Abraham and Isaac (a fact that steadied Jacob's faith many times: **Gen 28:13-15** And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "**I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac.** The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 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 promised you."

Genesis 31:4-7 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. **But the God of my father has been with me.** You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But **God did not permit him to harm me.**

Genesis 32:9 And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,'

Genesis 46:1-4 So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and **offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.** And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "**I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.**"

(b) the One who had been his Shepherd

Exodus 6:6-8 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"

Psalm 23 A Psalm of David. **The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.** He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, **for you are with me**; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Isaiah 59:18-21 According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. **So they shall fear the name of the LORD** from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives. "And **a Redeemer will come to Zion**, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD. "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore."

Genesis 48:21-22 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers. Moreover, **I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.**"

John 4:5-6 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near **the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there;** so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A fundamental principle in **God's economy** is that **the lives and natures of the patriarchs affected their descendants**. God works out the manifold destinies of His people **in accordance with their moral distinctions**. Genesis 49 gives a glimpse into such a program of God. This chapter includes the last of the several great sayings of destiny in Genesis— **blessings, cursings, judgments, and promises** . Jacob, in faith and as God's covenantal instrument, looked forward to the conquest and settlement of Israel in the land of Canaan, and then beyond to a more glorious age.

God gave His people this prophecy to bear them through the dismal barrenness of their experiences and to show them that He planned all the future. For Jacob's family, the future lay beyond the bondage of Egypt in the land of promise. But the enjoyment of the blessings of that hope would depend on the participants' faithfulness. So from the solemnity of his deathbed **Jacob evaluated his sons one by one**, and carried his evaluation forward to the future tribes.

Verses 1–2. In calling his sons to his bedside, Jacob said he would tell them what would become of them in the days ahead. His words, then, were a deliberately chosen prophetic oracle.

Verses 3–4. Jacob heaped praise upon Reuben, his firstborn, which collapsed when he announced that Reuben had defiled his father’s couch, clearly a reference to Reuben’s adultery with Jacob’s concubine Bilhah (35:22). Reuben was entitled to leadership and a double inheritance (1 Chron. 5:1–2), but because he had the ungoverned impulse of boiling water (turbulent as the waters) he would fail in leadership. In the time of the Judges (Jud. 5:15–16), the tribe of Reuben was characterized by irresolution.