

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 50

GENESIS 49:33-50:3 - JACOB DIES, IS EMBALMED AND MOURNED FOR

THERE ARE ONLY TWO PEOPLE IN SCRIPTURE SAID TO BE "EMBALMED". JACOB NOW AND JOSEPH LATER. WHY? THE ESV STUDY BIBLE SHEDS SOME LIGHT:

"THIS WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO DELAY THE NORMAL PROCESS OF PUTREFACTION AND SO ENABLE JACOB'S CORPSE TO BE TRANSPORTED TO HEBRON. MUMMIFICATION WAS NOT PRACTICED BY THE HEBREWS, AND SO JOSEPH ENTRUSTS THE TASK TO EGYPTIAN PHYSICIANS (V. 2). SINCE EMBALMING WAS NORMALLY A RELIGIOUS PRACTICE INVOLVING PRIESTS, JOSEPH MAY HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN TO USE PHYSICIANS IN ORDER TO DISTINGUISH HIS FATHER'S BELIEFS FROM THOSE OF THE EGYPTIAN PRIESTS." THE SEVENTY DAYS OF MOURNING REFLECTS EGYPTIAN ROYAL PRACTICE ACCORDING TO SOME ANCIENT SOURCES (E.G., HERODOTUS, HISTORY 2.86; BUT 72 DAYS IN DIODORUS OF SICILY, HISTORIES 1.72), SUGGESTING THAT JACOB IS BEING SHOWN VERY HIGH HONOR; FOR THE ISRAELITES THE PERIOD OF MOURNING WAS NORMALLY BETWEEN SEVEN AND 30 DAYS. IT IS UNCLEAR, HOWEVER, WHETHER THE TWO PERIODS MENTIONED ARE CONSECUTIVE OR CONCURRENT."

AS JOSEPH'S FATHER AND A RESPECTED MAN OF THE LAND HIMSELF (AS WE SEE IN JACOB'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE PHARAOH), JACOB IS GIVEN HIGH HONOR AND RESPECT UPON HIS DEATH, EVEN BY THE INHABITANTS OF EGYPT!

GENESIS 50:4-9 - JACOB'S FAMILY TRAVELS TO CANAAN TO BURY HIM

PER JACOB'S DYING REQUEST (GENESIS 47:29-31), JOSEPH AND HIS FAMILY TRAVELS BACK TO CANAAN TO BURY JACOB IN THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY TOMB. JOSEPH RECEIVES PERMISSION FROM PHARAOH TO MAKE THIS TRIP. A LARGE DELEGATION MAKES THIS TRIP, NOT ONLY JACOB'S FAMILY BUT LEADERS FROM EGYPT.

GENESIS 50:10-14 - JACOB LAID TO REST IN THE PLACE OF ABRAHAM

THE ENTOURAGE ARRIVED IN THE LAND OF CANAAN AND HELD A MEMORIAL AT THE "THRESHING FLOOR OF ATAD" (EXACT LOCATION UNKNOWN). SUCH A LARGE COMPANY MOURNING JACOB FOR 7 DAYS WAS SO NOTABLE TO THE CANAANITE LOCALS THAT THE PLACE WAS RENAMED ABEL-MIZRAIM WHICH MEANS THE "MEADOW OF MOURNING OF EGYPT."

THIS ENTIRE PROCESS TOOK TIME AND ENERGY ON BEHALF OF THE FAMILY AND THE EGYPTIANS, A FITTING TRIBUTE TO THIS PATRIARCH. AND THROUGH THIS ACT JACOB'S SONS ARE ABLE TO OBEY HIS COMMAND.

GENESIS 50:15-21

EVEN THOUGH THERE WAS A REUNION, THERE WAS NOT A FULL RECONCILIATION IN THE HEARTS OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS. THEY FEAR, NOW LACKING THE BUFFER OF THEIR FATHER'S WISDOM AND GUIDANCE, THAT JOSEPH MAY ENACT RETRIBUTION FOR THE EVILS THEY HAD COMMITTED AGAINST HIM YEARS BEFORE. THIS IS A VERY SAD WINDOW INTO THEIR HEARTS. WE GET NO INDICATION THAT JOSEPHS HELD ANY GRUDGE OR HELD RESENTMENT IN HIS HEART TOWARDS THEM. JOSEPH'S OWN WORDS REVEAL THIS:

