Israel's Destiny

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[0:00] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we do believe that this is your word, not merely the words of men.

And because of that, Father, we come to your word not with the attitude of subjecting it to our own judgments and preconceptions, but we come to it in humility, wanting to subject ourselves to it, to conform our lives to it, to be defined by it, by your truth.
So we ask, speak to us, address us, challenge us, transform us through the preaching of your word this morning. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.
Amen. So we live in a world saturated with advertisements, right? And everywhere we turn, we find marketing.
And people nowadays have become so adept at this, nowadays they market stuff that don't even exist yet, right? And so, I mean, we saw an example of this. They did a really good job of this last, or two years ago, I guess now, leading up to the release of Star Wars Episode VII.
[1:22] I don't know if you guys remember watching that movie. The promotion was crazy. Even the whole year before the movie even came out, the movie was probably not even done in production, the trailer came out, which basically revealed nothing of the plot at all, just a few cryptic pictures.

And then people went crazy, right? It's just about it. I mean, just the trailer. And then another six months later, they released a longer trailer that has slightly more information, but still leaves a lot to the imagination. And then leading up to all that time, they've been selling merchandise and promoting this.
So that by the time the movie came out, the anticipation was just at a fever pitch. I don't know if you guys remember that. I mean, it just, it broke all kinds of, you know, box office records. It grossed $529 million in its opening weekend, right?
People bought tickets months ahead of time. People bought and made costumes so they can wear it, right, on the night of the opening night of the movie, right? People in our church, some of them have lightsabers and stormtrooper helmets, right?
So it's, the anticipation was unbelievable. And it's kind of, but as we get to the closing chapters of Genesis today, this is the last sermon in Genesis, we're at the end of the book, but we find that the story actually doesn't end here.
[2:36] It was just a teaser trailer. It's just, it's not the end. God had made promises to Abraham of staggering proportions, of national and international importance, but at the end of Joseph's life, we find that they still have not yet been fully fulfilled.

We've seen the first fruits of that fulfillment. We get a taste of it, and that's supposed to whet our appetites and then build our anticipation for the ultimate fulfillment that is still ahead.
And as Christians, we have the fulfillment of God's promises to look forward to that far exceeds whatever the next big thing is that this world has to offer in grandeur, in glory, in beauty, and in significance.
And that means we should, as Christians, be captivated by, our hearts should be captivated by that reality, our minds should be preoccupied by that. And in fact, that anticipation, that hope we have in Christ and the fulfillment of God's promises should govern our lives and constrain our lives.
And that's really the main point of this passage. Those who possess the first fruits of God's promise should hope in, look forward to, eagerly anticipate the fulfillment of His promise.
[3:51] Those who possess the first fruits of God's promise should hope in the fulfillment of that promise. So we're going to talk in first part about the first fruits of the promise, chapters 48 and 49. And then we're going to talk about the fulfillment of the promise in chapter 50.

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And chapter 48, verse 1, begins this way. After this, Joseph was told, Behold, your father is ill. Now the word ill is in this context as it does in other parts of the Old Testament, 1 Kings 14 and 1, for example.
It refers to terminal illness, right? And so Joseph anticipates his father's impending death. And so he's bringing his sons with him so that they can receive his blessing.
Now Jacob, when he sees Joseph, kind of sends his strength. It says, and he sits up, and he says in verses 3 to 4, 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 since Jacob explicitly mentions that this is a promise that God made to him at Luz, we would expect these verses to be the same as the actual promises that God gave to him in Genesis 35, which is when God appears to him at Luz.
[5:08] So that's Genesis 35, 11 to 12. But in reality, these are actually not exactly the promises that God gave to him at Luz. It's actually kind of a combination, a pastiche of all the promises that God had given to all the patriarchs before him.

So you see in verses 3 to 4, it says, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of people. So that's actually a promise that God didn't give to Jacob at Luz, but it was actually a promise that God made to Isaac, his father, in chapter 28, verse 3.
And then the promise of an everlasting possession that God said to Jacob, that was not a promise that God gave explicitly to Jacob, but to Abraham, his grandfather, in chapter 17, verse 8.
So really what Jacob is saying here is that all the blessings that God had given to his forebearers, his forefathers, his patriarchs, he's standing in line of that heritage and saying that they all belong to him because that's what God has promised to his people.
And so after recounting what God had promised him, Jacob then proceeds to adopt his grandsons. So the two grandsons that were born to Joseph.
[6:17] This formal adoption process of grandsons is actually well tested in the ancient Near East. A lot of people did that. And the point of it is that Jacob wants his grandsons to inherit his property and all that he has just like his other sons.

