

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #103

Genesis 50:1-4

Genesis 50 is without question the most impressive funeral in all of history - the funeral of Jacob. It is the most majestic funeral in the entire Bible. Not only was this funeral acknowledged by society in general, but an impressive Egyptian military entourage literally took this body from Egypt to Canaan.

Hebrews 11:22 says “By faith Joseph, when he was dying made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.” Joseph would eventually follow in the footsteps or funeral steps of his father. He, too, wanted to be buried in Canaan. It is quite obvious that Jacob’s final request and funeral made a profound impact on Joseph.

THE PERSON WHO MAKES A PROFOUND IMPACT ON OTHERS AND IS HONORED FOREVER BY GOD IS ONE THAT STAYS FOCUSED ON THE WORD OF GOD AND WILL OF GOD UNTIL THE MOMENT OF HIS/HER DEATH .

Jacob’s request to be buried in Canaan is a “promised land” request. This one funeral testifies to Joseph, to Israel, to the Egyptians, to the N.T. believer and to the world that someday Israel will inherit a literal promised land.

Jacob, because of his faith in the promises of God, actually becomes a major statement for God even in his funeral. This all testifies of a promised land, king and kingdom which Israel will one day have.

ACTION #1 - Joseph reacts to his father’s death. 50:1

There is no doubt from this section that the one who hurts the most at the death of Jacob was Joseph. Ironically he is the one who spent the least years with his father, but quite clearly he loved his father the most. When Jacob died, Joseph fell on his father’s face, wept and kissed him.

ACTION #2 - Joseph commands the embalming of his father’s body. 50:2-3

Historical evidence reveals that the Egyptians were very skilled at embalming bodies, especially people of prominence. Mummies have been found that literally have been preserved for thousands of years, which indicates that the Egyptians were very skilled at this work.

According to historians “burying the dead was big business in Egypt.” Such things as embalming, coffin making, constructing and painting funeral furniture, plus many religious rituals “kept whole guilds forever busy.” The Pyramids were funeral monuments to various Pharaohs.

The actual embalming process took 40 days and Mr. John Phillips describes how it was done:

“First the brain was drawn out of the skull through the nostrils. Then, through an incision made in the flank, the vital organs were extracted. The body was then cleansed with palm wine and purified with pounded incense. The hollowed out body was filled with spices and perfumes - pure myrrh and cassia - and similar items, and soaked in nitron for weeks on end. After the proper period of saturation, the corpse was washed and wrapped in strips of fine linen, smeared with gum the Egyptians used for glue. The embalming being thus completed, the corpse was placed in a wooden case fashioned in human shape and taken to the sepulcher” (*Exploring Genesis*, p. 373).

When the process was completed, the Egyptians mourned for 70 days. To put this in some historical perspective, the Egyptians mourned for their departed kings and Pharaohs for 72 days, which is only two more than Jacob was mourned (S. L. Johnson, *Genesis*, Study #66, p. 2). When Aaron died, the children of Israel mourned for 30 days (Numbers 20:29) and the same was true for Moses (Deuteronomy 34:98).

So in just 17 years, Israel/Jacob had made such a positive impact on the Egyptian world that the entire world mourned his loss.

ACTION #3 - Joseph requests permission to bury his father’s body. 50:4-6

At the time of Jacob’s death, Joseph is about 56 years old. He was powerful, prosperous, loved, respected, but he was still submissive. He tactfully approached Pharaoh and requested that he be allowed to bury his father, promising in verse 5 that he would “return.” Jacob knew Joseph would keep his word (47:30-31) and so did Pharaoh.

ACTION #4 - Joseph buries his father’s body in Canaan. 50:7-13

Joseph, Pharaoh’s servants, the elders of Joseph’s house, all the elders of the land of Egypt (50:7), plus all of the brothers of Joseph, including their wives and children, except the little ones (50:8), plus a huge contingency of chariots and horsemen, all left Goshen, which is the northeast part of Egypt, to make a trip well over 200 miles to bury Jacob at the Patriarchal burial plot located near Hebron (Genesis 35:27). This incredible and impressive procession signaled that a very powerful, great, unique man of God had died.

I find verse 10 intriguing. When this processional approached the Jordan river they had a seven day mourning period, realizing they had arrived to the promised land. Verse 11 informs us that even the Canaanites realized the significance of all of this and named the area where this occurs as “Abel-miz-raim” which means “the mourning of Egypt.” **Moses undoubtedly was trying to get a mumbling Israel to realize there was a real literal promised land and the world knew it.**

ACTION #5 - Joseph returns to Egypt after burying his father. 50:14

Joseph had left this land when he was 17 and now 39 years later, he was able to go home, but not for long. There is no doubt from his statement in 50:24 that he knew this was the promised land. It is possible for us to get so caught up with living in this wilderness world that we forget that this isn’t our home. Joseph never did.