

JACOB BLESSES HIS SONS --- THE GREAT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

BIBLE TEXT : Genesis 48:1-22; 49:1-33.

LESSON 40 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 48:1-22

1 And it came to pass after these things, that *one* told Joseph, Behold, thy father *is* sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.
2 And *one* told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.
3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,
4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.
5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.
6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.
7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same *is* Bethlehem.
8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who *are* these?
9 And Joseph said unto his father, They *are* my sons, whom God

Bible References:

I The Adoption and Blessing, by Jacob, of Joseph's Sons

1. Jacob, after repeating the Bethel covenant, claims Joseph's sons as his own, Genesis 48:1-7.
2. Jacob greets Manasseh and Ephraim, happy that God made it possible, Genesis 48:8-12.
3. The aged, almost blind Jacob, in crossing his arms, automatically gives the greater blessing to the younger son, Genesis 48:13-16.
4. Joseph protests his father's discrimination against Manasseh, Genesis 48:17-19.
5. Jacob justifies his act and again prefers the younger, Genesis 48:19-22.

II The Prophetic blessings Given to the 12 Sons

1. Reuben's instability and sin cause him to lose a preferred position, Genesis 49:1-4;

Genesis 37:21-22

²¹ And Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

Genesis 42:22

²² And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

Deuteronomy 33:6

⁶ Let Reuben live, and not die; and let *not* his men be few.

Judges 5:15-16

¹⁵ And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart.

¹⁶ Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great searchings of heart.

2. Simeon and Levi's cruelty and sin cause their inheritance to be divided and scattered, Genesis 49:5-7;

Genesis 34:25

²⁵ And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

Genesis 34:31

³¹ And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

Exodus 32:26

²⁶ Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who *is* on the LORD'S side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Exodus 32:29

²⁹ For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

Numbers 1:47-54

⁴⁷ But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not

hath given me in this *place*. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, *so that* he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them.

11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

13 And 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 unto him.

14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid *it* upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this *is* the firstborn; put thy right hand

numbered among them.

⁴⁸ For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying,

⁴⁹ Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel:

⁵⁰ But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that *belong* to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

⁵¹ And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

⁵² And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.

⁵³ But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.

⁵⁴ And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

Numbers 26:62

⁶² And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel.

Numbers 35:1

¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho, saying,

Numbers 35:8

⁸ And the cities which ye shall give *shall be* of the possession of the children of Israel: from *them that have* many ye shall give many; but from *them that have* few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

Deuteronomy 33:8-11

⁸ And of Levi he said, *Let* thy Thummim and thy Urim *be* with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, *and with* whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

⁹ Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.

¹⁰ They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.

¹¹ Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

3. Judah receives the royal part of the birthright that culminates in the coming of the Messiah, Genesis 49:8-12;

Deuteronomy 33:7

⁷ And this *is the blessing* of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help *to him* from his enemies.

4. Zebulun is given the promise of an excellent commercial and trading position, Genesis 49:13;

Deuteronomy 33:18-19

¹⁸ And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.

¹⁹ They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck *of* the abundance of the seas, and *of* treasures hid in the sand.

Judges 5:14

upon his head.

19 And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it*: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

Genesis 49:1-33

1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the last days.

2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

3 Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *it*: he went up to my couch.

5 Simeon and Levi *are* brethren; instruments of cruelty *are in* their habitations.

6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

¹⁴ Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

Judges 5:18

¹⁸ Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

5. The prophecy concerning Issachar shows the complacency of that tribe, Genesis 49:14, 15;

Deuteronomy 33:18-19

¹⁸ And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.

¹⁹ They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.

Judges 5:15

¹⁵ And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben *there were* great thoughts of heart.

6. Dan, a less favoured brother, will nevertheless fulfil all his civil obligations, Genesis 49:16, 17;

Deuteronomy 33:22

²² And of Dan he said, Dan *is* a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

Judges 5:17

¹⁷ Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

7. Gad is to experience difficulty, but will surmount in the end, Genesis 49:19;

Deuteronomy 33:20-21

²⁰ And of Gad he said, Blessed *be* he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.

