

Scripture Reading: Genesis 47

“27 So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. 28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob’s life was one hundred and forty-seven years. 29 When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.” And he said, “I will do as you have said.” 31 Then he said, “Swear to me.” And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

Genesis 48: Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, “Indeed your father is sick”; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And Jacob was told, “Look, your son Joseph is coming to you”; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. 3 Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 4 and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’ 5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. 6 Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).””

“The End Draws Near for Jacob”

As the end draws near for Jacob, we also draw near to the end of our journey through the Book of Beginnings. For those who can remember all the way back to the beginning of that journey you might recall that it took over 25 sermons to get us out of just the first three chapters... While there is a lot in these final three chapters, I do not think it will take many sermons, and certainly not 25!

We have been considering the ‘generations of Jacob’ since chapter 37 and now it is time for his life to end and for the story of God’s grand plan of redemption to continue.

- We will see in these final chapters a return to the foundations of hope that were laid in the lives of Abraham, Issac and Jacob.**
- We will find Jacob living in hope as he adds to his twelve sons and blesses them all!**
- AND we will see hope for the future as the bones of both Jacob and Joseph are laid to rest as they await the final resurrection!**

As we consider all of this today and in the coming weeks, it should be very easy once again to see our Savior Jesus here in the pages of the Old Testament!

We know and will be reminded that:

- Jesus is our Rock, or foundation!**
- Jesus is our Life, or living hope!**
- And yes,
Jesus is our only hope for the future!**

Now as I mentioned a few weeks ago, this is not the first time we have the sense that Jacob’s life is drawing to a close:

He seemed to be about ready to die as a grieving man in Canaan with the thought of losing Benjamin after the loss of his favored son Joseph. And then when reunited with Joseph he seemed ready to exit this life as a very happy and completed man.

- However, our text informs us that Jacob went on to live another 17 years here in the land of Egypt.

In these final chapters, we will see Jacob interact twice with Joseph, which we will consider this week & right after family camp. After that we have Jacob blessing all of his children and we will come to his actual death and burial as we open the final chapter of Genesis.

- Now this might seem like a long drawn out affair, but as one who is growing older, it is easy to see how it can take some time to put all of your things in order.

Now of course in this fallen world we don't all get to live a long life, and death is always the enemy...

So even when the oldest among us passes it is a real time of weeping and mourning, no matter how 'prepared' we think we are for someone dying. On the other hand, we do not expect young people to die. Thus it is not unusual that when they do die suddenly, provisions have NOT been made for their burial and most would really not have their affairs in order.

- Now of course some are better at this than others!

For example, let me do a quick instructional survey:

- ✓ How many of you produced your first will in your twenties?
- ✓ How many of you produced your first will in your thirties?
- ✓ How many of you produced your first will in your forties?
- ✓ How many of you produced your first will in your fifties?

- Now I will not ask the embarrassing question about who does not have a will.

[we could do the same with preparations to care for a family after you are gone.]

As good post-millennial folks we are supposed to be planning for the future and thus these final chapters should have some important lessons for us to learn about planning for that future. They will also continue to teach us about Jesus and God's plan of salvation which we see right away in our text if we have eyes to see!

- In the first of two recorded meetings with Joseph we find Jacob making a very important request with regard to his burial.

29 "When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph & said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, & deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

- Now we need to remember here that Jacob had no problem with his family continuing to dwell in the Land of Egypt.

He knew the promise that had been given to his grandfather Abraham which said they would spend hundreds of years there in Egypt growing into a mighty nation!

- BUT, that mighty nation was going to one day return to claim the land promised to all the patriarchs!

Canaan is the promised land and that is where Jacob wants to be buried along side of the rest of the Patriarchs:

- **- Buried with Abraham & Sarah**
- **- Buried with Issac & Rebecca**
- **- And buried with his wife Leah**

He asks his son to swear that he will do this & while we know little about the custom of putting a hand under the thigh, it would be like a hand-shake or signing of a contract. If you remember, this is what Abraham asked his servant to do when he sent him off to find a wife for Isaac. Joseph as a good son is happy to carry out his father's wishes and says, "I will do as you have said."

31 Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed."

Some, I believe rightly, argue that Jacob insisted on Joseph swearing, not because he did not trust his son, but so Joseph could honestly tell Pharaoh what he had sworn to do when the time came to make that journey. Jacob is comforted by this promise and bows his head in worship in much the same way we would give a prayer of thanksgiving when something has worked out the way we had hoped.

So let me pause and ask an important question:

Why did Jacob insist on returning to the family sepulcher in Canaan for burial?

Thinking ahead in this familiar account we know that Joseph requests that his bones be carried back to Canaan many years later. And the bones of the other brothers who made up the tribes of Israel found their rest in Egypt.

