

Chapter Fourteen

JOSEPH

Hebrews 11:22 *“By FAITH Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial.”*

The brief account of Joseph's forgiveness on the brothers who had treated him so badly is found in the last chapter of Genesis, 50. There we find that wonderful statement, *“You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”* Though the enemy would often bring about attacks on the people of God, our Father is able to turn them to good, both for us and for the honour of His name.

It seems surprising that the author of Hebrews did not refer to the valleys and mountains through and over which Yahweh had led Joseph, when writing about faith, but instead, he chooses what seems to be an insignificant reference closing the first book of the Bible.

“I am about to die, but God will visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land which He swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (50:24) Then he took an oath of his brothers that when God visited them, they were to take his bones with them to the land that was promised.

It would be another 400 years before this prophecy of Joseph would come to pass under the leadership of Moses. For the fulfillment of his request see Exodus 13: 19, *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him*, and Joshua 24:32, *And the bones of Joseph they buried in Shechem*. Joseph had an inner revelation from God which he confessed with his mouth, much as Peter the apostle would do on the lower slopes of Hermon over 2000 years later. Therein is his faith.

What can we learn from this verse?

Firstly, we see the similarity between his situation and that of his father and grandfather. Like Isaac and Jacob, he was a stranger, a sojourner in a foreign land. All three men died without having entered into the promise which God had made, the promise of the Promised Land and of greatness to the nation of Israel. Isaac remained a nomad and a wanderer; Jacob was still in exile in the land of Egypt; Joseph had reached the giddy heights of prominence, but it was still the greatness of a stranger in a foreign land. Yet to all three, God gave the witness that His promise would not fail. They died in hope not despair.

Whatever our station in life, we are called to walk the same path as these patriarchs - the walk of faith. We also may rise to prominence in this world but we must never forget that we are citizens of another, higher kingdom. Most of us will never experience the greater promises of God, but each one of us must live in such a way that we will bring the day nearer when others can rejoice in them. Jesus made a wonderful promise that the Gospel must be preached in the whole world to all nations *and then the end shall come* (Matt.24:14). He will finally put an end to sin and usher in His kingdom of righteousness. As you live in the world today, you may believe that His coming is yet a long way off. Nevertheless, the example of Joseph is given to teach us that we

are to constantly look forward to the certainty of the fulfillment of the promise and live a life of such expectancy. We are to live each day in the light of eternity.

Over the years Joseph has come to know the faithfulness of God and his language has changed. No longer does he speak of dreams in which **he will rule** over his family. He does not say, "Go and tell my father of **all my glory** in Egypt". The writer of Hebrews has chosen the example of his dying days to teach us. Joseph is nearing the end of his earthly glory and has realised that all the glories and honours of this world are nothing to a dying man. They may satisfy for a season, but, in the end they are as a bursting bubble. Life is a fleeting thing. "*What is your life?*" says James, "*It is but a vapour that appears for a while and then passes away.*" (James 4:14).

God stirs faith in the old man so that he now sees where his real inheritance lies. It is in a future land and the coming of a future deliverer. One would think that he would want his descendants to remain in this land of Egypt which has been so good to him. Why shouldn't he want his body to remain here where he could be remembered? Maybe they would build him a great memorial, a large tomb in a prominent place, or perhaps name a great edifice after him. His name would be known forever. Indeed he could have a temple built to Yahweh and name it *The First Joseph ben Jacob Memorial Church*. In that way he could bring honour to God without losing any of his own glory!! However, God will not share His glory with man, nor with any of His creation. I'm being cynical of course, but isn't it amazing how many notable '*men of God*' in our days, have clung on tenaciously when their honour or reputation is at stake in the battle for integrity and faithfulness to God's work. Isn't it amazing how easily believers can be manipulated to *do this work* or *give to that cause*, when there are rewards or prominence associated. Instead, we are called to be as dead men, claiming no rights of our own and seeking no prominence in this world. God has not called us to be famous or successful; He has called us to be faithful.

Like Joseph, our theme should be the coming of our deliverer and our gathering together to Him. Jesus is our deliverer and He is coming soon. He has already delivered us from the penalty of sin; - we call that justification, wholeness for our spirits. He is presently delivering us from the power of sin - sanctification, wholeness for our souls. He will soon come to deliver us from the presence of sin - glorification, wholeness for our bodies! I am convinced that, unlike Joseph, we do not have to wait over 400 years, but that '*soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.*' As I look at this world with its growing problems of over population, famines, natural disasters, breakdown of family and social structures; as I look at the church with its great expansion and missions programs in most parts of the world; I am convinced **He is coming soon** As I consider the polarisation within the church between those faithful to His Word and its more liberal members, I am not dismayed but recognise that He is now preparing and **purifying His bride** If we are alive when He comes, we shall go to that inheritance *incorruptible and that fadeth not away*, but if we fall asleep, we shall not be left behind. So, in Joseph's words, uttered by faith, we see in figure, the living and the dead going together from the place of bondage.

The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"

(1 Thessalonians 4:16,17)

Surely the glory and tinsel of this world fades as we look forward to that glad day, so soon to take place. Are we making this our daily theme? Maybe we need to come again to our 'deathbed' at the foot of the cross where our vision will be changed. Dead men do not have regard for the things of this world.

Summary:

On his deathbed, Joseph was given the faith to look into the future and see the deliverer, Moses who would come to lead God's people out of Egypt and take them to their inheritance. Though he was a successful man in Egypt, faith revealed that there was a better land and a better future for the Children of Israel.

- 1. A deliverer, Jesus has come to take us from our bondage and to lead us to His promised kingdom.**
- 2. Faith causes us to look forward with the eyes of men, dead to this world.**
- 3. Our destiny is not found in our possessions or position; it is found in His promise.**
- 4. We need to live each day in the light of His Second Coming.**
- 5. This life is but a fleeting moment.**