And then consequently, what would happen after that would be the additional sons Joseph has will count as Joseph's offspring. But Manasseh and Ephraim, the first two sons of Joseph, will count as Jacob's sons.
And this is significant because this is what this is what this is the structure really of Israel as a nation because the 12 tribes of Israel come from Jacob. And that means Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, will have an inheritance.
There'll be two other tribes of the 12 tribes of Israel. And that means Joseph is getting a double portion of the blessing which the firstborn son was supposed to get. So he's giving his firstborn blessing not to his actual firstborn but to his firstborn of his favorite wife, Rachel.
So Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh are going to be part of that. And after expressing his desire to adopt them, he kind of seemingly out of the blue mentions his wife, how Rachel died on his way to Canaan.
[7:28] And his rationale seems to be, you know, Joseph, your mother, if she had lived longer, you know, she would have had, she would have born with more sons. You know, but she died prematurely.

And out of compassion for your mother who prayed while she was, after she gave birth to you, may the Lord add to me another son. Now let me adopt your sons as my sons so that they can inherit in your place.
And so that's what Jacob is doing. But there's something curious in what Jacob is doing here already. It's hinting at what's about to transpire. He names Ephraim first instead of mentioning Manasseh first.
Even though Manasseh is the firstborn son of Joseph. And then narrator informs us in verse 10, the eyes of Israel were dim with age so that he could not see. And that explains the curious question he asks in verse 8.
When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, who are these? I mean, you don't know who your grandsons are, right? I mean, so he knows who they are. I mean, he knows the names and he's already said he was the one to bless them, but he can't see very well.

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[8:32] So he wants to confirm that before he blesses him, he knows exactly who they are. So that's what happens. And then Joseph brings them to Jacob to receive his blessing in verse 13. It says, Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand and brought them near him.

Right? And so Joseph is bringing them in this precise configuration to ensure that his eldest son, Manasseh, gets blessed by Jacob's right hand.
And this is because people across cultures and all throughout history have generally considered the right hand side to be the place of honor and blessing.
And sorry, Ray, who's left handed. But the reason for that is quite simple because most people are right handed in the world. An estimated 75 to 95% of the world population are right handed.
And right handed people tend to prefer things on the right side. So right handed preachers look more often toward their right side. Right? Right handed parents when they are petting their kids or kissing them will pet, will show their affection to the kid on their right lap more frequently.
[9:45] When you people pack to move, people will put a box where they're going to put things that they want to keep on the right side and put the things they want to discard on the left side. I mean, this is just things that we do subconsciously. Right?

And there's an article published by the journal Psychological Science called When Left is Right. And then researchers report findings that right and left handers implicitly associate positive ideas like goodness and honesty more strongly with their dominant side of space, the side on which they can act more fluently, and negative ideas more strongly with their non-dominant side.
And so what these researchers found out is that when people have unilateral strokes, so let's say a right handed person has a stroke and can no longer use his right hand, that person, his thinking will also shift with time.
So he starts to associate good things now with the left side instead of the right side. In the same way, when the researchers made it difficult to use the right side, people started to switch their abstract thinking as well to try to associate good things with their fluent side.
So it's just kind of what's happened, this has been happening throughout history, across cultures, and that's Jacob because generally most people are right handed. These patriarchs in the same way associated good things with the right side and they wanted, so the son that they wanted to bless more, they wanted to make sure they were on the right side.
[11:02] So that's what Joseph is trying to do. But even though Joseph is so careful to present his sons in the right place, look at what happens next in verse 14. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

So this is exactly what Joseph wanted to prevent. So when Jacob is in the middle of his blessing, Joseph is upset enough that he interrupts him and tries physically to move his arms away and put him in the right place.
Verses 17 to 18, it says, 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.
And Joseph said to his father, Not this way, my father, since this one is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head. And displeased the word. It suggests great anger.
Sometimes throughout Scripture, displeasure leads to death. I mean, to people being killed. So it's a great displeasure that he's feeling, but he's restraining himself knowing that this is his father.
[12:14] But even though it's a little bit betrayed by his actions when he takes his father's hand forcibly and tries to move it, he's thinking to himself, I mean, this blind old man is making this mistake and he wants to correct it.

