

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 25, Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's Sons and Death (Gen. 48-50) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 25, Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's Sons and Death (Gen. 48-50), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Genesis session 25 examines the concluding chapters (48-50) of Genesis, focusing on **Jacob's blessings** upon his sons and grandsons, particularly Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh. The session explores the **themes of God's promises** to Abraham, fulfilled through Jacob and Joseph, emphasizing God's **covenant love and its implications for Israel and all nations**. Mathews connects these events to the broader narrative of the Pentateuch and highlights the foreshadowing of Jesus Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. The lecture also **analyzes the literary structure** of Genesis 48-50 and offers insights into various biblical translations.

2. 26 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 25 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Mathews_Genesis_
Session25.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 25, Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's Sons and Death (Gen. 48-50)

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Session 25 on Genesis 48-50:

Briefing Document: Genesis 48-50 - Jacob's Blessings, Joseph's Sons, and Deaths of Jacob and Joseph

Overview:

This session focuses on the concluding chapters of Genesis, specifically chapters 48 through 50, which deal with Jacob's blessings upon Joseph's sons and his own sons, and then the deaths of both Jacob and Joseph. Dr. Mathews emphasizes how these chapters bring the book of Genesis to its grand conclusion, tying together the Joseph narrative with the larger themes established from the beginning of Genesis, especially the concept of God's blessing for humanity and the promises made to Abraham. The session also highlights the significant role of key figures like Jacob (also known as Israel), Joseph, and Judah in the unfolding narrative.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. God's Good Purposes and Blessings:

- The narrative of Genesis and the Pentateuch as a whole revolves around God's good purposes for his creation, especially his intention to bless the human family. This is rooted in Genesis 1:26-28, where God created humanity in his image to have a personal relationship with him.
- The blessing of God includes the idea of procreation, authority over creation, and the promise of land. These elements are first expressed in Genesis 1, and then become central to the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12. This theme is reiterated throughout the Genesis narrative and the entire Pentateuch.
- God's love is the motivation behind his choice of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). It wasn't because they were more numerous or deserving but because of God's love and his oath to the forefathers.
- God's actions were designed to preserve the relationship between God and His people, which was ultimately for the salvation of the world (reflected in Joseph being used to preserve the family during a famine).

1. Jacob's Blessings (Chapter 48):

- Jacob blesses Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and adopts them, giving them equal status with his own sons (Genesis 48:5). This adoption signifies that the promises to Jacob would also be received by Joseph's descendants.
- Jacob recalls God's appearance to him at Luz/Bethel and the promises given there, emphasizing their importance to the family's future (Genesis 48:3-4).
- Jacob's use of the name "Israel" in Chapter 48 (Genesis 48:8-12) highlights the adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh as being fully part of the people of Israel, reassuring the reader that they inherit the promised blessings. Jacob's spiritual insight triumphs over his physical failing eyesight.
- Jacob, despite his failing eyesight, intentionally crosses his arms, placing his right hand on the younger Ephraim and his left hand on the older Manasseh (Genesis 48:13-14), showcasing the recurrent theme of the younger superseding the older in the lineage of God's blessing.
- Jacob's blessing includes the anticipation of the family returning to the land (Genesis 48:21).

1. Jacob's Blessings on his Sons (Chapter 49):

- Chapter 49 is introduced as a prophetic deathbed blessing, setting the stage for the future (Genesis 49:1) and connecting Genesis to the rest of the Pentateuch. There is a specific narrative and structural pattern in the Pentateuch: *narrative, poetry, epilogue*.
- The blessings are not uniform but are appropriate to each son's character and future role (Genesis 49:28). They reflect both past actions and their tribe's future.
- **Reuben:** Jacob reminds Reuben of his "turbulent" nature and his sin (Genesis 49:3-4)
- **Simeon and Levi:** Jacob denounces their violence (Genesis 49:5-7). They are scattered because of their actions.
- **Judah:** Judah receives a significant blessing, becoming the ancestor of the kings, including David (Genesis 49:8-10). The "scepter shall not depart from Judah" highlights a line of kings.
- Dr. Mathews discusses the different translations of Genesis 49:10, focusing on the "Shiloh" or "tribute" interpretation of this verse, highlighting the complexity of

translating ancient texts and the implications for understanding its meaning. Mathews ultimately leans towards "until he comes to whom it belongs" which connects with the idea of the ruler.

