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## Sowing the Word

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“But as for you, you meant evil against me

but God meant it for good,

in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

Genesis 50:20



**Genesis 48-50**

**June 10th, 2009**

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So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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## Helpful Study Resource:

*Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter

## Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout  
this booklet is:

**With the Word Bible Commentary**

**by Warren W. Wiersbe.**

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# Outline

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## Detailed Outline For This Week

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    - iii. Death and burial of Jacob in Canaan (49:29–50:14)
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# Notes for Booklet

## Chapter 48 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

This chapter marks Jacob's great mark of faith.

The events of this chapter are the ones that the Holy Spirit highlights in Hebrews 11 as an act of faith.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21)

There is something about this act of faith in Jacob that surpassed what he had known and done before. I challenge you to consider Jacob's faith in this chapter!

We did a whole Sunday morning message on this back on November 20, 2008. For more details you might want to go on our website and take a listen to this message.

### **48:1–22 The right hand on the wrong head?**

As Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, he placed his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger, instead of on Manasseh and said that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh.

Culturally and traditionally, the elder son, the firstborn was to receive all of the benefits and assume the greater position. Yet, spiritually it was right – both by God's decree but also as a consistent spiritual picture that God holds out to us through the Bible of blessing the second born (second birth, new birth) in twins.

- Cain was the firstborn, but Abel was blessed.
- Ishmael was the firstborn, but it was Isaac who was blessed.
- Esau was the firstborn, but it was Jacob who was blessed.
- Reuben was the firstborn, but it was Joseph who was blessed.
- Aaron was the firstborn, but it was Moses who was blessed.

Israel's history would bear out both prophecies and 450 years later, Moses agreed (Deuteronomy 33:17) (see 2 Chronicles 25:7, where the name Ephraim stands for all of Israel's 10 northern tribes).

Jacob's adoption of Joseph's sons (48:5; 1 Chronicles 5:1) gave them equal status with Jacob's other sons. Joseph's descendants through them would become two separate tribes bearing their names, confirming once again Joseph's dreams of being elevated above his brothers (37:1–11).

## Chapter 49 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

### 49:1–33 A father foretells his family's future.

Jacob then gathered his own sons around him and prophesied concerning their descendants. From the tribe of Judah, he said, would come the Messiah himself. Jacob's predictions reflected the way each son had lived, suggesting that a person's character and actions can affect his children and grandchildren. Moses blessed the 12 tribes in similar fashion (Deuteronomy 33).

### Genesis 49:10

The name "Shiloh" in verse 10 has given rise to many interpretations and speculations, but the most reasonable is that it refers to the Messiah (Numbers 24:17). The phrase could be translated "until he comes whose right it is [the scepter, i.e., the rule]," because the word Shiloh means "whose it is." The ancient rabbinical scholars took Shiloh to be a name of the promised Messiah, who alone had the right to claim rule over God's people Israel.

According to historian Josephus, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come" was the phrase that caused the rabbis to run through the streets of Jerusalem screaming in anguish in the year a.d. 12.

You see, it was in that year that the Romans—who were occupying the land of Israel—withdrew the ability of the Sanhedrin to mete out capital punishment. Having taught that the mark of a nation's sovereignty resided in its ability to execute capital punishment, when this power was taken from them, the Jews thought the scepter had indeed departed from Judah—that God had broken His promise to them. After all, Shiloh, Messiah, had not yet come.

Oh, but He had. For right in their midst sat Shiloh, Messiah, Jesus as a twelve-year-old boy, astounding the teachers and rabbis with His wisdom (Luke 2:46).

### From Warren Wiersbe:

Genesis 49 is usually titled "Jacob Blesses His Sons," but Jacob used the word "bless" only with reference to Joseph (vv. 25–26). Three times in verse 28 we're told that Jacob's words were "a blessing" upon the sons, and in a prophetic sense, they certainly were; for Jacob announced what the Lord had in store for them in the future.<sup>1</sup> But Jacob's "blessing" was much more than that.

For one thing, Jacob's words were a revelation of human character and conduct as well as of divine purposes. Three of the sons learned that their past conduct had cost them their future inheritance (vv. 3–7), for we always reap what we sow. But something else was true: Jacob's prophetic words must have given great encouragement to his descendants during their difficult time of suffering in Egypt, as well as during their unhappy years wandering in the wilderness. Jacob assured each tribe of a future place in the Promised Land, and that meant a great deal to them.

But even more, you find in Jacob's "last witness and testimony" a beautiful revelation of the gracious Lord who had cared for His servant for so many years. There's also a revelation of the Messiah, who had been promised to Jacob's people. In these words of Jacob, you meet Shiloh (v. 10), Salvation (Yeshua, v. 18), the Mighty One, the Shepherd, and the Stone (v. 24), and the Almighty (v. 25), all of which point to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As he addressed them, Jacob followed the birth order of the sons, beginning with Leah's six sons<sup>2</sup> and closing with Rachel's two sons, Joseph and Benjamin.

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## Names of God

Jacob used three more special names of the Lord: the Mighty [One] of Jacob, the Shepherd, and the Stone [Rock].

The Mighty One of Jacob. God deigns to be called "the God of Jacob," and as "the mighty God," He cared for Jacob's needs, helping him with his difficult work (31:36–42), and delivering him from danger (v. 24).

The Shepherd. Jacob had already referred to the Lord as "the God who shepherded me [looked after me]" (48:15). Since Jacob himself was a shepherd, he knew what was involved in caring for sheep. The concept of God as the Shepherd is found often in Scripture (Psalm 23:1ff, 80:1; 100:3; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34) and culminates in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (John 10).