But Jacob insists in verse 19, 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 me and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.
So Jacob knew exactly what he was doing. And just as he, who was the younger son, deceived his father and stole the firstborn's right of his older brother Esau, now he is intentionally blessing Joseph's younger son, Ephraim, with the greater blessing.
And there are actually several parallels between this scene and the scene where Jacob steals Isaac's blessing. So first, both patriarchs were blind, right? So Isaac was blind.

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Now here, Jacob is blind. And then, it's related to that is they blessed the younger son. And then once the younger son is blessed, the older son protests saying, no, this should not be so.
[13:22] And then, the preference for the younger is reaffirmed, that blessing cannot be reversed. So this is a very, closely parallel to his earlier story when Jacob steals his brother Esau's blessing.

And the blessing of the younger son fits a pattern throughout the book of Genesis, right? So Abel, the younger, was favored over Cain in chapter 4, right? Perez was preferred over Zerah in chapter 38.
And of course, most famously in chapter 27, Jacob was preferred over Esau. And this rubs against, directly against, the ancient Near Eastern system of primogeniture, which is to pass on the inheritance and the right of succession to the eldest son.
The Bible intentionally subverts that. God intentionally subverts that well-attested practice. And there's a very specific theological reason God does this. And Paul explains this in Romans 9, 10 to 16.
He says, When Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born, had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls, she was told, the older will serve the younger.
[14:34] As it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means, for he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

So then it depends not on human exertion or will, but on God who has mercy. Right? The reason why God does this in choosing, in going against the engineers in the custom of blessing the firstborn and choosing for himself sovereignly the people whom he will bless, God's showing that his choice, his grace, being part of his people, that depends not on human will or exertion, but on God's sovereign will.
And this reality of salvation, that God's, salvation is of God's sovereign choice, his sovereign grace, precludes any sense of entitlement and pride, and instead it promotes humility in all God's people's lives.
Because maybe, maybe you think that you're better than most of your peers. Right? Maybe you're a believer or you're not a believer, but you think that you live a pretty good life. Right? You, you, let's say you try to give to charities, you try to obey the law, you try to limit your carbon footprint, and now you think that because you did that, God owes you something.
You know, well, I'm better than these people. Right? I mean, I'm, so if anybody can get to heaven, I mean, surely it should be me. Right? Well, but, but let me tell you this. What, what God's promising to his people is eternal joy, right?
[16:04] Eternal communion with him, right? It's eternal inheritance in heaven, and how can you possibly expect to earn that? We work for the most of our lives to just earn a living wage, and maybe if we're fortunate to eat God of retirement, you have to work your whole life to do just that.

How do you expect to earn God's eternal salvation and communion with him? You can't earn that. It's too costly, and not only is it too costly to earn, we have failed miserably in our own attempts to earn it.
God's chief design and desire for us is that we love him and live for him, and we have all lived at some point in our lives as if God didn't exist, as if we're not accountable to him, as if we're really just living for ourselves, and even when we have supposedly done God's will, we have often done so out of fear of his punishment, or out of pride, out of a desire to lift ourselves up in relation to other people, or out of our own prideful attempt to earn our own ticket to heaven, right?
Not out of love for God, not because we want to live for God. We can't save ourselves, therefore we have to humble ourselves, and that's what this truth about God's sovereign grace teaches us.
And this truth also applies to the Christian. If you have already been saved, it's not because of your own merit. It's because of God's grace.
[17:39] For this reason, we as Christians have nothing to boast about. It precludes pride and entitlement. It promotes humility because we have nothing to boast about. Instead of boasting about ourselves and our own deservingness or worth, we glorify God and His grace in saving us.

And let me give you a couple diagnostics to test to see whether this is a truth that you really grasp or not, because a lot of times people, Christians know this in their heads but haven't truly grasped it

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in their hearts. And there are two telltale signs that you haven't really grasped this in your sight because Christians who haven't grasped this because this truth promotes humility tend to be prideful and the way that exposes itself is legalism in one sense.
That's the first sign. Instead of emphasizing God's grace, we emphasize our obedience. And that means these people, these Christians take obedience really, really seriously and then when they fail they take it really, really, really hard.
And often they will design for themselves kind of self-inflicted punishment or penance to make up for the wrongdoing that they have done. And these people often have guilt that lingers and that's a sign of this legalism of not fully grasping this truth.
A second telltale sign is that this Christian is prone to insecurity and envy because they connect God's grace with their own deservingness. When life gets hard and there's no obvious sign of God's blessing on their lives they start to get really insecure.
[19:11] Maybe I did something wrong. Maybe God doesn't actually love me. Maybe God's grace is not actually my life. And then when they see other people prospering and seeming to be blessed by God that either leads us to judge them and despise them saying that person doesn't deserve that.

