

Introduction

Pastor Krenz @ 96: living in a retirement complex, caring for his wife with dementia, but still leading three Bible studies a week with nine different men

1. When you envision the end of your life, what do you see?
 - a. By this, I mean, what will it be that consumes you or drives you?
 - b. For many, especially us Americans, it's retirement somewhere south, or endless days on the gulf coast, or maybe traveling to places we've always wanted to see, or maybe just spending as much time with the grandkids
 - c. These aren't necessarily bad things, or things we shouldn't desire or pursue, but how many as they approach the end of their lives think in terms of how their lives might still be used to further God's purpose and plan?
2. In our passage today, Jacob is nearly about to die and we get a picture of what was on his mind, what consumed him, and it serves as a good example for us:
 - a. As Jacob approached the end of his life, he clung to the promises of God
 - b. He recounted the promises of God
 - c. He ensured the promises of God
 - d. He gave assurance of the promises of God

**Instead of individual takeaways, I'm going to focus on one main overarching takeaway at the end of today's teaching

A. As Jacob approached the end of his life, he clung to the promises of God (READ 47:27-31)

1. Back in Genesis 46:1-4 God appeared to Joseph and told him not to be afraid to go down to Egypt:
 - a. God had appeared to Jacob on three prior occasions and promised him that He would give him the land of Canaan, grow him into a great nation, and would even bring him back to the land (28:12-15; 35:9-12)
 - b. To leave the land of Canaan might have felt like he was leaving God and His promises behind—after all, each of these appearances occurred in the land of Canaan and God's promises were specifically related to the land
 - c. So, God appeared to him again to assure him that He would still fulfill His promises even though He was sending him and his family to Egypt (READ Genesis 46:1-4)
2. Our passage today takes place 17 years later and things had gone well for Jacob's family:
 - a. According to Genesis 47:9, Jacob was 130 years old when he arrived in Egypt and he was now 147 and near the end of his life

- b. Just as God had promised him, things had gone well for most of these 17 years:
"...and they took possession of property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous" (47:27)
 - c. Despite this prosperity and the growth in his family, Jacob's heart wasn't in Egypt; it was back in the land of Canaan:
 - 1) We know this because the crux of these five verses is Jacob's demand that Joseph bury him back home in the family burial site in land of Canaan rather than Egypt (RE-READ 47:29-30)
 - 2) This was so important to Jacob that he made Joseph swear an oath to do it (placing the hand under the thigh) and repeated his command to his sons right before his death (READ 49:31)
3. I believe what this reveals is that as Jacob approached the end of his life, he was clinging to the promises of God:
- a. I don't doubt that Jacob wanted to be buried with his parents, grandparents, and wife Leah, but I believe there was more to it than this
 - b. As we'll see in the rest of the chapter, at the end of his life Jacob was keenly aware of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and himself, including bringing them back to the land He had promised them
 - c. I believe that Jacob's demand to be buried in the land of Canaan shows us that he was clinging to these promises:
 - 1) He knew at this point that God's promise to bring them back into the land wasn't going to happen before he died
 - 2) However, he was convinced God would make good on His promises, so much so that even after his death he wanted his bones to be buried in the land God had promised
 - 3) It's the same reason Joseph demanded that his bones be taken back to the land of Canaan when God would finally bring Israel back into the land (READ Genesis 50:24-26 & Exodus 13:19)
 - 4) This might be one of the reasons that the interaction with Joseph ends with Jacob bowing in worship at the head of his bed (31): **"in worship"** is supplied but most interpret his bowing here as worship

B. As Jacob approached the end of his life, he recounted the promises of God (READ 48:1-4)
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- 1. A short time after the discussion about his burial, Jacob became sick and his death was imminent so Joseph was summoned to his side
- 2. When Joseph arrived with his two sons, the first thing Jacob did was recount for Joseph his first encounter with the LORD (recorded in 28:10-17):
 - a. The Lord appeared to him at Luz in the land of Canaan (Bethel)—this is important because God promised him the land in which he appeared to him
 - b. The Lord blessed him there by making promises to him: **"and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply, and I will make you an assembly of peoples, and I will give this land to your seed after you for an everlasting possession.'"**

3. It's doubtful this was the first time Joseph heard the story so why repeat it now?
 - a. As we've already seen, Jacob was at the end of his life and keenly focused on God's promises, especially related to the land
 - b. God's promises were so important to Jacob that he was compelled to recount them to Joseph with his dying breath!