"THEN JOSEPH SAID TO HIS BROTHERS, "PLEASE COME CLOSER TO ME." AND THEY CAME CLOSER. AND HE SAID, "I AM YOUR BROTHER JOSEPH, WHOM YOU SOLD INTO EGYPT. NOW DO NOT BE GRIEVED OR ANGRY WITH YOURSELVES, BECAUSE YOU SOLD ME HERE, FOR GOD SENT ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE LIFE. GOD SENT ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE FOR YOU A REMNANT IN THE EARTH, AND TO KEEP YOU ALIVE BY A GREAT DELIVERANCE. NOW, THEREFORE, IT WAS NOT YOU WHO SENT ME HERE, BUT GOD; AND HE HAS MADE ME A FATHER TO PHARAOH AND LORD OF ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD AND RULER OVER ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT." GENESIS 45:4-5, 7-8

IT WAS NOT JOSEPH WITH THE HEART PROBLEM, IT WAS HIS BROTHERS. THEY HAD NOT ACCEPTED THE FORGIVENESS OF THEIR BROTHER AND WERE STILL LIVING IN FEAR OF THE OTHER SHOE DROPPING ON THEM. IN FACT, HE CONTINUES IN THIS SECTION AND SAYS "DON'T BE AFRAID, I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR LITTLE ONES (50:21)." HE THEN CONCLUDES BY "COMFORTING THEM AND SPEAKING KINDLY TO THEM...". YOU CAN'T DO THAT WITHOUT A HEART OF FORGIVENESS. IN FACT, BEING ABLE TO DO THAT IS A PRETTY IMPORTANT SIGN THAT FORGIVENESS IS IN YOUR HEART.

JOSEPH IS A MAN OF GOD AND A MAN OF FAITH. WHEN HE FORGAVE HIS BROTHERS FOR THEIR HORRIBLE SIN AGAINST HIM, HE ACTUALLY FORGAVE THEM. HE WASN'T MODELING A TWISTED FORM OF FORGIVENESS WHERE THERE REMAINED CONSEQUENCES OR PUNISHMENT FOR THE SO CALLED "FORGIVEN" SIN. THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF WHAT FORGIVENESS, AND ESPECIALLY GOD'S FORGIVENESS LOOKS LIKE. JOSEPH WASN'T IMPLYING THAT THE THINGS HIS BROTHERS HAD DONE AGAINST HIM WERE "OK", HE JUST WAS NOT GOING TO HOLD THEIR SIN IN HIS HEART OR OVER THEIR HEADS. HE WAS FREE AND TRUSTED GOD TO BRING ABOUT JUSTICE. JOSEPH WAS GLAD TO BE BACK WITH HIS BROTHERS AND WAS CONFIDENT IN WHO HE WAS IN GOD'S EYES. GOD HAD BROUGHT HIM TO EGYPT, NOT HIS BROTHERS. AND SO HE WASN'T ANGRY AT THEM.

THIS SEEMED TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE FOR HIS BROTHERS. THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW AMAZING GRACE REALLY WAS. GODLY FORGIVENESS NOT ONLY FORGIVES BUT EXTENDS GRACE. THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME FOR US TO REMEMBER GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND GRACE TOWARDS US. MANY CHRISTIANS LIVE IN FEAR OR LIVE IN SHAME BECAUSE OF THE SINS THEY HAVE COMMITTED. I GET THAT. I WRESTLE WITH THAT.

HOWEVER, SCRIPTURE TELLS US THAT THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD ISN'T JUST A FORGIVENESS BUT IT BRINGS WITH IT A "CLEANSING FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS". WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SINS, GOD IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO DO A TWO PART WORK! HE FORGIVES ~~AND~~ CLEANSSES SO WE DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN FEAR OF PUNISHMENT OR "THE OTHER SHOE DROPPING." SURE THERE MAY BE REAL LIFE RAMIFICATIONS OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE - BUT GOD DOESN'T WANT US TO LIVE IN A STATE LIKE THE BROTHERS OF JOSEPH WERE, JUST WONDERING IF AND WHEN GOD WAS GOING TO LET US HAVE IT? AS IF GOD'S LOVE TOWARDS US IS SOME SICK JOKE, THAT REALLY IS A MIRAGE AND THAT HE'S OUT TO "GET US" LATER.

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF GODLY FORGIVENESS. I HOPE WE DON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE.

BEFORE WE CONCLUDE, WE MUST TAKE A MOMENT TO DWELL ON THIS POWERFUL VERSE IN GENESIS 50:20. THIS VERSE IS MAY JUST BE THE PERFECT SUMMARY STATEMENT OF THE STORY OF JOSEPH.