Why is he getting this? Or envy. I wish I had what that person had. Now, recognizing God's sovereign grace in saving his people delivers us from this pride and insecurity and it frees us up instead to marvel at God's grace not just in our lives but in the lives of everyone around us.
That's what this truth does. It frees us. And because Jacob understands this truth he illustrates it in blessing Ephraim here over Manasseh.
And then having adopted and blessed Joseph's sons Israel now calls the rest of his sons in order to bless them. Israel is a prophet. Israel is another name for Jacob. And his blessings both look back on the past and then look ahead to the future.
And as Jacob blesses his sons we see God's promises that have been confirmed. The first fruits of God's promises. But I'm not going to go through and cover all the blessings just because that's going to take a while.
[20:31] But there's clearly main characters that are blessed in this list. It's one of the five major characters that have had major plot were involved in major plot points throughout Jacob's narrative.

There's Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and Joseph. So I'm going to comment on their blessings and focus on those five sons. And it turns out as he blesses them not all of Jacob's blessings are actually blessings.
Some of them are curses. And the sons who dishonored him in his life are cursed instead. And we see this in verses three to four. Jacob addresses Reuben. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the first fruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
So far, so good. Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence because you went up to your father's bed, then you defiled it.
He went up to my couch. So Reuben, as Jacob's firstborn, was preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. But then in a shocking turn, right, Jacob turns and continues. He's unstable as water.
[21:37] He won't have preeminence. Right, that signals that repetition of that word. It signals the reversal of his fortunes. And narrator told us at chapter 35, verse 22, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it.

So at the time, Jacob heard of it. But at the time, perhaps out of fear of retaliation from his much more physically robust son, he didn't do anything. But on his deathbed, when he knows there's nothing he can do, he unleashes his fury and his fierce condemnation of what his son had done.
And look at this. Because you went up to your father's bed, then you defiled it. He went up to my couch. There's a threefold repetition of what Reuben did. He says three times exactly what Reuben did, almost kind of conveying his sense of disbelief.
Can you believe he did this? And then while he addressed Reuben directly in the first two times, he said, you went up to your father's bed, then you defiled it.
In the last class, he's telling the rest of his sons, because he speaks to him in third person, look, he went up to my couch. And the fact that he used the word defile is significant here because that word means to profane something that's sacred or holy.
[22:51] The word is usually used to describe in the Old Testament for the profaning of God's name or God's temple or God's Sabbath or the sacrifices or the priesthood.

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So the fact that that word is used here to say you defiled Jacob's marriage bed means that marriage bed in God's eyes is sacred. It's holy.
It's something that he wants to honor. And it's confirmed by Hebrews 13, 4, let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
God makes marriages and because he makes marriages he takes marriages very seriously because he designed marriages to be a picture of God's sacrificial love for his people.
And so a marriage bed is sanctified, it's holy and to violate it is a defilement, a profaning of what God has said is holy. And because of this curse in Reuben's line not a single prophet or judge or king arises from his line.
[23:53] Reuben loses preeminence in the history of Israel. And then having demoted Reuben, we might expect the blessing of the firstborn to devolve to the next son which is Simeon or to the next son, Levi, but they also don't get to enjoy that.

Instead they get their father's curse in verses 5 to 7. Simeon and Levi are brothers, weapons of violence are their swords. Let my soul come not into their counsel. Will my glory be not joined to their company for in their anger they killed men and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. Cursed be their anger for it is fierce and their wrath for it is cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. So Jacob is here referring to the massacre of the Shechemites in the town of Shechem by Simeon and Levi.
They were angry that their sister was dishonored, defiled by having premarital relations, sexual relations with an uncircumcised Shechemite and because of that out of their wrath they designed the ruse to have those men get circumcised acting like they're going to become one people and then while they were hobbled after circumcision they went and killed them all.
And so that's what Jacob is referring to here. Simeon and Levi are brothers, weapons of violence are their swords. The word sword here most likely refers to the circumcision sword.
[25:14] So here Jacob is saying that they used what should have been a sign of the covenant, a sign of God's blessing to kill others and because of that Jacob fiercely denounces them also.

