

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #102

Genesis 49:29-33

It has been called by Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, a poor man's dearest, kindest and best friend. It has been called by the Greek philosophers the healer of deadly ills, the debt we must all pay. It has been called by Henry Longfellow, the consoler, the thing that could heal the heart forever. It has been called by John Dryden, a poet, the best of thieves who can steal us from ourselves. The subject is death .

Like it or not, admit it or not, accept it or not, the reality of each one of our lives is that we are speeding toward our date of death. When death comes, what we did with our lives stands forever. If we gave ourselves to accomplishing our goals, our objectives, our will, we lose rewards, just like Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Issachar. If we gave ourselves to accomplishing God's goals, God's objectives, God's will, we earn rewards, just like Judah, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin.

All of these sons had a first rate example of one totally dedicated to God - their father Jacob. Jacob was no sinless saint in life; in fact, his life was spotted with some dark episodes of failure and sin. But he eventually got it all resolved and he leaves behind a remarkable example of one dedicated to doing God's will.

THE ONE WHO WILL BE HONORED FOREVER IS ONE WHO STAYED FOCUSED ON GOD AND HIS WORD AND HIS PROGRAM RIGHT UNTIL THE MOMENT OF HIS DEATH.

There are three facts about Jacob's death that we want to clearly see from this text which truly do show us a glorious way to die:

FACT #1 - Jacob believed death would mean a gathering to his people. Genesis 49:29a

Jacob believed death for him would mean he would go to Sheol and be gathered with other O.T. saints (Genesis 37:35; 42:38). Sheol was a place that contained two chambers, the upper chamber, which is the place of comfort, known as Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), and the lower chamber, which is the place of torment (Deuteronomy 32:22; Proverbs 15:24), commonly referred to as Hades.

Jacob was not afraid of death. He viewed it as the moment in which he would be gathered to his people. He would be able to see Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Rachel and Leah. Death for Jacob was nothing to fear, it was something he looked forward to.

One who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior need **NEVER** fear death. Death for the believer means it is an opportunity to be reunited with loved ones of like precious faith. Death for a believer means "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8).

FACT #2 - Jacob believed the location of his burial was critical. Genesis 49:29b-32

Jacob was very specific as to where he wanted to be buried. In fact, he had already informed Joseph of his desire (Genesis 47:29-31), so this is not new revelation, it is reemphasized revelation. Before all of his sons, he is requesting that they take him back to the land of Canaan and bury him in the cave of Machpelah. Now why is this so important to Jacob? What is so significant about this spot?

Jacob did not in any way think this would get him some better angle for which he could enter heaven. This request has everything to do with Jacob's belief in the Word of God. Clear back in Genesis 15, God promised Abram that He would eventually give him this land (15:18-21). While Abraham was in this land, Sarah died (23:2) and Abraham fully believed that this was the land God had promised, so he asked Ephron if he could purchase the land for his place of burial (23:7-8). This was the Hebron area, in the land of Canaan (23:19). Abraham believed that someday, he and his seed would be raised up to inherit this land promised to him by God. Evidently, Jacob feared that some of his sons might get so caught up with the Egyptian world that they would forget about their promised land so he specifically requests that he be taken back to Canaan and buried there.

1. This request proves Abraham, Isaac and Jacob died believing in a literal specific land promised to Israel.
2. This request proves Jacob was focused on the future program of God until the end of his life.
3. This request proves Jacob was focused on communicating to his children the things of God right until the moment he died.
4. This request proves that Jacob believed in a future resurrection because he wanted to be raised with his loved ones in their promised land.

FACT #3 - Jacob died after making a powerful statement for God. Genesis 49:33

We must remember that Jacob is old (147 years old - 47:28), he is sick (48:1) and he is very weak (48:2). To sit up on his bed this one last time in order to pronounce these judgments, plus to make a final request was an amazing demonstration of faith, plus in God's mind, a form of worship (Hebrews 11:20).

Jacob dies as a faithful hero. When he was all done, he curled back up into his bed and died. His body was left behind, but he "was gathered to his people." His last visible act, which his sons saw, was a father worshipping God.

Unless the Rapture occurs first, death is a debt we will all pay. If we want to be honored in glory, we must stay focused on God's Word and committed to God's doctrines. Keep active and faithful in God's church. Pursue righteousness. Use your substance, your energy, your time to do a work for God. Stay faithful to God even in weakness, illness or old age. If you do that, regardless of some poor decisions you've made along the way, you will finish like Jacob and be honored forever.