- The verse looks forward to a leader to whom the scepter belongs. Dr. Mathews connects this with Jesus, the offspring of David and the lion of the tribe of Judah.
- **Joseph:** Joseph receives a blessing of fruitfulness and strength (Genesis 49:22-26) and is recognized as a leader among his brothers, a "prince". The blessing also points back to Joseph's connection to the covenant promises through his father's relationship with God.
- The theme of unity is crucial; all tribes are blessed, signifying the unity of Israel and the recipients of the Abrahamic promises (Genesis 49:28). The blessing is given 3 times, highlighting its importance.

1. **The Deaths and Burials of Jacob and Joseph (Chapters 49-50):**

- Jacob commands that his body be taken back to Canaan and buried in the family plot in the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 49:29-32). This reinforces the importance of the land promise.
- Jacob's burial in Canaan involves a significant mourning period in Egypt and also includes a ceremonial procession back to the land with Egyptians and family members (Genesis 50:1-11). The respect shown to Jacob by Egyptians and Canaanites highlights the growing importance of Israel on the world stage and fulfills the promise to Abraham about Israel blessing the nations.
- Joseph reassures his brothers, recognizing that their past evil actions were part of God's plan to save many lives. (Genesis 50:15-21)
- Joseph, at the end of his life, makes his brothers promise to take his bones out of Egypt when God delivers them to the promised land (Genesis 50:24-26). This promise was fulfilled in Exodus 13:19 and Joshua 24:32. Joseph's death and burial in a coffin in Egypt act as an important reminder of the future exodus and the promise of return.

1. **Jesus Christ as the Fulfillment:**

- The session concludes by pointing to Jesus Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. He is the perfect, obedient Israelite, the ideal king, and the mediator between God and humankind.

- Christ's death and resurrection are presented as the means by which all the promises are brought to bear on those who repent and worship God, tying all of Genesis and the Pentateuch to the message of salvation.

Quotes of Note:

- "The Lord did not set His affection on you and chose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord, Moses says, loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery..." (Deuteronomy 7:7-8, quoted by Dr. Mathews)
- "They would have the same status as Joseph himself, and that is a descendant of Jacob who would be blessed and receive the promissory blessings." (Regarding Ephraim and Manasseh's adoption, spoken by Dr. Mathews)
- "The scepter will 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." (English Standard Version, quoted by Dr. Mathews as an alternate reading for Genesis 49:10)
- "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good." (Genesis 50:20, quoted by Dr. Mathews)
- "God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Genesis 50:24, quoted by Dr. Mathews)

Conclusion:

These chapters provide a powerful conclusion to the book of Genesis, underscoring God's faithfulness to his promises and his intention to bless his people and all nations. The blessings given by Jacob are not just for the immediate future but set the stage for the unfolding history of Israel and ultimately point to the coming of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's plans. Dr. Mathews' analysis emphasizes the themes of God's covenant love, the importance of the land promise, the role of key patriarchs, and the ultimate redemptive purpose of God's plan. This session encourages readers to see how the events in Genesis are deeply interwoven with God's overall plan of salvation.

4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 25, Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's Sons and Death (Gen. 48-50)

Genesis Study Guide: Chapters 48-50

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why did Joseph want his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to be blessed by Jacob?
2. What were the three elements of the promissory blessing that Jacob remembered God promising him at Luz?
3. What significant act of Jacob's demonstrated a deviation from custom when he blessed Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh?
4. What is the significance of Jacob's frequent reference to himself as "Israel" when blessing Ephraim and Manasseh?
5. What is the structure of the conclusion of Genesis, and how is it evidenced in chapter 49?
6. What is notable about Jacob's description of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi in his blessing, and how does this connect to their past actions?
7. What was the significance of the prophecy regarding Judah, and how is it linked to Jesus in the New Testament?
8. What did Joseph ask his brothers to do concerning his remains, and what importance does it have for the book of Exodus?
9. What did Joseph tell his brothers in response to their fear that he might seek revenge, and how did he interpret the events of his life?
10. What is the ultimate conclusion of Dr. Mathews regarding God's promises in Genesis and their culmination in Jesus Christ?

Answer Key

1. Joseph wanted his sons to be counted among the 12 sons of Jacob so that they would receive the blessing that God had intended in the promises to Jacob. He was concerned that they were not direct descendants, being grandsons, and they were raised according to Egyptian customs.