And this prophecy is also fulfilled. We see that in Numbers 18 and 35 as well as Joshua 21. The Levites, instead of receiving their own inheritance, they are scattered throughout Israel into 48 cities distributed throughout all the tribal regions of Israel.
And then similarly, Joshua 19 tells us that Simeonites, instead of obtaining their own property, obtain a small piece of their property within the territory of Judah. So they're scattered, dispersed, weakened.
then after Jacob turns to Judah, and this is the first blessing and one of the most important blessings. And in fact, Jacob's blessing of Judah and Joseph make up about half of all the blessings in this passage.
He says in verse 8, Judah, your brother shall praise you and your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's son shall bow down before you. So that means, Judah's name means praise.
[26:25] That's his mom, Leah, named him so because she said, this time I shall praise the Lord. And so Judah, that's what his name means and he will himself be praised. And the word, your hand, also looks and sounds very much like the word Judah and praise.

And so there's a lot of word plays going on here. And then Jacob, it says, Jacob says, Judah will be like a lion. He'll be powerful and regal, a royal beast.
And he says in verse 10, the scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
So from between his feet is a euphemism for the private parts. So what he's saying here is that the scepter, the ruling, the reign, the kingship will never depart from the descendants of Judah.
And it says until tribute comes to him. Now that doesn't mean that Judah will stop having kings when finally tribute comes to him, rather it's referring to the culmination of that.
[27:27] Jacob will, I mean, Judah will continue to have kings in his line. He will continue to reign and be preeminent among his brothers and that will be culminated at the point when other nations bring tribute to him.

And obedience of the peoples shall be his. This is a prophecy that's fulfilled in the Davidic kingdom. David is the king that comes from the line of Judah.

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And so this second half of the verse 10, in case some of you guys are confused, I'm going to just take a little detour and explain that in verse 10 because if you're looking at Bible translations, that's not English standard version, which is one I have, it probably says something different in your Bible. If you have the New International Version, NIV, it reads, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. Some of you guys have that. Or if you have the King James Version or the New American Standard Bible, it says, until he to whom, no, until Shiloh comes.
Some of you guys have that? So, maybe I didn't even have to mention it. Are you guys all using the ESV? Okay. Well, you're not. Okay. So, if you see that, I want to, I mean, this is not, doesn't directly tie to the main point I want to make, but I do want to build your confidence in God's word.
[28:46] And if you see a discrepancy like that, I want to show you why. And the one is, so first is, the word for tribute is notoriously difficult to translate and interpret because it only occurs once in the entire Bible.

So, really, it's really guesswork. You're trying to figure out what it means. And then, and secondly, so people who translate it as, until he to whom it belongs, that's the way they translate the word tribute.
So, if you add one Hebrew syllable consonant, it changes to one to whom it belongs. So, so people who translate it that way are saying that, okay, it's probably a corruption of the original manuscript. So, there probably used to be this syllable in there and that makes a lot more sense to us. So, we're going to interpret it that way. That's what they're saying. And the third option, the Shiloh comes, that's just the literal translation because the Hebrew word is Shiloh.
And if, and they're understanding it to mean Shiloh is where the Ark of God, which represents the presence of God, resided. It's the city where the Ark of God was kept before the time of the Davidic monarchy.
[29:44] So, when David took the throne in Jerusalem, they brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem. So, they think that it's until Shiloh comes means that that's the culmination of Judah's reign is that when Shiloh as representing the Ark of God that was in Shiloh comes to him, comes to the king.

So, that's, those are the kind of three major interpretations. You could believe any one of them and the reason why is because they all mean the same thing in the end because they all refer to the Davidic monarchy.
Like, no matter which way you cut it, it all refers to fulfillment in the Davidic monarchy. When David becomes king, all of these things are fulfilled. The nations bring tribute to him, right? The obedience to the people are his. The Shiloh comes, the Ark of God comes to him, and to him who it belongs has come.
So, he's the one. And so, that's what those discrepancies mean. And then, verses 11 to 12 conclude Judah's blessings. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's cold to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.
His eyes are darker than wine and his teeth whiter than milk. Now, the reference to binding his donkey on the vine is a little obscure, but basically, what he's saying is that there will be such abundance of wine, and wine is considered a sign of luxury and prosperity.
[30:59] There's such an abundance of wine, you could even tie your donkey to your vine, not worrying about your donkey eating right from your grapes and trampling on your vines because there's so much to go around.