²¹ And he provided the first part for himself, because there, *in* a portion of the lawgiver, *was he* seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

Judges 5:17

¹⁷ Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

8. Asher's inheritance is to be a rich one, filled with luxuries and dainties, Genesis 49:20;

Deuteronomy 33:24-25

²⁴ And of Asher he said, *Let Asher be* blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.

²⁵ Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass; and as thy days, *so shall thy strength be*.

Judges 5:17

¹⁷ Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

9. Naphtali is blessed with the reckless daring of choice wisdom, Genesis 49:21;

Deuteronomy 33:23

²³ And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.

Judges 5:18

¹⁸ Zebulun and Naphtali *were* a people *that* jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

10. Joseph receives the prime blessing of all, a combination of all the patriarchal blessings; also the double inheritance of the

7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

8 Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

9 Judah *is* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

12 His eyes *shall be* red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

13 Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *shall be* for an haven of ships; and his border *shall be* unto Zidon.

14 Issachar *is* a strong ass couching down between two burdens:

15 And he saw that rest *was* good, and the land that *it was* pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.

16 Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel.

17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.

18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

birthright, Genesis 49:22-26;

Deuteronomy 33:13-17

¹³ And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD *be* his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,

¹⁴ And for the precious fruits *brought forth* by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,

¹⁵ And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

¹⁶ And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and *for* the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let *the blessing* come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him *that was* separated from his brethren.

¹⁷ His glory *is like* the firstling of his bullock, and his horns *are like* the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.

Judges 5:14

¹⁴ Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

11. Benjamin, the youngest, is blessed with strength and prosperity, Genesis 49:27;

Deuteronomy 33:12

¹² And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; *and the LORD* shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

Judges 5:14

¹⁴ Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

III The Messianic Prophecy and the Final Charge

1. A strain of Messianic prophecy is found in the covenants,

Genesis 3:15

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 6:18

¹⁸ But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

Genesis 12:3

³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 17:21

²¹ But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Genesis 22:18

¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Genesis 28:14

¹⁴ And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 46:3

³ And he said, I *am* God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

Genesis 49:10

¹⁰ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

Numbers 24:17

20 Out of Asher his bread *shall be* fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

21 Naphtali *is* a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

22 Joseph *is* a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well; *whose* branches run over the wall:

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot *at him*, and hated him:

24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob; (from thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

25 *Even* by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

27 Benjamin shall ravine *as* a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a

¹⁷ I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Deuteronomy 18:15

¹⁵ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

2. The burden of the prophetic blessings centres around the Messianic hope, Genesis 49:1, 10-12, 18, 24.

3. Jacob, the godly man, dies, Genesis 49:28-33.

Notes:

The name of Jacob is a familiar one in the Bible, and is often linked with God's, as in the phrase: "the God of Jacob." This occurs perhaps more frequently with Jacob than with any other person who ever lived. Jacob came to know God at a place that he named **Bethel**, meaning the **House of God**. He was sanctified some years later at Peniel while en route to his own land, after living in the land of Haran for a score or more years. Jacob feared and loved God, and was loved by God; and God said of him that he had power with God and with men. Now we come to the story of the end of his life and are about to hear his last words.

The last words of dying friends and relatives are always significant to us. We listen carefully, as our loved ones come to the brink of the River, to catch their parting messages, which reassure and comfort us in the days of bereavement following their passing. But the last words of men of God, like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua, are most important because these men not only were great leaders of Israel, but in their final moments were given special gifts of prophecy they had not possessed during their life.

Jacob was ill; and Joseph, fearing that his father's end was near, took his two sons and went immediately to the bedside of the sick patriarch. Jacob was proud of Joseph, who through God's help had ascended to such heights in the realm of Egypt; and when he heard that his son was coming, the failing man took on new strength and sat upright that he might greet the little group better.

