

Joseph 7 - A Bright Future

Sometimes when you watch a movie and you come to the end of it, you wish you had just a little bit more. There are those movies that are disappointing because they just sort of end abruptly and leave you to assume that everything is now going to work out. Others lead into a sequel for an ongoing saga for Hollywood to cash-in on. Then there are the historical stories where they give an epilogue to let you know what happened to the characters in the future. Even though we have the rest of the Bible and how everything worked out after Joseph, there is actually still an epilogue, an afterword, that has *not* been fulfilled yet. We come, now, to the end of Genesis and Joseph's death as the final word of the book. But there is for Joseph to be fulfilled long after the enslavement and exodus of Israel, long after the battles of Joshua, the Judges, and the kings of Israel have been fought, way beyond the captivity and the restoration of Israel, way after the resurrection of Christ, all the way up to Revelation chapter 4 when John, the Apostle, hears the words "Come up hither." We finish up the book of Genesis by looking at the close of Joseph's life. But first, let's look at Joseph's funeral arrangements.

1. Not "good-bye," but "see-you-later" -

Gen 50:22-26 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third *generation*: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, **God**

will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, *being* an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

The burying of the dead is not a mere disposing of a body. All the things surrounding a funeral speak of a sense of persistence. For the unbelieving atheist, it might be the persistence of a memory of someone. For an unbelieving agnostic, it is the sense that there must be something more beyond the grave. For the Christian, it is the firm affirmation of the expectation of a new home and body. This message also might be called, "A Sermon in a Sigh." Volumes could be communicated in a mere sigh as we express our longing to escape this world.

As we look at the last verses of Genesis, we see Joseph's last instructions with a view to the future. By looking to the future and having his bones to be buried in the Promised Land, Joseph was not merely being sentimental. If death ends all consciousness and existence, then it hardly matters what happens to us after death. Even for those who do not belong to God and have no hope for eternity, a funeral represents *some* sense of hope that there is something beyond this life. Joseph could be, at the very least, demonstrating some kind of longing for the future. But Joseph had far more to go on.

First, he had direct contact with God over his life time. He had watched as God worked time after time to protect, preserve, and promote him. He witnessed the impossible as his brothers and father came to him even as it had been revealed to him years earlier. He firmly testified, on two occasions that he viewed the events of his life as a fulfillment of God's perfect will. In the context of his awareness of God's plan and work, to add on instructions for burying his bones in the Promised Land must be viewed as an awareness of God's future plans. Joseph was not just looking to his funeral and offering a "good-bye." He was

looking beyond and as such he was saying, "See you later. There is something more for me in the future."

2. Joseph's hope -

For the Israelites there was always a sense that God had a special place that was theirs to inherit, no matter how far off in the future that was to be.

- Joseph had the testimony of his great-grandfather Abraham.

When Sarah died, Abraham went to the sons of Heth to buy a burial plot. He did not take Sarah back to Ur of the Chaldees. He was only looking to the future and knew the future was in the Promised Land.

Gen 23:4-7,12-13 *I am* a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

5And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

6Hear us, my lord: thou *art* a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

7And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, *even* to the children of Heth.

12And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

13And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou *wilt give it*, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take *it* of me, and I will bury my dead there.

Abraham had a sense of permanence in the land and wanted to secure part of it.

- Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob.

Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob were buried there with the same view in mind. Jacob's instruction to his sons was to bury him there.

Gen 49:29,31 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,

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

- Joseph

Gen 50:24-25 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

²⁵ And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

- Jeremiah's title deed

Let's look at Jeremiah as another example of one looking to restoration in the far future in the land of Israel.

Jer 32:6-7,10,13-14 And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

7 Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*.

10 And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances.

13 And I charged Baruch before them, saying,

14 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these

evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

Jeremiah's example, in particular, is an example of a number of times that the Jews looked forward to God's promise of the land for them. God wants there to be no mistake in our understanding. It is very much like when we tell our children something over and over again to make sure that they get it and get it good! Jeremiah was in prison, with little hope of escape, and yet he purchased that land with such conviction and witness so that he could testify to the Jews that they *were indeed* going to be taken captive and *just as* assuredly they were going to be coming back.

Even in the Passover, in this day, there is a longing expressed for the land they belong to.

Traditionally, Jerusalem has been the focus of longing for Diaspora Jews [Jews who are dispersed around the world] who were forced from their land and the Temple of their God. Psalm 137 is the well-known lament of the Babylonian Jews who wept "by the rivers of Babylon" and declared,

Psa 137:1-6 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

²We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

³For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

⁴How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange

land?

