

Genesis Chapters 48-49a Summary - John Karmelich

Most of us have thought at some point in our life about what we would like to say to our family on our deathbed! I realize many of us die unexpectedly, and how we end our lives won't be in a way we'd like! Still if we could summon our loved ones for that moment, I suspect most of us would want that! What would you like to say then? In effect, the apostle Paul got to do that in "2nd Timothy" as he was going to be killed soon and Timothy was as close as he had to a son! Meanwhile back to Genesis: Realize in this book a main character was a man named Jacob. He was the father of Joseph & his eleven brothers. Keep in mind Genesis began with the birth of the world and the birth of the nation of Israel. It's logical Genesis ends with Jacob (the father of the 12 tribes) on his deathbed saying in effect here's what all of you need to know about the future! Yes, Jacob got to live to 147 which is far more than any of us will!

I realize most of us write "a will" at some point in life, but that's different from telling those we love at our deathbeds what really matters in life! If I had such a moment, I'd discuss the importance of putting God first in one's life, making time daily to honor Him, plus praying for guidance, and making the best decisions one can. As far as all I accomplished it's something for a funeral. First and foremost, I'd pass on the way to handle life is putting God first, as it is the key way for Christians to live and well as die! In short, the "God speech" is essential!

Believe it or not, that ties really well to this lesson. The text here in effect a series of messages given to Jacob's 13 children (which includes two grandsons)! These messages are "cryptic" in that they tie well to the future of Israel once they became a nation over a hundred years after this was written! OK, good for them. How does any of this affect me? As we know all scripture's inspirational for learning! (See 2nd Timothy 3:16.) I'm sure you all believe that, or you wouldn't be reading this far!

Keep in mind Jacob is 147 at this point. People lived much longer as most likely the ozone layer went a decrease from the flood. I mention this because his children coming to visit him were well over 100 at that time! Just saying don't picture grandad with little kids bouncing on his knees!

Anyway Chapter 48 focuses on Jacob (the 147-year-old) with his son Joseph who hasn't left Egypt since he was taken captive as a teenager. There was an unwritten law (then) that the oldest son gets double of what the other siblings get in exchange for inheritance distribution. Chapter 48 is Jacob with Joseph. It is necessary to point out Joseph isn't the oldest son, but since he rescued the family from starvation, it's a most likely reason Jacob gave him the "double blessing". Jacob does this by saying Joseph's two sons are now in effect equal with Jacob's 11 other sons. That's why when the 12 tribes of Israel are listed in a way that the tribe of Levi had to be excused as they became the priests. Think of listing the 12 tribes with 13 possible tribes to choose from.

Jacob at this point in his life is going blind. The text says he sat up, which is important in that he wants to put one arm on one of Joseph's sons and one on the other. Jacob did it that way, so the youngest got favored over the oldest. Joseph tries to fix it and Jacob says in effect, "I know what I'm doing!" Keep in mind God is ordaining all of this as it affects the tribes of Israel as they live in the Promised Land. I can just hear some of you saying, "Why should I care about this? Israelites today don't know their tribe as that information was lost in 70AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple!" As I like to point out, if I can't trust God's unconditional promises to Israel (nation), how could I ever trust His unconditional promises to us Christians through Jesus! Anyway, in Chapter 48 the younger son Ephraim gets a much

better blessing (as being dominant). They became the largest tribe in the Northern Kingdom when they split in two after King Solomon about 700 years after this prediction. Just saying God's word is true!

Then in the first half of Chapter 49 Jacob calls all the other sons over for a visit. Remember Jacob was on his deathbed, so the sons all paid their father one final visit. The blessing by son, (i.e., by tribe) isn't given in birth order. Maybe each son was brought to his father and Jacob said, "who's next?" We don't know why the order is the way it is, so that is that! The interesting thing is Jacob brought up sins that a few of them did decades ago. That does not mean God's going to make us suffer for our mistakes when we are saved. Jacob brought them up partially to explain (in my opinion), why they were not given the double blessing that Joseph had. I can list the particular sins, but you get the idea. When we get to the tribes of Levi and Simon, Jacob says they'll be scattered in Israel. The tribe of Levi became the priests. That is a sign of God's grace. Simon never lived in their territory. My simple point is the things Jacob stated came true over 400 years after these predictions were made and many years after Moses wrote it.

OK John, what I want to say to my children will probably go in their ear and out the other! That's why it's important to emphasize what Jacob did, how God has guided him all of his life. It is a reminder for our children when life gets hard, God is still there to guide us. That is the key thing to pass on! Now I need to talk about the most important part of Chapter 49: Jacob gave the most text talking about Judah! He is the one who the Messiah comes through! Without getting into specifics, those verses state things that apply not only to King David (about 600 year later), but Jesus Himself comes through that tribe!

A quick fun side story: One of the things the Jewish rabbis taught based on that speech to Judah is that the Messiah will come before the Jewish people lose the right to inflict capital punishment. Rome took over Israel and took away that right. That's one reason the attempts to stone Jesus in the Gospel as well and Stephen in Acts was an illegal act as far as the Romans were concerned. I bring this up because the Jewish historian Josephus, who lived around the time of Jesus (but was not a Christian) wrote how the Jewish rabbis then said God failed to keep His Word to bring the Messiah before the Jewish people lost the right to capital punishment. Little did they know Jesus was alive at that time!

Anyway, each of Jacob's sons are listed with "cryptic" messages that mostly dealt with where each son (remember each son will become a tribe) will end up in Israel literally 400-500 years after this! All I'm getting it as the reason these predictions are in the bible is to show God spoke through bible people that literally showed their future! Remember Moses wrote all this down about 400 years later. Don't know if it was passed down from generation to generation or God dictated it to Moses. Either way, it's accurate information that affected Israel's literal history for many hundreds of years.

That leads me back to my favorite why should we care speech! Yes, we know the Bible is the Word of God. That's not the issue. Most of us believe it is accurate history, that's not the issue for us! What the issue is for us today over and above that is the importance of passing on our values to others. Think of all the ways Jacob suffered in his lifetime (much of Genesis!). Despite that God guided his life to make a difference for God and preserved Him. The same applies for us. It doesn't mean we'll live to 147! It means that the purpose of life is to use it to glorify God. It's why we were created in the first place. Of course, not all of us will get the opportunity for a death-bed sermon! That's why it's essential to use our lives as a witness for Jesus. It's why we as Christians were created. Will we mess up? Of course. We are to confess our sins and God literally will never remind us of them again! We're not going to be like Jacob who brings up "100 year ago" issues to explain why certain sons don't get special birth rights. It was done to explain why Joseph was picked over them! Anyway, that's ancient history. What we must remember from reading all of this is despite Jacob's many mistakes he gave instructions to be buried in

Israel (not that it's a salvation requirement), but just to show his association with God! If we get that, I am positive God can and will use our lives for His glory!

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John