Notice how Jacob began his conversation with Joseph. "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me." Luz was the first name of Bethel, where Jacob was saved. He began his story at that place, because it was there that his real life began (**2 Corinthians 5:17** ¹⁷ Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.). Before that time he was a sinner and guilty of deceit and many other kinds of sins. He tried to do things his own way, before he met God at Bethel; but after his conversion we see that he was willing to let God have His way and work things out according to His divine will. In addition to being saved, Jacob learned a great lesson at Bethel. He was not the same man thereafter, so he refers to that time as the real beginning of his life.

Perhaps there were several reasons why Joseph was the honoured son of the 12. We know that he was a serious, well-mannered child, and that early in life he was given a coat of many colours, which not only showed the father's preference for him, but also might have given him some special authority the others did not receive. Joseph, no doubt, loved God from his very youth and because of his close association with his father perhaps

possession of a buryingplace.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth.

33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

had heard the story retold many times of the covenants that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and his father. He was the kind of son whom the God-fearing Jacob could confide in and with whom he could glorify God.

Now, at the end of his life, Jacob wished to reward this faithful son in a special way. Instead of giving a blessing to Joseph, as he did to the others, he blessed Joseph's two sons instead, and adopted them into his own family with all the rights and privileges of sons. They were to be fathers of tribes, which would give Joseph a double share in the inheritance -- one of the blessings of the birthright lost by the first-born, Reuben. At the first census, in the wilderness of Sinai, the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim numbered 72,700 men -- from 20 years of age upward -- who were able to go to war. This made Joseph's portion one of the largest of any tribe of Israel.

We find several instances in the Bible where God set aside the customs and traditions that men have set up as being correct and proper, probably to assert His own will and sovereignty, or to work out His plan for mankind in the quickest way (**Psalm 115:3** ³ But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. **Psalm 135:5-6** ⁵ For I know that the LORD *is* great, and *that* our Lord *is* above all gods. ⁶ Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.). In a number of instances God set aside the law of the birthright and preferred the younger son before the elder, bestowing heavenly favour and blessing as He in His infinite wisdom saw fit.

A theological system in the world, originally taught by John Calvin and known as Calvinism, has made inroads into and been accepted by a great portion of Protestantism. It teaches that God chooses, or predestines, those who are to be saved from sin and allows (or even sentences) the remaining bulk of humanity to a lost eternity. This theological system also includes the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, saying that once having been born into the family of God it is impossible for one to be separated from that relationship or to be eternally lost.

They base their false teachings on verses in the Bible, which they remove from the correct setting and distort, disregarding the all-inclusive invitations of the Gospel; but nothing can be farther from the truth of Scripture than these teachings. We have no sympathy with them, nor tolerance for them, in any way whatever. God's Word teaches that everyone is predestined to be saved in and through Jesus Christ, if he chooses to receive salvation; and also that it is possible to lose that salvation at any time, by wilfully turning away from God and committing sin.

To select some widely separated verses of Scripture, separate them from their context, and distort their true meaning to prove a theory that has been previously set up in the mind, ignoring the tenor of the whole body of Scripture in doing so, is against the plain teaching of the Bible and is repulsive to the open, honest mind. But that is what the Calvinists have done, and we can be sure that God's disapproval rests upon such a practice.

The call of God to repentance is for all men. The "whosoever wills" of the Bible are enough proof to satisfy anyone that none are left out of the great invitation to join the family of God. On the other hand, the fact that there is such a thing as predestination, or election, cannot be denied; but when we study the Scriptures we see that predestination is NOT to be applied to our call to repentance but is only for certain offices and callings in the work of God on earth.

This choice of certain men and women, on the part of God, for

specific offices in His harvest field and Kingdom, is guided by His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge of the thoughts, plans, intents, and decisions of every man, woman, and child -- saved or unsaved. He knows who of the sons of men will love and serve Him with all their hearts. He knows who will be willing to make a supreme sacrifice and all the embracing consecration for His cause. He knows who will esteem the reproach of the Cross as greater riches than all the treasures of the world. These godly, sainted, self-sacrificing individuals God calls for special duties and privileges in His Kingdom (**1 Peter 1:1-2** ¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. **1 Peter 2:9-10** ⁹ But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: ¹⁰ Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. **Ephesians 1:4-12** ⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ⁸ Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: ¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: ¹² That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.). That is the extent of predestination. It does not affect our response to His call to "every one that thirsteth," or Heaven's answer to the "Lord, have mercy" of the "whosoever will."