⁵If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

⁶If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Yet with Israel a modern state, some see that longing as [out of place and belonging to another time], and with it the phrase that traditionally ends the seder, "Next Year in Jerusalem." The temple was destroyed 2,000 years ago, and many Jews today feel comfortable, religiously and materially, in their Diaspora communities. Some are uncomfortable with the extremes of religious life and the ongoing political strife in the Jewish state. The issue is even more salient for Israeli Jews, residents of a country whose capital is Jerusalem, for whom "next year in Jerusalem" therefore makes little sense on its surface.

What, then, does it mean for today's Jew to utter the words "next year in Jerusalem" at the end of every Passover seder?

The most straightforward answer is that "Jerusalem" refers to the future city--and its Temple--rebuilt when the Messiah comes. Most traditional Jews feel quite comfortable expressing this messianic longing at the end of the seder, just as at the end of each Shabbat Jews recite the hope that the Messiah should come "speedily in our day."

Although the phrase itself entered the Haggadah [the liturgy of the seder] only in the Middle Ages, it resonates thematically with ancient biblical themes of past and future redemption. On the seder night, each participant

has personally experienced the physical redemption at that Red Sea. As the Haggadah says, "For it was not our forefathers alone whom the Holy One redeemed; He redeemed us, too, with them," and, "In every generation, every individual must feel as if he or she personally had come out of Egypt." Then, as we end the seder, we utter this phrase that reaches forward to the coming of the Messiah and to complete spiritual redemption, represented by Jerusalem.

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Passover/The_Seder/Conducting_a_Seder/After_the_Meal/Next_Year_in_Jerusalem.shtml

What were Joseph and all the Old Testament saints looking forward to?

Heb 11:1,6,8-10,13,22 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

6But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

8By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

13These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

22By faith Joseph, when he died,

made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

3. The believer's keen longing -

As the Jew in the seder service looked for the Messiah to come speedily, we should have a keen longing and be looking for Christ in His kingdom.

Matt 6:10 Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

We should be looking for Him to come quickly.

Rev 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Rev 22:7,12,20 Behold, I come quickly: blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

We call this the blessed hope. It is the resurrection.

Titus 2:12-14 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We are to comfort each other with this thought. As people approach the end of their sojourn on earth, to the lost it may seem insensitive for us to encourage someone to focus on the prize of glory. I know that not everyone is focused on the sureties of God's Word. This is all the more reason why we must know this book. Our confidence is not built on wishful hopes, but on the firm promises and testimonies of God Almighty Himself.

1Thess 4:13-18 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1Thess 5:1-5,9-11 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

²For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

³For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

⁴But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

⁵Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

⁹For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

¹¹Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Like Joseph, we keep our eyes on the mission that God has laid before us, and we know that the mission is not ended in death.

1Cor 15:51-58 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

⁵⁷But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Joseph had a great anticipation and wanted to make sure, even though it would be *thousands* of years later, that he was going to rise up as though he had never left. There are many tombstones that have faded over the course of the last several hundred years. Even though we might be long forgotten, God will not forget.

Isa 49:15-16 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.
¹⁶Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

The engraving on the tombstones might erode away, but not the engraving on God's hand. If you are saved, then your name is written there. On my tombstone, it would be better to not carve born 8/27/55 and died whenever. On your tombstone it might include your birth date, the date you were born again, and the date of your death. How about just born on a certain day and only a *dash*? You will not be dead, you will be more alive than you were ever known!!

Does your life have a purposeful end? When we started this series of messages on Joseph, we said it could have been titled, *A Man on a Mission*. Is your life just one big effort to prolong your time on earth to keep eating and trying to amuse yourself till the end comes and you are cast into Hell if you are lost? Don't be deceived and think that you can somehow escape pain and suffering. Your life can be part of the Battle of the Ages as God redeems those who will believe and brings us home to glory. Freed from the power of sin and death, we can live with God with confidence and certainty in His word and work.

1. Not "good-bye," but "see-you-later"
- Gen 50:22-26
2. Joseph's hope - Gen 23:4-7,12-13,49:29,31,50:24-25, Jer 32:6-

7,10,13-14 , Psa 137:1-6, Heb 11:1,6,8-10,13,22

3. The believer's keen longing - Matt 6:10, Rev 3:11,22:7,12,20 Titus 2:12-14, 1Thess 4:13-18, 1Thess 5:1-5,9-11, 1Cor 15:51-58, Isa 49:15-16