The Stone. The Stone [Rock] is another familiar image of the God of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 31; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:32) and Isaiah points to Christ (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:7). When you think of a stone, you think of strength, stability, and security, and God provided all of that and more to Jacob during his difficult earthly pilgrimage.

## **The order of the sons names**

The names of the sons are not given in birth order (29:32–30:24; 35:18), nor in the pattern of wife, then handmaid ( 46:8–25).

The order is as per the mother: 1) the 6 sons of Leah; 2) one son of Bilhah; 3) two sons of Zilpah; 4) one son of Bilhah; and 5) the two sons of Rachel. Other than the reversal of Leah's fifth and sixth sons, the others remain in chronological order in relation to their mothers.

The question for the Bible student is why? No other pattern is discernible. It may have been nothing more than a mnemonic device, or just how Jacob personally had come to recall them to mind.

Some see something far more. In 49:1 it says that this is a description of what will take place in the last days. There is a probably prophetic picture in the layout of this chapter that shows us things about Israel. I believe this is probably there and have done a little study on it, but am sure there is more here.

## **Chapter 50 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim**

### **This chapter marks Joseph's great faith**

As the Holy Spirit recorded acts of faith in Hebrews 11, acts that are worthy of us to notice, follow and grow from, He chose this one in the life of Joseph. Joseph's life is so incredible, yet the Spirit of God specifically wants us to notice this.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. (Hebrews 11:22)

What things in this account hold out for you and I an example of how we should face death by faith, as Joseph did?

We did a whole Sunday morning message on this back on December 7, 2008. For more details you might want to go on our website and take a listen to this message.

### **Real forgiveness**

Following Jacob's death, the brothers begin to feel guilty again for their past sin. They become concerned that Joseph would enact vengeance on them. They concoct a crazy scheme of seeking to maintain the forgiveness they have enjoyed already. Joseph's reply to this is wonderful and amazing.

Do not be afraid – he does not want them to live in fear. Fear is an incredibly powerful tool in the hands of the enemy. Joseph wants to relieve them of this fear.

for am I in the place of God? – Joseph recognizes that dealing with other people's sins is not his responsibility, but God's. Oh, that we all realized this.

But as for you, you meant evil against me – Joseph is not ignorant of how unkind and harmful their intentions were. It is helpful to note that he is not oblivious to this.

but God meant it for good – Joseph sees the sovereign hand of God behind the scenes working His good and perfect will. Seeing God's sovereignty will greatly help in being able to forgive others. Further, knowing God is good and working good in and through all things (Romans 8:28) can give us great confidence.

Now therefore, do not be afraid: I will provide for you and your little ones. - not only did Joseph forgive, he blessed them and worked good for them.

And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. The idea in this verse is that although Joseph's words have been clear, he still had to keep reminding them of the same things. I cannot help but think of how God has to deal with us, assuring us that He really does forgive us.

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Genesis 48-49

What should believers do for their family before God takes them in death? Just what Jacob did.

***He praised God for the past.*** He told his family what God had done for him and how God had blessed him. God had redeemed him and shepherded him all his life (48:15–16). Jacob had been in some hard places, but the “Stone of Israel” had been his refuge and defense (49:24). At the end of life, may we be able to say, “Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 34:11).

***He gave a blessing while he could.*** Reuben’s sin cost him the blessing of the firstborn, which went to Joseph’s sons. (See Gen. 35:22; 1 Chron. 5:1–2.) Again, God changed the birth order as Jacob put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. Joseph was disturbed by the move, but Jacob was right. We must never try to tell God how to bless other people. Note that Jacob crossed his arms. Is this perhaps a picture of the cross that sets aside the first birth and gives us a second birth?

***He warned about the future.*** Chapter 49 is not a father’s blessing on his sons. Rather, it is a prophecy of what the sons could expect in the future because of their individual characters and the decisions they had made. Reuben was the lustful prodigal son, but Levi and Simeon were angry elder brothers. Judah would be the royal tribe, for the Messiah (Shiloh, “the peace-bringer”) would come from Judah. Joseph was the vine that went over the wall separating Jews and Gentiles. He was shot at by his brethren, which often happens to those who are especially blessed of God. But the Lord was with him, strengthened him, and extended his boundaries of blessing (v. 26). Joseph suffered, and his sons were blessed by God. Reuben sinned, and his sons lost the blessing of God.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 48:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Genesis 50

Three burials are mentioned in this final chapter of Genesis, and each is significant.

***Burying a beloved father.*** It is instructive to contrast the simple Jewish funerals with the elaborate burial customs of the Egyptians. There is certainly nothing wrong with caring for the body and expressing grief, so long as we keep things in perspective. Jacob died in faith and was a pilgrim to the very end (Heb. 11:21). He started with his staff and ended with his staff (32:10; 1 Tim. 6:6).

***Burying the past.*** Joseph's brothers did not really believe that Joseph had forgiven them, even though they had heard his words, seen his tears, felt his kisses, and received his gifts (45:1–15). Like the prodigal son, they offered to work their way into his favor (Luke 15:19). Their attitude grieved Joseph, who had endured so much for them, just as we grieve our Lord when we doubt His forgiveness and love (Rom. 8:31–39).

***Burying a devoted brother.*** Like his father, Joseph knew what he believed and where he belonged. If we consider all the difficulties he had experienced in life, it is remarkable that Joseph had any faith at all. He knew God's promise to Abraham that the nation would be delivered from Egypt (15:12–16), and he reiterated that promise to his family. Joseph had brought them to Egypt and cared for them in Egypt. His coffin reminded them that God would bring them out of Egypt. What an encouragement that was during the dark days of their bondage. Our encouragement today is not a coffin but an empty tomb (1 Pet. 1:3ff.)

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 50:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.





