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**Day 21 - January 21**

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## **Period of the Patriarchs (2100 -1525 BCE)**

### ***Jacob's and Joseph's Last Days***

**Readings: Genesis 47:29-50:26**

#### ***Reflections:***

- Joseph remains the prominent son of blessing until the end. Jacob is able to restate the blessing God had on his life and for his descendents. God has said this many times but now he is able to say it with confidence and faith. Jacob takes Joseph's two sons as his own and so makes sense of these two smaller tribes being named accordingly rather than Joseph as the tribal name.
- This is a very small but powerful story. Jacob does not bless the sons according to birth order. The oldest normally got the primary blessing but Jacob intentionally crosses his arms and blesses the younger one with the greater blessing. This is how God works. He does not choose the strong, but the weak. He does not choose the older, but the younger. He does not choose the big and strong, but the small and weak. This is to show that God is a God that loves to reveal his strength in our weakness. He loves to choose the rejected of the world and display his glory. This reminds us that it is often humanly offensive how God chooses to work.
- Here is a longer passage in the New Testament that drives this very point home. "For the message of the cross (grace) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached (faith in God's grace) to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews (religious people who love the law) and foolishness to Gentiles (human approach to life), but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. My sister, think of what you were when you were called. You were not wise by human standards; not influential; not of noble birth. But

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.' When I came to you, my sister, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much crying. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5)

- The blessing on the tribes is interesting in two points. First, the prophecy of the Messiah coming through Judah's tribe is found here in a pretty clear form. "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his." Second, that Joseph is clearly marked for great blessing. Again we see that he will face opposition but he will overcome any obstacle, like a fruitful vine that climbs over a wall.
- When Jacob dies, it is striking how the fear of the brothers returns. Again Joseph the sensitive man weeps and reassures them of his grace. It seems even after all these years the family dynamics remain the same. The brothers still struggle with fear and Joseph still has to reassure them.
- We have witnessed in our journey through Genesis how the major theme is reinforced again and again. Will I follow God's way that looks crazy or my way that looks good at first but then ends up in disaster? Repeatedly we see the contrast: the tree of life and the tree of knowing good and evil, Cain and Abel, Lot and Abram, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers. One pair after another reminds us that it is a humble legacy of those who risk the adventure of following God and learn to live as fools as they trust in God's higher ways.