And that image of prosperity and wine and milk flowing is taken up by later writers of the Bible in the Old Testament prophets and they use that to talk about the Messianic kingdom.
And when the Messiah comes and the kingdom of God comes, it will be like this. So this is all pointing to that ultimately. And now, after blessing his other sons, Jacob at last turns to Joseph in verses 22 to 26 and Jacob blesses Joseph with fruitfulness which is upon an Ephraim's name because his name means twice fruitful from Genesis 41, 52.
And the expectation then is that this blessing on Joseph will pass through Ephraim who was the one who received the greater blessing from Jacob. And then Jacob recounts Joseph's troubled past, how he was, you know, sold into slavery by his brothers and imprisoned by Potiphar.
And he talks about that in more abstract ways. And then he talks about how the mighty one of Jacob, the shepherd, the stone of Israel helped him through it all.
[32:12] And then, after having recounting his past, he blesses Joseph and he names every blessing you can possibly think of. He lists them all. And the word blessing has been kind of a key

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word throughout the book of Genesis.

And one commentator says this is kind of like the finale of a fireworks display because the word blessing happens just again and again and again and again like just six times in just two verses in verses 25 to 26.
And there's a beautiful balancing of this blessing. It says, right, blessing of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crotches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. So the word heaven is a word play on the word breast.
They look and sound similar. And the word deep is a word play on the word womb. So there's a beautiful harmony here and a balance between basically the male sphere and the female sphere, right?
So the woman can uniquely bear and rear children, right? And he's saying here that that part will be blessed. And he's also saying that men are called to till and to toil and then that sphere is also going to be blessed.
[33:17] So Joseph is all set. He's going to be blessed in every single way. And it's no surprise to us that in the future in Israel as a nation, Ephraim becomes a very strong tribe.

And when the northern tribes of Israel, so basically 10 of the 12 tribes minus Judah, basically 12 tribes minus Judah and Levite, separate from the Davidic monarchy to form their own kingdom, northern kingdom of Israel, the first king chosen out of that group is an Ephraimite.
And from that point on, every king's seat, the royal seat of Israel is in Ephraim's territory. And so Ephraim becomes kind of synonymous with this reign and prominence in Israel's kingdom.
And so, and after all of this, verse 28 concludes Jacob's benediction by saying, all these are the 12 tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.
And this is where we begin to see more clearly the first fruits of the promise that God had given him. Right? It's the first time in the entire Old Testament where the 12 tribes of Israel are mentioned.
[34:30] Right? So this, these are not just Jacob's 12 sons, but they're the ones that are going to be the forefathers of the entire nation of Israel. And that's fairly obvious as we read the blessings.

It's not really blessing to individuals, but blessing to entire tribes. And then, and so these are really the first fruits of the promise that God had given to Abraham being fulfilled. He said in Genesis 12 too, I will make of you a great nation.
And that promise of nation is now beginning to be fulfilled through his 12 sons. And moreover, if you look at the previous instances in Genesis where the sons of Jacob were listed, so in Genesis 35 and Genesis 46, in both of these occasions, Jacob's sons are listed basically in accordance with who their mothers were.
So it says sons of Leah and they will list them and the sons of Rachel will list them. And that's a very unconventional way to list sons in the Bible. And it signals that there's disunity and division in their family because they're warring against each other, sons of Leah and sons of Rachel.
But this here is the first instance when all the sons of Jacob are listed together in one list in the order of birth. Right? So this shows that Jacob's family is now united again.
[35:48] They're reconciled and now they're going to be ready to fulfill God's promise of creating a great nation out of Israel. So that's the first fruits of God's promise.

And as he sees this promise being fulfilled and as Joseph, his son, his beloved son, is about to close his eyes in death as God had promised earlier, Jacob now looks ahead to the parts of God's promise that is not yet fulfilled in Genesis 46, 3-4.
He says, 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 Jacob and I will also bring you up again.
Bring you up again out of Egypt. God had promised him that. But because he's not, he's still in Egypt when he's dying, he tells all of his sons to take him to the specific piece of land, the one piece of land that he had officially purchased or rather his forefather, Abram, had officially purchased from Mamre to bury him there.
And the reason for this, and of course, I mean, he's a very prominent figure. Remember from last week that Pharaoh was paying homage to Jacob and Jacob is really, I mean, his son, Joseph, is a vizier of Egypt.

