

## Lesson 12 – 18 July 2010

### Jacob Gathered Unto His People

**Lesson Scope:** [Genesis 49:28](#) and [Chapter 50:26](#)

#### Lesson Focus

Life on earth has an end. Death may come in youth or in old age; it may come suddenly or after a prolonged illness. Jacob had wrestled with the challenges of life and had prevailed. This made a remarkable difference at his death. As his sons considered his life, they could see God's ways illustrated. They would soon carry his lifeless body to Canaan, reminding themselves and their children that they too must experience death.

Jacob had lived with an intense desire to be faithful to God. Now when death was near, God's promises for the future held his attention. With his sons gathered around him, he committed to them all earthly care and expressed his desire to be with those who had gone before him. Jacob was prepared for and submitted to the divine appointment of death.

This study should move us to serious contemplation. First we should consider our own preparation for death. Most people try to avoid thinking of death. Even many religious people do not really prepare to face death.

Secondly we should consider changing sociological patterns that are affecting us. Many accidents and illnesses are treated in hospitals. Most deaths also occur in hospitals. Many young people grow up not having witnessed death. Please see notes in Research Guide.

Thirdly, many funerals are now being conducted as celebrations. Lightheartedness abounds, and the focus is on the deceased rather than on Christ's provision for salvation.

These factors make it necessary to emphasize the significance of the actions of Jacob as he prepared for his death. Follow Joseph and the family as they experience the preparations for death, death itself, and the burial *"It is appointed unto men once to the."* This appointment ushers the man of faith into the presence of God and the departed faithful.

**Lesson Aim:** To learn basic truths about death.

**Theme Verse:** [Psalm 116:15](#). Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

## Lesson text

### A Peaceful Death

#### Genesis 49:28-33

All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. <sup>29</sup>And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, <sup>30</sup>In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. <sup>31</sup>There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. <sup>32</sup>The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth. <sup>33</sup>And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

### A Grievous Mourning

#### Genesis 50:1-11

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. <sup>2</sup>And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. <sup>3</sup>And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. <sup>4</sup>And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, <sup>5</sup>My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. <sup>6</sup>And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

<sup>7</sup>And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, <sup>8</sup>And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. <sup>9</sup>And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. <sup>10</sup>And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which *is* beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. <sup>11</sup>And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites,

saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This *is* a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which *is* beyond Jordan.

### **An Honorable Burial**

#### **Genesis 50:12-13**

And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: <sup>13</sup>For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **A Peaceful Death**

1. What attitudes did Jacob possess as he faced death?
2. What is the meaning of death?
3. What preparations should we make for death?

#### **A Grievous Mourning**

4. How did Jacob's family express their grief?
5. How did Joseph's actions portray the solemnity of death? How should we?
6. Why is expressing grief at the time of death important?
7. How should the death of the righteous be a witness to the unsaved?

#### **An Honorable Burial**

8. How did Jacob's sons honor their father at his death?
9. Give Scriptural reasons that when possible, burial is the God-approved way to care for the dead.

### **Analyzing the Passage**

"I am to be gathered unto my people" (Gen.49:29, 33) indicates that in the life to come, Jacob expected to be with those he had identified with on earth. Even more important, it had been Jacob's choice to make the God of Abraham and Isaac his God. Jacob had had fellowship with God on his earthly pilgrimage, and he looked forward to eternity with Him.

"When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons" (Gen.49:33), his life ended. How beautiful it was that Jacob's sons listened respectfully and carried out his will for his burial obediently! How much Jacob's sons had learned!

Jacob's chosen place of burial, the cave of Machpelah was located near Hebron. It is uncertain why they traveled from Egypt to the east of Jordan,

and approached Hebron from the east, needing to cross the Jordan River.

Embalming (Gen.50:2) originated with the Egyptians. They believed the bodies of the deceased needed to be preserved so that the soul of the departed could return and occupy the body again. The Hebrews' view of life after death did not require embalming. However, this embalming was certainly a benefit for the journey to Jacob's burial.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **A Peaceful Death**

1. The righteous prepare for death by leaving a blessing to those who remain (Gen.49:28). Parents must start young in life to leave a blessing behind them. We must have a solid homelife and good parent-child relationships that bless our families throughout life. We must lead our children into church life that embraces the faith. Then our parting words will have meaning for them. How sad when children have so rejected their parents and earlier teaching that the parents' last words fall on deaf ears and cold hearts.

2. The righteous move from this earthly, earthly into the presence of God and the departed (Gen.49:28-29). Death is inescapable. We know we cannot live here forever. We grow old and weary, yet we know that the life to come will be infinitely better. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore- (Psalm16:11).

3. The righteous have a desire to be buried with their faithful loved ones (Gen.49:30-32). This may not always be possible, yet it is right to desire burial in family plots. It is right for our churches to maintain cemeteries for our own people. Death is not the end of life. Our desire to associate with God's people in death gives a message to the living of our vision for keeping the faith.

4. The righteous make (Gen.49:30-33). This is especially helpful for the family who remain. Many decisions can be made before the time of grief or shock. The question of who will preach the funeral sermon, what will be the text, what songs will be sung, who will be the pallbearers, what casket will be bought, which undertaker will be used, and many other such questions can be answered before death occurs.

### **A Grievous Mourning**

5. The finality of death and the loss incurred bring grief (Gen.50:1-3, 10). David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). No words of love can be given, no counsel received, and

encouragement exchanged with those who have passed on. Their voice is not heard, their smile is not seen, and their touch is not felt. Grief is an expected response, a right response, and a necessary response. Grief is God's method of releasing emotions and healing, them. God forbid that we should make light of or criticize the grief of those who have experienced the death of family or friends.