- **As we shall see when we come to the study of that final hope of the resurrection, it does not matter where one's body is laid to rest, nor what condition it is in.**

What Jacob is rightly focused on is the foundation that has been laid for the nation of Israel which of course is the hope of the world because as the Apostle Paul says of his countrymen in Romans 9:

"4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

- **The foundation has been laid and the nation of Israel would one day bring forth the Savior of the World, despite all their sins and shortcomings!**
- **Jesus the true foundation!**

The writer of the Hebrews makes mention of the faith of these men, which of course we know full well is a gracious gift from God:

Hebrews 11:17: " By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff."

These men establish Israel and their burial plot should have been a constant reminder of their important history! And lest we forget, Jesus Himself turns to their example when confronting the Sadducees of His day who had gotten so many things wrong about the hope of Israel and the hope of the resurrection:

Matthew 22: "23 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 24 saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brothers.

The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. 27 Last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.” 29 Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.”

Now of course Jesus is quoting the Words of God as He appeared to Moses at the burning bush where we see the beginning of the return of Israel, which has now grown into a mighty nation, to the Land of Promise.

- I trust you can see why it was important for Jacob to be buried with Abraham and Isaac!

The next chapter opens with the second meeting between these two men in Jacob’s final days and here we begin to see the hope of Israel being built for the future.

Genesis 48: Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, “Indeed your father is sick”; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And Jacob was told, “Look, your son Joseph is coming to you”; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.”

It is interesting to note here the use of the name Jacob and then Israel. If you remember, we saw that Abraham is always called Abraham after God gave him his new name and Isaac of course is always referred to by his given name: But Jacob is also given a new name as he returns to Canaan, but after that we find both names being used. They might seem interchangeable, but here I think we clearly see a transition from the son Jacob to the Patriarch Israel. And it is that very encounter where Jacob got his new name that comes to his mind as Joseph comes to visit...

3 “Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 4 and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’”

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob laid the foundation and now Jacob, as Israel begins to look forward to the nation of Israel. He is dying and his family is now in the strange land that God said they would visit...

- But he remembers the hope of the future when this multitude of people would return to the Land of Promise.

In two weeks, Lord willing, I will take us on in the text where we see Jacob adopting & blessing the sons of Joseph:

5 “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. 6 Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. 7 But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

In all of this Jacob’s favored wife comes to mind and while there is a sweet remembrance of her and her resting place, I think it is important to note that Jacob is not to be buried with her, but with his father & grandfather... The Patriarchs!

This is why Leah is buried there with Sarah & Rebecca as mothers in the line of promise: Bearing Isaac, Jacob & Judah!

- As we learned a few weeks ago, the Kingdom must come first, even over our families or true loves!

And in closing for this week I believe there is another very important lesson for us to learn from the death of Jacob. Here we see a man who knows that his time has come and is making the proper arrangements with the Kingdom of God at the center of his thoughts. This is a pattern that he perhaps learned from his father and grandfather:

Abraham as his death drew near, blessed Isaac giving him all that was his and sent away the children of Keturah. It is something we often see in the lives of godly Saints...

Moses and Joshua in their final days are careful to make provisions for future leadership and to admonish God's people to be faithful. We will consider some of the last words of Joshua at the Table this morning. We see King David on his death bed make provision for his son Solomon to sit on His throne.

- So, are their practical applications for us today?

The obvious one is to be prepared! Have you made the proper preparations, like that will and the life insurance and decent records that someone else will have to understand? Are you preparing your family members for the future with right training in the ways of the Lord?

- Are they learning good habits or bad habits from the examples you are giving them?

An encouraging part of the life of Jacob, should certainly be that it is never too late to set better examples! And finally, we should be those fully prepared to face death, be it our own or one of those close to us... By always having the concerns of the Kingdom front and center and not playing second fiddle to other priorities. We want to be ready when our time comes as the Apostle Paul was when he wrote his final Epistle to young Timothy...

II Timothy 4:6 "6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

On the other hand we do not want to be that foolish man in the parable that Jesus told who squandered God's great blessings:

Luke 12: "13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness,[b] for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

- Rather we want to be those who are truly rich toward God, learning the right lessons from both Jacob and Joseph in these final days of their lives and the final chapters of the Book of Genesis!
- We want our lives built on the only proper foundation:
The Finished Work of Jesus!
- We want to live our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit because it is Christ Who lives in us!
- And we want to look forward to the hope of the resurrection when the last enemy, death will be defeated!

Communion Meditation: Joshua 23

"14 "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which Jehovah your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. 24: 14 "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve Jehovah! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."