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[37:07] So Jacob could have been buried in the best property in Egypt wherever he wanted. But the reason why he specifically instructs them to take him back to Canaan is because he's not staking out his claim in Egypt, but he's holding on to God's promise and saying, that's where God promised to give us a nation and a place for us to dwell.

And therefore, I'm going to hold on to that and hope in the fulfillment of that promise. And so I charge you, my sons, to take me back there when I die. So that's, and that leads us to our second point, which is shorter.

And it's the fulfillment of the promise. So this, we saw the first fruits of the promise that Jacob gets to enjoy and now we have to see the fulfillment of the promise. And in chapter 50, now Jacob's sons do follow through on their father's last wish and Joseph gets Pharaoh's permission and then they go and bury Jacob in Canaan.

And as they do that, the word go up is used seven times and that's not just any other word for going somewhere. It's rather a technical word that's used in the book of Exodus referred to Israel's exodus from Egypt.

So this is prefiguring what is to come. In the same way, Jacob and his sons are going up to Canaan out of Egypt. Israel, the nation, will go up out of Egypt into Canaan at the Exodus.

[38:24] And then, and when they're done with the burial, however, Joseph's brother's old fears just resurface. and then, and they're worried that now that their father's dead and there's no one to really keep Joseph in line, that Joseph had been holding a grudge against them all along for selling him into slavery earlier and now he's going to really destroy us.

And so he's, they're worried about that and they act preemptively and to, to basically appease Joseph. And then Joseph reassures them in verses 19 to 21. Do not fear for am I in the place of God?

As for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. So do not fear, I will provide for you and your little ones.

And last week, I explained this briefly that how this illustrates God's radical sovereignty and care for his people, right? Because it doesn't say here that what Joseph's brothers meant for evil, God used it for good.

It says that what they meant for evil, God meant it for good, right? That means it's, God's not like this investor, right, who is trying to cut his losses, minimize losses at a time of financial downturn.

[39:41] No, he's the investor who sovereignly knows everything that's happening and every downturn and every loss is intended from the very beginning, from eternity past for good.

That's how sovereign and mighty and God is and that's how he cares for us. And so Joseph, knowing this, is able to graciously forgive his brothers and assure them and speak companyly to them.

And then, after living peaceably together for many years, Joseph, like Jacob before him, approaches his death and then he makes the rest of the sons of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you and you shall carry up my bones from here.

That's verse 25 of chapter 50. And even though Joseph, he's the vizier of Egypt, he has all the wealth of this great civilization at his disposal, yet even, and he, I mean, if he wanted to for the foreseeable future, he and all his progeny would be set.

I mean, they'd be all set in Egypt. They could enjoy their riches and enjoy the best of the land it has to offer. But even Joseph, instead of banking on that prospect, says, no, take my bones and bury me in Canaan because that is where I belong because that's where God has called me and that's where God has called our people.

[41:00] This is, has great application points for us as God's people. It's in the author of Hebrews comments on Jacob and Joseph in chapter 11, verses 21 to 22. It says, By faith, Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of the staff.

By faith, Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. Like the patriarchs before them, as it also says in Hebrews 11, 13 to 16, these all died in faith, not knowing, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, they desired a better country that is a heavenly one.

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. Right? The author of Hebrews is here making a typological connection between the physical promised land

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and the spiritual promised land.
And so, the land of Canaan was a theological type, meaning it was a prefigurement, a foreshadowing of the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise, which is heaven. That's where the real presence of God is.
That's the real promise of land. And that's where, as Christians, we are supposed to place our hope. And when Jacob blessed Ephraim earlier in 48, 15 to 16, he said, 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.
[42:31] He's blessing Ephraim and Manasseh. And angel here refers to the angel of the Lord, which is just a God appearing in human form. It's from Genesis 16, 21, 22. And he's saying that God has been his shepherd, guiding him and protecting him.