C. As Jacob approached the end of his life, he ensured the promises of God (48:5-20)
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1. What I mean by Jacob ensuring the promises of God is that he did something to make certain that God's promises would be fulfilled
2. The first thing he did was adopt Joseph's two sons as his own (READ 48:5-7):
 - a. While living in Egypt, Joseph had two sons, Manasseh (the older) and Ephraim (the younger)
 - b. In v. 5 Jacob declared, **"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."**
 - 1) What Jacob did was make Ephraim and Manasseh co-equals and co-heirs with his other sons
 - 2) The text doesn't tell us specifically why he did this, but he links it directly to God's promises in v. 4 (RE-READ)—most translations start the verse with **"Now then"** or **"So now"**
 - 3) Later in v. 16 he says, **"and may my name live on in them and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac"**
 - 4) This became true in the conquest because when the land of Canaan is divided up among Jacob's sons, it is split 12 ways with Ephraim and Manasseh each receiving their own allotments (essentially taking the place of the tribe of Levi and Joseph)
3. The second thing Jacob did was bless Joseph's sons and bestow upon one of them, Ephraim, the blessing of the first born (READ 48:8-20):
 - a. When Jacob asked Joseph to bring him his sons to be blessed, Joseph instinctively arranged them so that his first born, Manasseh, would receive the primary blessing, the blessing of the first born (done with the right hand)
 - b. But, as Jacob began to bless the boys he crossed his hands, placing his right hand on Ephraim's head and thereby giving him the blessing of the first born
 - c. V. 17 says that when Joseph saw this it **"displeased him"** so he tried to reverse Jacob's hands and said, **"Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Placed your right hand on his head"** (meaning Manasseh)
 - d. Jacob responded, **"I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people, and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become the fullness of nations."** (19)
 - e. V. 20 says, **"Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh"**

4. So, what's going on here?
 - a. There is a pattern in the Bible of God choosing the younger over the older (e.g. Jacob over Esau, Moses over Aaron, David over his brothers, Solomon over his older brothers, etc.)
 - b. However, something else was going on here and we're told what it was in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 (READ):
 - 1) Back in Genesis 35:22 there's a one verse statement with little to no explanation: **"Now it happened while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it."**
 - 2) That's all it says; there's no explanation or reason given for Reuben sleeping with Jacob's concubine but other similar acts in the Bible suggest it was an attempt to usurp Jacob's authority (David's son Absalom sleeping with his concubines when trying to take over his throne)
 - 3) As a result of Reuben's actions, Jacob stripped him of his first-born status and instead bestowed that honor on Ephraim, Joseph's second born son
 - c. In essence, what Jacob was doing here with adopting Joseph's two sons and bestowing the blessing of the first born on Ephraim, was ensuring that God's promises would continue through Joseph, rather than through Reuben, and that's exactly what we see throughout the rest of the Bible
 - d. In fact, later in its history, Israel is often referred to simply as Ephraim (especially the northern 10 tribes)

D. As Jacob approached the end of his life, he gave assurance of the promises of God (48:21-22)

1. One of the things God repeatedly promised Jacob was that He would be with him:
 - a. He promised Jacob this when He first appeared to him at Luz when he was fleeing Esau: **"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. And I will bring you back to this land; for I will not forsake you until I have done what I have promised you."**
 - b. He promised Jacob this when He told him to return from Mesopotamia and head back home to the land of Canaan (Genesis 31:3): **"Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."**
 - c. He assured Jacob of it one more time when he was forced to leave home and head to Egypt because of the famine (Genesis 46:4): **"I Myself will do down with you to Egypt, and I Myself will also bring you up again..."**
2. This promise, along with God's promise regarding the land, had such a profound effect on Joseph that with his dying breath he was compelled to give assure to Joseph of God's same promises to him (READ Genesis 48:21-22):
 - a. Just as God had been with Jacob, God would be with Joseph
 - b. Just as God had promised to bring Jacob back to the land of Canaan, He would do the same for Joseph (fulfilled when Moses brought the bones of Joseph out of Egypt)

during the Exodus and they were buried in Shechem after the conquest; Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32)

- c. This last statement in v. 22 has some challenges but the point seems to be that Jacob was blessing Joseph with a larger inheritance than his brothers

Takeaway

1. How do you envision approaching the end of your life?
 - a. I'm not talking about the way you will die, but do you imagine will be your priority? What will it be that consumes your thoughts, your time, your energy?
 - b. Unfortunately, many Christians—especially American Christians—think more about achieving the American dream than the Gospel, and if that's the case in the prime of their lives, what will it be like as they approach the end of their lives?
 - c. Jacob could have gotten distracted living in the land of Egypt; after all they had it really good living in the best of the land, gaining property and possessions, multiplying like rabbits, and becoming prosperous
 - d. However, at the end of his life his focus was still on the land of Canaan and God's promises
2. So, my question for us this morning is whether or not we'll be like Jacob at the end of our lives, still captivated by and focused on God's plan and purpose?
3. Will we be like Pastor Krenz, 96, serving Jesus in an assisted living facility, pouring our lives into others for their sake and the sake of the God's purpose and plan?
4. As we approach the end of our lives, will we still...
 - a. Be clinging to God's promises?
 - b. Be recounting God's promises to others?
 - c. Be ensuring that God's promises endure (e.g. by sharing the Gospel, making disciples)?
 - d. Be giving assurances of God's promises?