

# Genesis – Lesson 31

## Joseph's Final Days

### Read Genesis 50:1-26.

1. (a) Why do you think that the Egyptians went *with* Joseph to bury Jacob at Hebron?

The reasons for this are probably twofold: 1) it is clear that Joseph has adopted a number of Egyptian practices and culture during his stay in Egypt; Jacob embalmed is an example of this, something foreign to the cultural mindset of one from Mesopotamia. Therefore, it is possible that this accompaniment was a simply an extension of the Egyptian customs Joseph had embraced, and/or 2) the position of Joseph as the virtual leader of Egypt would grant him great adoration by the people, and they would want to respect him when his father died. Thus, many of the Egyptians went with him because it was a royal occasion, an event in which the people honored their leader by honoring the memory of his dead father.

- (b) What were Joseph's brothers *concerned* about when Jacob died?

The brothers were now afraid that Joseph would take his *revenge* upon them; once Jacob is gone (and his preventative influence gone with him), the brothers are afraid that Joseph will now seek to punish them in a way he could not while Jacob was alive.

- (c) How can Joseph's reply to his brothers in verse 20 be *linked* with Romans 8:28-30?

The statement of v. 20 is one of the greatest statements linking the *sovereignty* of God with his *providence* over the affairs of individuals. Joseph sees the evil of the brothers as something *used* by the sovereign hand of God to accomplish good, just as Paul articulates in Romans 8. According to Paul, God works together *everything* in the life of the elect (i.e. the called) for *his* good purposes, just as God worked everything in Joseph's life for the doing of good. In the simplest sense, *everything* in the life of a person under the direct control of Almighty God is used for *good*. We may not be able to *see* or *understand* how some things can be good, especially evil done to us by others, but we are assured by both of these men that it is for God's good purposes in any event.

2. (a) What was God's *purpose(s)* for the events of Joseph's life?

The *entirety* of what happened to Joseph, from being cast into a well, to being sold into slavery, to be sent to prison, to being abandoned there, to rising to power in Egypt all had a *singular* purpose: to save the lives of the family of Jacob. God used *years* worth of difficulty through Joseph to get the people of Israel to Goshen, to provide for their physical sustenance, and to (eventually) grow them into a nation and be lead forth to establish a new nation under God.

- (b) How is this *similar* to Jesus' purpose according to Romans 5:19?

Paul articulates in this verse the twin doctrines of *original guilt* and *alien righteousness*, two *mirror* concepts derived from a single starting point: the imputation of *someone else's* nature. Paul points to Adam (the first "*one man*") and says that, because of his *disobedience*, all humanity became sinners; the entire human race "*inherits*" from this first man the natural state of being disobedient, and all human beings sin (and die!) to prove that this is true. Paul then points to Jesus (the second "*one man*") and says that, because of his *obedience*, those who follow him "*inherit*" from him the new state of being obedient, of having an *alien righteousness* imputed to them from this "*second Adam*." This is very similar to the situation with Joseph: just as *he* persevered and trusted in the Lord throughout all of the difficulties of his life, the people of Israel persevered as he had. In a sense, the family of Jacob "*inherited*" from Joseph his obedience; God worked through him to accomplish new life in them, and all of that was because Joseph stayed faithful. They were "*imputed*" (in a sense) his faith.

(c) What is the chief characteristic of Joseph that appears in his *final words* (vv. 24-25)?

The chief characteristic of Joseph in his dying words is his concerns *for the plans and purposes of God*. Although he is about to die, Joseph insists that God will visit the people again in the future and bring them back to Canaan. He instructs them to carry his bones with them as they leave *because he is confident that God will not forget them*. Joseph, even at the end, is more concerned about what God is going to do to the people than what is about to happen to himself.

(d) What do you think is significant about the statement regarding Joseph's *burial* in verse 26?

The verse does not say that Joseph was (in fact) buried. Instead, it would appear that Joseph's body was embalmed and placed in a sarcophagus, in anticipation of the day it would be carried out of Egypt and buried at Hebron. Of course, 400 years later, in spite of the embalming, all that would remain of Joseph's body would be his bones. But, the family kept Joseph out of the ground in anticipation of his eventual burial in Canaan.

3. What did you learn about the plan of God to *redeem* humanity in the lives of:
- Adam     **he is given the *original* plan regarding a redeemer and a picture of redemption in the animal skins made for him by God after he sins**
  - Cain     **he is emblematic of the human race, rebellious against its creator and in need of redemption**
  - Seth     **he stands as a picture of the Messiah when he becomes a *substitute* for Abel and produces a line of faithful men**
  - Enoch    **he demonstrates symbolically how those who are elect and brought to the Lord will walk with God and live forever**
  - Noah     **he is an example of the very nature of redemption itself, saving a specific people against the wrath of God**
4. What *new* thing did you learn from Genesis about:
- Abraham **that he was a man fraught with both moments of great faith and moments of great failure, a man in need of a savior like any of us**
  - Isaac    **that he was a man of great *patience* and *endurance*, handling his moments of trouble with humility and faith**
  - Jacob    **although beginning as impetuous and a schemer, he was *broken* by God to become a humble servant and patriarch of a new nation**
  - Joseph   **that during the course of his life, he was much more *human* than he is often portrayed, even having temptations to revenge upon his brothers**
5. (a) Summarize briefly how the *gospel* of Jesus Christ appears in Genesis. Where did you see it most *explicitly*?

The *gospel* of Jesus Christ is the message that humanity is spiritually dead and deserving of the wrath of God, but that a redeemer sent by God has come to accomplish everything necessary to remove that wrath and make a peculiar people fully acceptable to God and able to live with him forever. This message is fully visible in Genesis: in chapters 1-11, the fallen nature of the human race is on display, even including brief glimpses of the wrath of God coming in substantial ways; in chapters 12-36, the plan of God to send a specific redeemer through a specific people is visible, including several characters who *foreshadow* that redeemer in the way that God redeems some through them; and, in chapters 37-50, the exact nature of God's plan is revealed, using the evil of Jacob's sons against Joseph to "redeem" a people and make them fully God's people, now under his sovereign hand of providence. Genesis 50:20 is the most *explicit* reference to this: what human beings determined to do (i.e. to commit evil against the anointed one of God as their rebellious nature demands) God uses to bring about good. Just as evil men attempted to destroy Joseph, God brought good from it; just as evil men attempted to destroy the Son of God, God brought the redemption of the elect from it.

(b) Tell how Hebrews 11:6 and Ephesians 2:8-9 are *proven* in Genesis.

**Both Hebrews 11:6 and Ephesians 2:8-9 make the same point: only those who *trust in the word of God by faith* are worthy to receive mercy from him. God is not interested in how well we “jump through hoops” or how well we do things that we *think* please our Creator. No, God demands the simple willingness to abandon *all other promises* and to take him at his word. This is seen in the life of virtually every hero in this book, from Adam’s trust in God to populate the world after he sinned, to Noah’s trust in God to build an ark in a world that had never known rain, to Abraham’s trust in God to leave Ur and follow God to an unknown land (and then to trust in God for a son), to Jacob’s trust in God to return to his homeland as the result of wrestling with God, to Joseph’s trust in God to see him rise to power in Egypt and forgive his brothers for the evil that they did to him. All of them (according the *rest* of Hebrews 11), were looking forward to the *fulfillment* of God’s promises in the Christ, and were declared righteous by God for doing so in faith.**

6. What was the greatest *lesson* or *revelation* that you discovered in this book? How did it affect you *personally*?

**This is a personal question: answer it as you will! Hopefully, it will have something to do with the fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ is clearly visible in it!**