And he also says that God is his redeemer. He says he redeemed him. And the word redeem is laden with theological significance throughout, in the both Old and New Testaments. Because the redeemer in the Old Testament is usually your nearest male relative.
And basically, the Old Testament described that when you become impoverished, basically, and fall into debt or slavery, your redeemer, your nearest male kin was supposed to come and redeem you, pay for you, so that you wouldn't have to be humiliated and enslaved by someone else.
And the same redeemer was expected should you be murdered by someone. It was the redeemer, the nearest male kin that was expected to avenge his death. That's two important, very important functions in the Old Testament of the redeemer, kinsman redeemer.
And this is particularly poignant and emotional for Jacob because Jacob didn't have a redeemer, right? Jacob's redeemer was supposed to be Esau. But Esau is the one that hated him, wanted to kill him.
[43:49] He had no human redeemer to speak of. So in essence, what Jacob is saying here is I have had no human redeemer to speak of in my life. But God Almighty has been my redeemer.

God redeemed me from my murderous brother. God redeemed me from my slavery to Laban. God is my redeemer.
And he says more. So he says that God has been his redeemer, God has been his shepherd. He says in 49, 24 that God has been his stone of Israel. Right? Do you know that God is also our shepherd as he was Jacob's?
That he's also our redeemer? That he's also our stone of Israel? In John 10, 11, Jesus, the son of God who came, he said, I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. And that's precisely what he did. We were sheep that had gone astray, sinned against God, and living in rebellion against him.
[44:56] And yet Jesus paid for our sins, died in our place as our good shepherd laid down his life for us so that we can be restored back into the fold of our loving father. Jesus was our shepherd.

And in Matthew 21, 42, Jesus applies the prophecy in Psalm 118, 22, 23 to himself when he says, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
Right? Jesus was rejected by his own people, yet God made him the cornerstone of his church, of his people. And Ephesians 2, 20 says that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.
That's why we have the church. We were all orphans. We didn't have a family. We didn't have a home. We had no place to lay our head. Yet Jesus became the cornerstone of the home within which we can have shelter.
Jesus became the cornerstone upon which the family of God can be built so that we have this rich heritage of the family of God, fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters in God's family. That's what Jesus did for us.
[46:10] He's been our stone of Israel, the rock upon which we stand. And lastly, Christ has been our redeemer. Galatians 3.13 tells us, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

We were slaves to sin. We were so indebted we had become enslaved to sin and the curse of the law.
But Christ was our strong redeemer. We had no human redeemer to speak of just like Jacob. No one else, no human being could have saved us wealthy enough to redeem us, to purchase us from the grip of Satan and the grip of the slavery that the sin had in our lives.

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But Jesus was our strong redeemer. He paid for us for our freedom not with perishable things like gold or silver but with his very own blood dying for us.
He redeemed us. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the blessing promise to Jacob.
[47:25] He is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy over Judah because he is the one the ultimate king that's come from the line of Judah.

That's why Matthew 1 connects the genealogy directly from David to Jesus. That's why in Revelation 5.5 it says that Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David who has conquered the lion the conquering lion whom no one would dare to cross whom no one would dare to approach to snatch out of his hands his own people.
That lion of Judah that's our Jesus guards us protects us he redeemed us he saved us that's why the scepter never departs from Judah because he belongs eternally permanently with Jesus and now because of him the obedience of all peoples come to him not just the Jews but through Jesus all nations all peoples their obedience belong to him and that's our first fruits Jesus is the first fruits of the promise that God gave to us and as Christians who hold such precious and dear first fruits we ought to hope daily and to anticipate and to look ahead to the ultimate fulfillment of that promise that's how we ought to live as Christians what do we look forward to daily when we live?
Do we look forward to the weekend? Do we look forward to the next vacation? we have eternal riches loving communion with God to look forward to and daily everyone who looks at our lives should be able to say something different about this Christian this person they don't live with the same priorities that the rest of the world has even when things seem to be going wrong for them they seem to have this abiding hope not just some wishful thinking but they seem to have a substantive hope in this promise that it will ultimately be fulfilled that should be us what would that look like for you?
think about it for a moment how would your life look different if you live with that hope every day? your priorities your spending your time those who possess the first fruits of God's promise should hope in the fulfillment of his promise let's be a church that lives this day in light of that day God we are eternally grateful you alone can rescue you alone can redeem we had no hope in this world apart from you heavenly father you are redeemer you paid the purchase price the ransom through your son's life death resurrection and now we have the freedom through your spirit
[51:02] God help us as your people to live in light of that wonderful truth in Jesus name we pray Amen I can■■■ Your people God help us to speak in this world soup and we are and we have to accept Feel through your life

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