2. The three elements of the promissory blessing Jacob remembered from Luz were that God would make him fruitful and increase his numbers, make him a community of peoples, and give the land as an everlasting possession to his descendants. These are echoed in the promises to Abraham.
3. Jacob crossed his hands, placing his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the younger son, and his left hand on Manasseh, the elder son. This reversed the traditional custom of blessing the firstborn with the right hand and demonstrated that God chooses according to His own will.
4. The frequent use of "Israel" emphasizes the adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh into the covenant people of God. Since Jacob, through the name change to Israel, was the recipient of God's promises, this inclusion reassures the reader that the two sons have status among the chosen people.
5. The structure is a narrative followed by poetry and then an epilogue. This is evident in Genesis 49, where the narrative gives way to Jacob's poetic blessings for his sons, concluding with a narrative section describing his death and burial.
6. Jacob describes Reuben as turbulent, and he condemns Simeon and Levi for their violence. These descriptions directly reference their past sins and serve as a reminder that God's blessings must sometimes be coupled with correction.
7. The prophecy about Judah states that the scepter would not depart from his line, indicating a line of rulers that would continue forever. This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, who is recognized in the New Testament as the "lion of the tribe of Judah" and the heir to the Davidic throne.
8. Joseph asked his brothers to carry his bones up from Egypt to the land God promised to their fathers when they eventually left. This highlights the future promise of God's presence in the land as well as the book of Exodus which details that departure.
9. Joseph told his brothers that although they intended to harm him, God intended it for good. He affirmed that God had used the events of his life to accomplish the saving of many lives, ultimately bringing good out of their sin.
10. Mathews concludes that God's promises to the patriarchs and Israel were only partially realized but ultimately culminated in Jesus Christ. He is the perfect and obedient Israelite who brings the full blessings of God to all nations through his sacrifice on the cross.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer these questions in essay format. Please note that no answers are supplied, just suggested topics to explore.

1. Analyze the significance of the adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh by Jacob, and how this contributes to the larger themes of promise and inheritance in Genesis.
2. Compare and contrast the blessings Jacob gives to his sons in chapter 49, paying special attention to the significance of the blessings given to Judah and Joseph.
3. Explore the theme of divine sovereignty and human agency in the Joseph narrative, and discuss how this is highlighted in his final conversations with his brothers.
4. Discuss the three seams in the Pentateuch as noted by Dr. Mathews. Explain how the literary structure supports the narrative and theological message of Genesis, particularly in chapters 48-50.
5. How does the book of Genesis, and specifically its conclusion in chapters 48-50, anticipate and point towards the coming of Christ and his role in salvation history?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Patriarch:** The male head of a family or tribe, particularly Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the book of Genesis.
- **Promissory Blessing:** God's promises to bless Abraham and his descendants with land, a numerous family, and a relationship with God.
- **Luz/Bethel:** The location where Jacob encountered God in a dream, a significant place where God renewed his promise to Jacob.
- **Israel:** The new name given to Jacob by God after he wrestled with the angel, signifying "God strives". Jacob's name also becomes synonymous with the nation of his descendants.
- **Adoption (in this context):** Jacob's legal and spiritual action to bring Joseph's sons into his family, giving them full status as recipients of the promissory blessings.
- **Ephraim and Manasseh:** The two sons of Joseph who were adopted by Jacob and became two of the tribes of Israel.
- **Shechem:** A place and city in Canaan, which was significant to Jacob. His sons pillaged the city after the rape of their sister, Dinah, and Jacob purchased land there. This place is also where Joseph is later buried after his death in Egypt.
- **Shiloh:** A reference used in the Jacob's prophecy over Judah in chapter 49. Interpreted variably as either a place, a person, or "tribute."
- **Davidic Covenant:** God's promise to David that his lineage would rule forever.
- **El Shaddai:** A name of God, often translated as "God Almighty", which was revealed to the patriarchs.
- **The Twelve Tribes of Israel:** The descendants of Jacob's twelve sons, who formed the nation of Israel.
- **Cave of Machpelah:** The burial site purchased by Abraham, where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were buried.
- **Embalming:** The process of preserving a body after death, common in ancient Egypt.
- **Mediator:** A go-between or a person who reconciles parties, in the Bible this is often a description of Jesus and those who bring God's word to his people.

5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 25, Jacob's Blessing of Joseph's Sons and Death (Gen. 48-50), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Genesis 48-50: Jacob's Blessings, Joseph's Sons, and the Deaths of Jacob and Joseph

1. What are the main themes emphasized in the concluding chapters of Genesis (48-50)?

These chapters primarily focus on the continuation of God's promises and blessings, specifically highlighting the themes of family, land, and posterity. Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, adopting them as his own, thus ensuring their place in the Israelite lineage and inheritance. Jacob also bestows blessings on each of his twelve sons, forecasting their future roles within the tribes of Israel. The chapters also conclude with the deaths of both Jacob and Joseph, underscoring their faithfulness to God's promises and the anticipation of future fulfillment in the promised land. Ultimately, these chapters emphasize God's sovereignty over the narrative of the family of Israel.

