

### Joseph's Last Days

#### Genesis 50:15-26

Genesis 50:15-26 – *“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.”<sup>16</sup> So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded, saying,<sup>17</sup> ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.”’ Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.*

<sup>18</sup> *Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we are your servants.”<sup>19</sup> Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?<sup>20</sup> But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.<sup>21</sup> Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”*

<sup>22</sup> *“So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father’s household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.<sup>23</sup> Joseph saw Ephraim’s children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph’s knees.*

<sup>24</sup> *And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”<sup>26</sup> So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”*

#### Background Notes

After Jacob’s death, the brothers were afraid that Joseph might change his mind and take this golden opportunity to get revenge for what they had done to him. After all, Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt, and he had the authority to do whatever he wanted! But Joseph had no intention of taking revenge, or any such thing. He had truly forgiven his brothers.

Once again in the life of Joseph we catch a glimpse of our Lord and how He has forgiven us. But how many times do we, like the brothers, doubt and question our Lord’s grace? How it must grieve the heart of the Lord when we display doubt and a questioning attitude to His grace.

Verses 16-17: *“So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.”’ Now,*

*please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.”* Maybe the brothers concocted this story about Jacob - but maybe not. During the seventeen years in Goshen, the topic surely must have come up a few times. When the brothers once more bowed down before Joseph and declared that they were his servants, we see yet again the fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams.

Joseph’s reaction to his brothers’ message is found at the end of verse 17: *“Joseph wept when they spoke to him.”* Joseph was dismayed that the brothers would think of him in this way. In his reply, Joseph made this well-known statement, *“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive”* (v20). Joseph knew that **God was in control of all of the events of his life.**

Joseph saw Ephraim’s children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up “on Joseph’s knees” (v23). Joseph had the joy of seeing and enjoying and teaching his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. What a blessing!

*“And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob”(v24).* Clearly Joseph was aware of the prophecy and promise that God made to Abraham back in Genesis 15:13-14: *“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”*

The oath that Joseph required from the children of Israel (v25) was carried out at the time of the Exodus. Exodus 13:19 says, *“Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath, saying, ‘God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.’”*

Joseph’s bones, then, were carried for forty years throughout Israel’s wilderness wanderings between Egypt and the Promised Land. In Joshua 24:32 we read, *“The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.”*

In Hebrews 11, in that great chapter of faith, Joseph is remembered for this request. Hebrews 11:22 says, *“By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.”* Isn’t that interesting? Of all the many faithful events in Joseph’s life, carrying his bones back to the Promised Land was what was noted and remembered in Hebrews 11!

Joseph lived for 54 more years after his father died. He lived to the age of 110 years. It was a good old age, but not as long as the former patriarchs had lived: Abraham was 175, Isaac was 180, and Jacob was 147. *“So Joseph died... and his body was put in a coffin in Egypt.”*

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The slave caravan to Egypt was not the end of the story!

Back in Genesis 37, Joseph's brothers hated Joseph and threw him into a pit, and while they were eating a meal they looked up and saw a caravan of Midianite traders going to Egypt. They took Joseph out of the pit and sold their own brother into slavery for twenty shekels of silver. End of story, they thought.

But the slave caravan to Egypt was **not** the end of the story! We know the rest of the story, and it is captured in Joseph's classic statement : *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"* (v20).

There's no doubt that evil was involved in what the brothers did, but God overruled that evil. God used that evil act for ultimate good. God's good purpose was to preserve many people alive when Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt, and the good of bringing Jacob and his family to Egypt, where they would become a nation. The caravan to Egypt was **not** the end of the story.

Now the question could be asked: "Did God **allow** the evil, or was it part of His **plan**?" Joseph said, *"you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good."* Well, if God meant it for good, does it not follow that this was part of God's plan? Yes, it does follow, but some Christians have a hard time with this biblical truth.

Recently a man told me that he had no problem with the idea that God **allowed** evil, but the idea of evil as a part of God's **plan** - that threw him for a loop! That really bothered him. I explained to him that God does not approve evil, or condone evil, or plan evil in the sense that He wants it to happen. No! But because God is sovereign and all-powerful and all knowing, we must conclude that whatever evil God allows is made a part of His overall plan.

Look at Acts 2:23, where Peter was speaking of the Lord Jesus: *"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death..."* In this verse we have the evil of man and the plan of God in the same sentence! Also look at Acts 4:27-28, *"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done."* Here again we have the evil of man and the plan of God in the same sentence.

Now if God could take the worst of man's evil - the rejection and the crucifixion of His own Son - and work it into his plan for our salvation, how much more can He take any other evil of man and make it part of His plan? As Ephesians 1:11 says, *"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will."* Notice - God **"works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will"** (NIV, emphasis added).

So there is quite a bit of doctrine involved here in Genesis 50, isn't there? The slave caravan to Egypt was not the end of the story!

## 2. The coffin in Egypt was not the end of the story.

*“So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”* It has often been pointed out that the book of Genesis begins with the story of creation where everything is new and perfect, and it ends with a coffin in Egypt. What a come down! Why? The downward spiral was the result of man's sin and its consequences. Certainly this is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit had the book of Genesis end this way - to show the effects and consequences of man's disobedience and departure from God.

But - praise the Lord - the coffin in Egypt is **not the end of the story!** The rest of the Bible was yet to come. The story of God's wonderful plan of redemption for mankind would continue to be unfolded. The coming of the Messiah and His atoning work on the cross was yet to take place.

What a contrast - the coffin in Egypt at the end of Genesis, compared to the **empty tomb** at the end of the Gospels! How thankful we can be that the coffin in Egypt is not the end of the story!

## Practical Application

### Our disappointments are God's appointments.

I'm sure you've heard that expression, "Our disappointments are God's appointments." It is certainly an application of Genesis 50:20 - *“you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good...”*

Think of all the disappointments in Joseph's life. He was misunderstood, hated, betrayed, sold, falsely accused, put in prison, forgotten there – and in the end he was even mistrusted by the brothers he had so generously forgiven. And yet Joseph was able to rise above all the disappointments in his life. Why? Because Joseph realized that “our disappointments are God's appointments.”

Joseph knew the truth of Romans 8:28 before it was written: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”* (NIV). Notice: God works for good **“in all things.”** Romans 8:28 is the New Testament way of saying what Joseph said in Genesis 50:20, *“you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”*

Aren't you glad for the many **“But Gods”** of Scripture? Another example: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – for by grace you have been saved...”* (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Are you experiencing disappointment in your job, in your ministry, in your family, or in your relationships? Remember that *“in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him.”* Our disappointments are God's appointments.