"AS FOR YOU, YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT THIS PRESENT RESULT, TO PRESERVE MANY PEOPLE ALIVE." GENESIS 50:20

WE HAVE SAID THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY OF JOSEPH THAT HIS STORY REFLECTS THE POWERFUL TRUTHS OF ROMANS 8 AND THIS VERSE RINGS THE LOUDEST WITH THAT ECHO. EVERY "EVIL" THING THAT HAPPENED TO JOSEPH, EVERY DIFFICULT TRIAL HE EXPERIENCED (AND HE CERTAINLY HAD HIS SHARE OF THEM), HE CAN NOW LOOK BACK AND NOT LAMENT "POOR ME" OR "WELL, I GUESS IT WORKED OUT OKAY IN THE END" BUT INSTEAD HE SEES AND INTERPRETS EVERY THING THAT HAPPENED AS EXACTLY WHAT NEEDED TO HAPPEN TO, IN THE END, ENSURE GOD'S WILL FOR HIS LIFE, AND ULTIMATELY THE LIFE OF THE ENTIRE FAMILY AND NATION. HE BELIEVED IN A GOD WHO WAS MORE POWERFUL THAN HIS ENEMIES, HIS CIRCUMSTANCES AND HIS UNDERSTANDING WHO WAS ALWAYS WORKING AND ALWAYS WITH HIM, AND ALWAYS WINNING IN THE END.

JOSEPH IS STARING AT THE FACES OF THE VERY PEOPLE, HIS OWN BROTHERS, WHO HIT THE FIRST DOMINO OF HIS TRIALS AND SAYS TO THEM " *YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD...*". WOW.

CAN'T YOU JUST IMAGINE JOSEPH WRITING SIMILAR WORDS TO WHAT PAUL WOULD WRITE CENTURIES LATER:

"FOR I CONSIDER THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT IS TO BE REVEALED TO US. AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. BUT IN ALL THESE THINGS WE OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD." ROMANS 8:18, 28, 37-39

SO MUCH FOR US TO TAKE AWAY FROM JOSEPH'S ATTITUDE. WE ARE CALLED TO HAVE THE SAME ATTITUDE TODAY, AND EVEN MORE SO PERHAPS SINCE WE KNOW CHRIST HAS COME AND NOW HAS FILLED US WITH THE SPIRIT.

GENESIS 50:22-26 - THE FINAL DESIRE AND DEATH OF JOSEPH

JOSEPH LIVED A LONG AND SATISFYING LIFE. THOUGH IT WASN'T LIKE THAT EVERY DAY, NOR FOR LARGE CHUNKS OF TIME, THAT'S HOW IT TURNS OUT IN THE END. HE'S 110 YEARS OLD, BLESSED IN EGYPT, JOINED BY HIS FAMILY AND EVEN SEES HIS SONS, GRANDSONS AND GREAT GRANDSONS GROW. HE IS EMBALMED AND PLACED IN A COFFIN IN EGYPT.

JOSEPH'S DIES, SURELY LOVED AND REVERED BY THE NATION HE SAVED. HE HAS A FAMILY BY HIS SIDE AND ENJOYS WHAT WILL END UP BEING THE MAJORITY OF HIS LIFE WITH GOOD AND PLENTY. AND YET WHAT IS ON HIS MIND AS HE NEARS THE END OF HIS LIFE? THE PROMISE OF GOD AND HIS GREAT HOPE.

HE DOESN'T TALK ABOUT HIS BIG FAMILY OR BOUNTIFUL BARNS. HE DOESN'T TALK ABOUT HOW LONG HE'S LIVED OR HOW LUSH HIS LAND HAS BEEN. THOSE THINGS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRUE - BUT THAT WAS NOT WHAT JOSEPH'S LIFE OR LEGACY WAS ALL ABOUT. INSTEAD HE SAYS THIS:

"SOON I WILL DIE," JOSEPH TOLD HIS BROTHERS, "BUT GOD WILL SURELY COME TO HELP YOU AND LEAD YOU OUT OF THIS LAND OF EGYPT. HE WILL BRING YOU BACK TO THE LAND HE SOLEMNLY PROMISED TO GIVE TO ABRAHAM, TO ISAAC, AND TO JACOB." THEN JOSEPH MADE THE SONS OF ISRAEL SWEAR AN OATH, AND HE SAID, "WHEN GOD COMES TO HELP YOU AND LEAD YOU BACK, YOU MUST TAKE MY BONES WITH YOU." GENESIS 50:24-25 (NLT)