6. When possible, the family should be present at death and be involved in the funeral or burial process (Gen.50:1-10). In the past, most deaths occurred at home with the family gathered around. Many deaths were those of children who died of infectious diseases. Death was real to them. Today, most deaths are the result of aging. Most deaths now occur in hospitals. As a result, many young people have never been present at someone's death. We must acquaint all ages with death according to their understanding. Death must be real to all if we want to prepare for death.

7. Relating to the dead with dignity helps to communicate the solemnity of death (Gen.50:2-3). Viewings and funerals bring together friends and relatives who may not have met for many years. This should not turn these occasions into a lighthearted reunion. We show respect for the departed by a solemn reflection on the memory of them.

8. The ungodly are often touched by the death of the righteous (Gen.50:1). The event of death draws men together from all walks of life. Strangely, a funeral service may be one of only a few services that some people attend. In the presence of death, people sense the spiritual dimension of life more fully. The death of a godly person with a lively hope speaks clearly to the unprepared.

### **An Honorable Burial**

9. It is only proper to honor the directions of the righteous dead (Gen.50:12-13). Just because someone is no longer living, is not an excuse for the family to ignore the directions and convictions of the deceased and do their own preference. Those who dishonor others will find their children doing the same to them. If we show disrespect to the person of the elderly, our children may disregard their doctrines.

10. Burial is the God-approved method of caring the body after death (Gen.50:12-13). This is the example of the godly given us in the Scripture, and it fits with the anticipation of a bodily resurrection. The earthly tabernacle of the immortal soul certainly should be handled with a godly respect.

## **Important Teachings**

1. The righteous prepare for death by leaving a blessing to those who remain (Gen.49:28).
2. The righteous move from this present, earthly world into the presence of God and the departed faithful (Gen.49:28-29).
3. The righteous have a desire to be buried with their faithful loved ones (Gen.49:30-32).
4. The righteous make specific plans for their decease (Gen.49:30-33).
5. The finality of death and the loss incurred bring grief (Gen.50:1-3, 10).
6. When possible, the family should be present at death and be involved in the funeral or burial process (Gen.50:1-10).
7. Relating to the dead with dignity helps to communicate the solemnity of death (Gen.50:2-3).
8. The ungodly are often touched by the death of the righteous (Gen.50:11).
9. It is only proper to honor the directions of the righteous dead (Gen.50:12-13).
10. Burial is the God-approved method of caring for the body after death (Gen.50:12-13)

## **Answers to Questions**

1. What attitudes did Jacob possess as he faced death?  
Jacob was ready to die. He was submitted to God's appointment. He looked forward to being reunited with those who had gone before. Jacob wanted to be identified with the faithful in his death.
2. What is the meaning of death?  
Death seals a person's destiny. Death separates a person from everything in this world and brings him into the world to come. Death separates the spirit and soul from the body. Death does not destroy one's existence or end one's fellowship with God and union with Christ. The New Testament compares death to a sleep in the sense that death is temporary. The dead will be awakened in the last day.
3. What preparations should we make for death?  
We should always have our lives in order to meet God. We should have a will and have orderly financial arrangements. It is proper to have written plans for a funeral if we should die suddenly. We might have a burial location chosen. We should make choices that place our families on a

course that preserves the faith after our death.

4. How did Jacob's family express their grief?

Joseph fell upon his father's face, wept upon him, and kissed him. The Egyptians mourned seventy days. We assume that the family mourned with them. The mourning seven days at the threshing floor of Atad was by Joseph's direction. This mourning was a great and very sore lamentation.

5. How did Joseph's actions portray the solemnity of death? How should we?

Joseph was present at his father's death. He was not ashamed to weep and show his affection for his father. By having Jacob embalmed, Joseph related to the dead with dignity. Joseph was careful to keep his promise to his father, and he conscientiously carried out his wishes.

We teach the solemnity of death by having as many of the family (including children) present as is practical. We should expose our children to the finality of death.

6. Why is expressing grief at the time of death important? Expressing grief at the time of a death is God's method of emotional relief and brings healing to those who are grieving. Some may not understand the grief and cause great damage by unsympathetic remarks such as why someone cannot recover quickly from grief. Observe the amount of time spent in grief in this account compared to modern customs.

7. How should the death, of the righteous be a witness to the unsaved?

Death makes men think of their own destiny. Men know in themselves that there is a difference in the end of the righteous and the end of the wicked. Funeral services should be evangelistic. We should not talk of the person and his family, influence, or accomplishments. Sobriety at viewings and funerals should be a sharp contrast with the world's patterns. We should not tell funny stories about the deceased. All actions should allow the Holy Spirit to use the life and death of the righteous to move the conscience of the unprepared.

8. How did Jacob's sons honor their father at his death?

They obeyed him and fulfilled his wishes in detail concerning his burial.

9. Give Scriptural reasons that, when possible, burial is the God-approved way to care for the dead.

Burial in the ground is consistent with the anticipation of a bodily resurrection. By the examples from the Scriptures, we observe that God's people have placed their dead in the earth in graves or caves.

**Summarizing the Lesson.**

"If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree fallen, there it shall be" (Ecclesiastes 11:3). Death is final. Life is a gift from God for us to use to prepare to spend eternity with Him. May we all finally be gathered to the people and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Research Guide**

1. See "Death" in the World Book Encyclopedia. Note the changes that have occurred in the past one hundred years in the way death happens and how people relate to it.
2. Consider the New Testament accounts of death found in Acts 8:2; 9:36-39.
3. Consider Paul's attitude toward death (2 Timothy 1:12; 4:6-7).