This choice, by God, of certain individuals from out of the teeming millions who walk earth's pathways, we can see, is governed by two things. Firstly, it is determined by each of us, individually, by the manner in which we respond to God's calls to repentance and His subsequent entreaties that we might come into a closer relationship with Him. Secondly, it is governed by God's foreknowledge of the way we will answer and respond to these calls, invitations, and entreaties.

Abel was preferred above Cain -- because God knew that by faith Abel would offer "a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Isaac was preferred above Ishmael -- because Isaac was the son of promise and the Almighty knew this promised son would be a God-fearing and God-honouring man all his days. Jacob was preferred above Esau -- because before the birth of these twins, God knew that Jacob would value the birthright **and blessing of Heaven above** anything in the **world and that Esau would** despise and sell those coveted blessings and privileges for a mere "mess of pottage."

Judah and Joseph were preferred above Reuben -- because God saw through His omniscient eye that they would live more godly lives than their lust motivated brother. Moses was chosen as a leader for Israel instead of his elder brother, Aaron, because there was a principle in his heart that would choose "to suffer affliction with the people of God." And David was selected as a

king for Israel rather than any of his elder brothers, because the heart of that shepherd lad was perfect toward God -- and God knew it from the beginning!

So we can realise that the foreknowledge of God and the all-including wisdom of the Almighty can see the end from the very beginning and know the thoughts of our hearts better than we do ourselves. He cannot be limited in any of His attributes or else He is not the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Being that we know Him to be. If His holiness, love, mercy, and judgment are without bounds and know no end or termination, then His foreknowledge is also without limit (Isaiah 42:9; 46:9, 10; Acts 15:18). He can, and does, know every detail of our lives, even to the end of our existence on earth

But this foreknowledge of the eternal Father does not rob us of our power of choice -- the supreme and sovereign will that He gave us in the beginning. It is our own responsibility to determine the destiny of our soul. To no one else can go the blame if we choose the wrong path and are lost for eternity. There is a power of choice that is given us that even God cannot govern or change, once our decision is made.

Consequently, those "whom he did foreknow" God predestinated to conform to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. Those whom He predestinated, He called to various walks and offices of service for Him. The choice was up to the individual but God knew what that choice was going to be, so He called him for special service, saying, in substance, "Since this person is going to choose to follow Me, I will call him for this certain position in My Kingdom and work on earth". They are the ones whom God justified, when they called on Him in repentance, and they are the ones whom He will glorify. **Psalm 4:3** ³ But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. **Romans 8:28-31** ²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. ³¹ What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

God saw that Joseph was going to be a man whom He could trust, so He called this youth for a special place in the divine plan for the salvation of the world. Now God, speaking through His servant, Jacob, sets aside the natural laws and prefers Ephraim over the elder, Manasseh. Great are the ways of the Most High! Far-reaching and all-including are His plans! Worthy of all men's praise is He Who not only has created this world, but Who remains interested in it and in every detail of its operation! How humble we should be as we approach His Throne and as we walk before Him in this life!

QUESTIONS

1. What were the names of Joseph's two sons?
2. Name the 12 sons of Jacob.
3. What special blessing was given Joseph?
4. To whom did the kingly portion of Reuben's birthright go? What was included in it?
5. How was the prophecy concerning Levi eventually fulfilled?
6. Quote the Messianic prophecy contained in Jacob's blessing of his sons.
7. What custom of man's did God set aside when Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph?
8. Explain in what ways God has predestined us.
9. To what did Jacob refer when he opened his conversation with Joseph?
10. Where was Jacob buried?