



17- Heal a Family / Build a Nation

02/14/2010 - Jim Johnson – Gen. 47:27-48:19

Change is difficult. It doesn't come easily - as we will see in Gen. 47:27-48:19

Genesis 47:27-31

Jacob, was about 130 years old when he came to Egypt, and now was 147. But the last 17 years of his life were the richest and best in terms of family. God had healed the brokenness and they had been enjoying family bliss for the past 17 years. (27-28) As he was preparing for his death he summoned Joseph to his side and asked him to make sure that he would be buried in the land of promise along side his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac in the cave of Machpelah. (29-31)

It seems odd that Joseph was the only family representative present. Though he had the unique power to grant the request (as viceroy of Egypt,) it seems that the rest of the family should have been included in the discussion. Evidently years of family bliss were being tarnished by an old man with an old problem.

Jacob _____ one son over the others.

Genesis 48:1-6

Jacob is very close to death now, so Joseph made the trip from the capital city up to Goshen with his 2 oldest sons Manasseh and Ephraim. He was thinking ahead to the time when his family will return to Canaan land and become the great nation that God promised. (1-4) Jacob decided that he would adopt his grandsons and legally make them his sons thereby displacing Reuben and Simeon as the first and second born, bumping them to the third and fourth place positions. This would have been a great loss to Reuben and Simeon, but every brother would also have been affected. The Canaan real estate would now need to be divided 13 ways instead of 12.

Jacob _____ two grandsons at the expense of his sons.

Jacob also elevated these 2 grandsons over all his other grandchildren. He didn't do anything special for Reuben's kids, or Judah's kids – just Joseph's. He even played favorites with Joseph's grandkids. Their inheritance will not come from Jacob, or Joseph, but out of whatever went to Manasseh and Ephraim. (6)

Gen 46	Gen. 48
Asher	Asher
Benjamin	Benjamin
Dan	Dan
	Ephraim
Gad	Gad
Issachar	Issachar
Joseph	Joseph
Judah	Judah
Levi	Levi
	Manasseh
Naphtali	Naphtali
Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon
Zebulun	Zebulun

Genesis 48:7-13

Jacob brought his 2 grandsons near and began to pronounce his blessing upon them. (7-11) According to the custom, he placed his hands upon them. The right hand - the hand of honor would be placed upon the first born Manasseh and the left on Ephraim. At the last moment he crossed his arms and placed his right hand on Ephraim and the left on Manasseh. (12-14) He asked God to bless his grandsons as He had blessed him and that their families would grow large in number. (15-16) Joseph had deliberately positioned Manasseh at Jacob's right hand to receive the blessing of the firstborn - but Jacob crossed his arms and gave it to Ephraim instead. It angered Joseph. He saw that his father was playing favorites again.

Jacob _____ one of those two grandsons over the other.

Rather than a blessing, Joseph feared that dad was cursing his family with the same old family curse. Joseph was angry, but Jacob defended his decision.

ANALYSIS

Ephraim came out on top. He and his brother had been adopted by Jacob as his sons – made heads of their tribes and given a full inheritance in the Promised Land. And then Manasseh was demoted as firstborn and the privilege given to Ephraim. Was this according to the will of God? Did God instruct Jacob to do this – or did he do it just because he could? Was it wise to give Ephraim such prominence among the tribes of Jacob?

If we were to look ahead to Ephraim’s future we would find that Ephraim and his descendents took their place as one of the twelve land-holding tribes of Israel. Once they had settled in the land they settled in the hill country region north of Jerusalem. When there was conflict between the tribes, Ephraim was often at the heart of it. When Reheboam became king, Jeroboam, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, led a massive rebellion. He severely split the nation. It was Ephraim and 9 other northern tribes against the 2 tribes of Judah & Benjamin in the south. The tribe of Ephraim was so prominent in the region and so central to the rebellion that the northern confederacy was often called by the name Ephraim. One of the first most foolish things they did was to set up a rival worship in up in Ephraim’s territory. From there Ephraim and all the ten northern tribes quickly slipped into gross immorality and idolatry. God eventually brought judgment on that northern confederation. They disappeared and never existed again leaving only 2 tribes intact.

Gen 46	Gen. 48	Rev. 7	Eze. 48
Asher	Asher	Asher	Asher
Benjamin	Benjamin	Benjamin	Benjamin
Dan	Dan	Dan	Dan
	Ephraim	Ephraim	Ephraim
Gad	Gad	Gad	Gad
Issachar	Issachar	Issachar	Issachar
Joseph	Joseph	Joseph	Joseph
Judah	Judah	Judah	Judah
Levi	Levi	Levi	Levi
	Manasseh	Manasseh	Manasseh
Naphtali	Naphtali	Naphtali	Naphtali
Reuben	Reuben	Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon	Simeon	Simeon
Zebulun	Zebulun	Zebulun	Zebulun

God had worked so hard in Jacob’s day to unify the brothers, so that they would become a great nation. But 900 years later, the family would be ripped apart and shredded, by the rebellious and degenerate tribe of Ephraim. Perhaps this is why Ephraim was omitted from the list of tribes in Rev. 7:5 and omitted from the list of tribes whose names will be inscribed over the gates of the new Jerusalem (Ezek. 48:30-35)

Application

At the end of his life—we look at him and ask – “Did the man really learn anything?”

Here he is once again, favoring Joseph over the others, and Joseph’s children over the other grandkids, and Ephraim over Manasseh. It was the same, silly, foolish Jacob.

The saddest person - is the one who refuses to _____.

Many of us also need to change, but we have not. Why haven’t we changed? Is it because we don’t believe it’s possible? (Mt. 19:26) Is it because we are afraid of change? (Ps. 23:4) Are we unchanged because we are concerned about failing? (Phil 4:13) Is it because we don’t know how to change? (2 Tim. 3:16-17) Is it because we don’t believe that we have the power to change? (2 Peter 1:3) Or are we unchanged because we just don’t want to change.

If we do not change the people around us will. Why won’t you change? Think about that, and when you come up with an answer, then get on your knees, and say to the Lord. “I am ready to change, help me.”

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Why do you think Jacob was so resistant to change?
2. What areas in your life have you seen God bring change?
3. What can you learn from that experience that will help you where you still need to change?