I HOPE WE CAN GROW IN OUR UNDERSTANDING AND LOVE FOR AND LONG FOR THE GREAT AND BLESSED HOPE WE HAVE BEFORE US AS GOD'S PEOPLE. IT'S A FAITHFUL AND SURE PROMISE OF OUR GOD. IT SERVES AS AN ANCHOR FOR THE TURBULENT LIFE OF A MAN LIKE JOSEPH. IT'S WHAT HE IS THINKING ABOUT AND LOOKING FORWARD TO. AND AS WE SEE HERE IN THIS FINAL CHAPTER, IT IS MORE THAN JUST A THEOLOGICAL OR GOD-FORBID WHIMSICAL IDEA. IT HAS *PRACTICAL* IMPLICATIONS ON HIS LIFE. HE LITERALLY TELLS HIS FAMILY TO GET HIS BONES READY TO TAKE BACK TO CANAAN WHEN HE LEAVES BECAUSE HE WANTS TO BE RESURRECTED LOCALLY WHEN THAT DAY COMES. GOD HAS PROMISED THE LAND OF CANAAN AND EVENTUALLY THE ENTIRE WORLD TO ABRAHAM - NOT JUST THIS BROKEN AND DIFFICULT WORLD, BUT A NEW WORLD, A RESTORED WORLD, A BLESSED WORLD THAT IS REMADE TO BE "VERY GOOD" LIKE IT WAS IN THE FIRST PAGES OF GENESIS.

THAT IS LITERALLY WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN WHEN THE MESSIAH RETURNS TO THIS EARTH. JOSEPH IS GOING TO BE RESURRECTED AND LIFE RESTORED TO THAT OLD AND NOW NO MORE THAN DUST AND ASH BODY THAT WAS EMBALMED BY THE EGYPTIANS AND HE'S GOING NEVER DIE AGAIN. HE'S GOING TO SEE HIS FATHER JACOB'S FACE AND THERE WILL NO LONGER BE MOURNING FOR OR WRESTLING WITH THE TROUBLES OF THIS LIFE. HE'S GOING TO SEE ISAAC LAUGHING AT HOW GOD WON AND WAS FAITHFUL TO THE PROMISE HE MADE TO ADD A MULTITUDE OF DESCENDANTS TO HIS OWN ROLE AS THE PROMISED CHILD. AND THEY ALL ARE GOING TO SIT DOWN WITH ABRAHAM, THE ONE WHO WAS FIRST TO BELIEVE. THE ONE WHO SAW LITTLE COME TO PASS IN HIS LIFE TIME AS IT CAME TO THE PROMISE OF GOD, BUT WHO BELIEVED EVERY, SINGLE, PART OF THE PLAN. ABRAHAM WILL BE BLESSED, SEE HIS CHILDREN AS THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE, AND INHERIT AS HIS OWN, THIS REMADE AND NEW WORLD, JUST AS GOD PROMISED, AND INTENDED FROM THE BEGINNING.

EVERYTHING WRONG WITH THIS WORLD WILL BE MADE RIGHT AND ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, AND JOSEPH WILL BE SEATED AT THE HEAD OF A BANQUET TABLE SET TO CELEBRATE THIS GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY. THEY WILL SEE IT. THEY WILL TASTE IT. THEY WILL TOUCH IT. THEY WILL LIVE IN IT.

AND THEN THEY WILL MEET YOU.

THEY WILL TURN AND SEE YOUR FACE AND THEY WILL MEET WITH AND SIT WITH AND TALK WITH YOU AND I - PEOPLE WHO SEEM SO DIFFERENT THAN THEM, YET LIKE THEM, LIVED BY FAITH, AND NOT BY SIGHT, WHO KEPT THE FAITH AND FINISHED THE RACE, AND WHO BELIEVED THE PROMISE OF GOD - THE SAME PROMISE IN FACT - AND WHO WAITED FOR AND LIVED IN LIGHT OF THAT PROMISE COMING TO FRUIT IN THE END.

THAT'S WHERE JOSEPH'S MIND WAS AND WHERE HIS HEART WAS. AND THAT'S RIGHTFULLY WHERE ONE'S HEART SHOULD BE AS THEY FINISH THIS FIRST BOOK OF THE BIBLE. WE'VE DISCOVERED SO MUCH AS WE HAVE WALKED THROUGH GENESIS. IT'S LIKELY THAT MORE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH IS IN THIS BOOK THAN OTHERS, CERTAINLY NO OLD TESTAMENT BOOK RIVALS ITS IMPORTANCE. EVERY OTHER BOOK REFERS TO IT AND REFERENCES IT AND ASSUMES THE READER UNDERSTANDS IT.