2. How does Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, reflect a broader theme in Genesis?

Jacob's adoption and blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh illustrate a recurring theme of God's surprising choices and reversals of expectation. Typically, the firstborn son receives the greater blessing, yet Jacob intentionally blesses the younger Ephraim over the older Manasseh. This subversion of the expected birth order echoes previous instances within Genesis and highlights God's sovereign choice in the selection and blessing of his people. It reinforces the idea that God's favor is not determined by birth order or human tradition but by His own purposes. Additionally, it shows how God can work even through Joseph's Egyptian connections to fulfill his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

3. What is the significance of Jacob adopting Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh?

By adopting Ephraim and Manasseh as his own, Jacob elevates their status to that of his own sons, thus securing their inheritance within the covenant community. This act ensures that Joseph's line will have a double portion of inheritance, recognizing Joseph's pivotal role in saving the family during the famine and his status as a key figure in God's plan. This also increases the number of tribes to thirteen, while still maintaining the significance of the number 12 by excluding the Levites who did not receive their own tract of land, but were given 48 towns to live in.

4. What can be said about the nature of Jacob's blessings to his 12 sons in chapter 49?

Jacob's blessings (and in some cases, pronouncements of their futures) in chapter 49 are a mix of prophetic declarations and assessments of their character. These blessings aren't merely wishes; they're foretellings of how each tribe will contribute to the larger community of Israel. Some are praised for strength or leadership, while others are rebuked for their past actions. For example, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi are criticized, while Judah is praised as a future leader. In effect, the blessings show both the strengths and weaknesses within Israel's lineage and also show that God can work even through people with past failings. These prophetic statements also reveal the diverse roles that the various tribes will play within the larger nation of Israel.

5. Why is the blessing given to Judah (Gen 49:8-12) so important?

The blessing of Judah is significant because it establishes the tribe of Judah as the line of kings, which will ultimately lead to the birth of Jesus Christ. Specifically, the passage states that the scepter will not depart from Judah, and this is interpreted as the promise that kings will come from this tribe. This prophecy is a direct reference to the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7 and it points to the coming of a messianic king through Judah. The passage culminates in the image of a future leader who receives the obedience of the peoples. It is also worth noting that this portion includes a difficult to translate word, *Shiloh*, which has been variously translated and interpreted throughout history. However, most current translations note that it refers to a person to whom the authority rightly belongs.

6. How do the final verses of the death and burial of Jacob reflect God's purposes in the Abrahamic covenant?

The details surrounding Jacob's death and burial show the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land. Jacob makes Joseph promise to have his bones buried in the family plot in the land of Canaan which shows Jacob's faith that God's promises would be realized. The elaborate funeral procession with Egyptians and Canaanites taking note demonstrates the prominence and respect given to Jacob. This serves to reinforce the idea that the family of Israel is destined for a significant role. This also underscores the theme of land, a key element of the Abrahamic covenant, which is shown through Jacob's instructions to be buried in Canaan.

7. What does Joseph's request to have his bones returned to Canaan signify?

Joseph's dying request to have his bones returned to the land of Canaan is a powerful expression of faith in God's promises. He recognizes that his family's stay in Egypt is temporary and that they are ultimately meant to return to the promised land. This request highlights the enduring hope of the Israelites and the certainty that God's word would be fulfilled. This is a key moment of faith that prepares the reader for the exodus narrative that will occur in the next book, Exodus. Joseph's request for his bones to be carried back to Canaan serves as a constant reminder for future generations of God's promises.

8. What overarching message does Genesis 48-50 contribute to the entire book of Genesis?

These final chapters of Genesis reaffirm the key themes of the entire book: God's unwavering commitment to the Abrahamic covenant and the continuity of His redemptive plan. The blessings, deaths, and requests underscore the themes of God's faithful love toward his people. It shows that God is not just a creator, but also a God who is intensely personal and concerned about the details of life for his people. These chapters also build the anticipation for the exodus story, highlighting the temporary nature of the Israelites' stay in Egypt and emphasizing the importance of the promised land. They show that God is in control of the lives of all his people, and will accomplish all that He intends to do with love and care.