GENESIS REVEALS THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE, THE ORIGIN OF EVIL, THE ORIGIN OF GOD'S PLAN TO FIX IT ALL. WE MEET OUR LITERAL AND BIOLOGICAL PARENTS - ADAM AND EVE AND MEET OUR SPIRITUAL PARENTS OF FAITH - ABRAHAM AND SARAH. WE TREMBLE AT THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN WHEN WE READ ABOUT THE FLOOD AND THE TOWER OF BABEL AND WE CLING TO HOPE OF GOD'S GOODNESS WHEN WE SEE NOAH'S RAINBOW AND HEAR HOW GOD WAS MERCIFUL TO CAIN AND ENOCH. WE LEARN WHAT FAITH LOOKS LIKE THROUGH ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY WHO HAVE TAKEN CENTER STAGE OF THIS 50 CHAPTER BOOK SINCE GENESIS 12. AND WE SEE AN HONEST AND RAW TELLING OF THE BROKENNESS AND DYSFUNCTION OF THAT SAME FAMILY, WHEN WE ARE LET IN TO NOT JUST THEIR *GOOD* DAYS BUT ALL OF THEIR FLAW-FILLED ONES TOO. WE HAVE MOURNED WITH THEM, BEEN FRUSTRATED WITH THEM AND REJOICED WITH THEM. WE'VE SEEN THEM DO THINGS THEIR WAY (AKA ABRAHAM'S SON ISHMAEL) AND SEEN THEM DO THINGS GOD'S WAY (ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE TO OFFER ISAAC). WE WATCHED THEM GROW UP, GROW OLD AND DIE. WE HAVE WATCHED THEM START WITH NOTHING IN UR AND END WITH ABUNDANCE IN GOSHEN. AND NOW WE CLOSE THE BOOK WITH A CONCLUSION OF SORTS, BUT A STORY THAT IS NOT OVER. THE VERY FIRST CHAPTER OF THE NEXT BOOK WILL MAKE THAT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR. BUT THE GREAT ADVENTURE THROUGH GENESIS WILL CONCLUDE FOR NOW.

AS WE HAVE READ THROUGH GENESIS WE HAVE NOT ONLY LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT HUMANITY BUT WE HAVE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE CREATOR. HIS INTENTIONS, HIS MOTIVATIONS, HIS LIKES, DISLIKES AND HIS NATURE TOWARDS THE WORLD. YES WE HAVE SOME GREAT STORIES AND BIBLICAL HEROES, BUT WE MUST WALK AWAY FROM GENESIS WITH A FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF GOD. WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHAT HE IS DOING AND WHAT HE WILL DO.

THE FIRST FOCUS OF CHAPTER 1 IS THAT "IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND EARTH" (GENESIS 1:1). AND CHAPTER 50 HAS JUST CONCLUDED WITH JOSEPH REMINDING HIS BROTHERS AND US, THAT "GOD WILL SURELY TAKE CARE OF YOU..." NOT ONCE, BUT TWICE (50:24, 25). THOSE ARE PRETTY SIGNIFICANT OPENING AND CLOSING LINES OF OUR STORY.

GENESIS IS ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS, BUT IT'S ULTIMATELY A STORY ABOUT GOD. ABOUT HIS PLAN, PURPOSES AND HEART POSTURE NOT JUST TO THE OLD ANCIENT WORLD BACK THEN OR CREATION IN GENERAL BUT TOWARDS HUMANITY AT LARGE AND *YOU* SPECIFICALLY. GOD CREATED YOU AND CREATED YOU WITH A PURPOSE. THAT PURPOSE IS FOR YOU AND I TO KNOW HIM, BE LOVED BY HIM AND HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. THAT'S WHY HE CREATED THE HEAVENS AND EARTH, THAT'S WHY HE MADE HIS PROMISES TO ABRAHAM, AND THAT'S WHY HE HAS KEPT IT ALL IN MOTION UNTIL THIS VERY MOMENT. BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU AND WANTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.

WHAT ELSE COULD YOU EVER LIVE FOR WHICH COMPARES TO THIS? DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE ON FOOLISH AND DANGEROUS SECOND RATE CAUSES. LIVE FOR THIS GOD, SEEK HIM, WORSHIP HIM, LOVE HIM, PRAISE HIM, WRESTLING WITH HIM, AND CLING TO HIM. YOU WERE CREATED FOR THIS PURPOSE AND WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE FOR THE PURPOSE YOU WERE CREATED, YOU WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.