

Genesis Chapter 49b-50- John Karmelich

1. Recently, I attended the funeral of a life-long Christian.
 - a) I would describe that funeral as more of a victory-party than one of sorrow.
 - b) This was a person who glorified God all of their life.
 - c) You could almost here Jesus throughout the service saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Matthew 25:21 NKJV)
 - d) On a related note, I think it is important every now and then to go to a cemetery.
 - i) Go look at gravestones. Some have scriptures, and some just have names.
 - ii) Almost all of them have the year of birth, and the year of death.
 - iii) In between is a "dash". That dash represents the time span of their life.
 - iv) We do not know the ending date of our life. All we can do is live out the "dash" the best we can. The greatest thing we do can do with our lives is to live it for God. A life lived to glorify God is far greater than anything else we can do with that dash. We should desire to be "significant" for God, not rich or famous.
 - v) That was the case of the funeral I attended. That is the story of Joseph and Jacob.
2. This is the last lesson on Genesis. The focus is on the death of Jacob and Joseph.
 - a) Thirty lessons and roughly 360 pages after I started, I feel like I can see the finish line of a marathon. ☺ I realize now the joy is not finishing the race, but enjoying the run.
 - b) When one reaches the finish line, one needs to look back, and say, "it was a great run".
 - c) Note Paul's famous last words near the end of his life:
 - i) "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2nd Timothy 4:7-8 NIV)
 - ii) Paul ends his life with a cry of victory. We are going to see that same tone in today's lesson about the death of Jacob and Joseph.
 - d) The great lesson for us is not to focus on our death but on our life.
 - i) I want on my deathbed, whenever that is, to look back on my life with a sense of peace and say, "I lived it for God. I have kept the faith. I have done what God called me to do".
 - ii) Please note this does not mean I am focused on God 100% of the day. I have my faults and I have hobbies and interests that are not God-oriented. The point is I have committed my life to serving God and hopefully you have to. If you have made that commitment, your interest in other things are limited.
 - iii) There is a Christian saying that goes: "Love the Lord Your God with all of your heart, soul mind and strength, and then do whatever you want." The point of that line is if you love God that much, your interest in other things will be limited.
3. Before I start into this text, let's compare the start of Genesis with the end of Genesis.
 - a) Genesis starts with "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth".
 - i) Genesis starts with "life". The word Genesis means "beginnings". It is about the start of various things. It is about the start of life itself. It is about the start of the first human being. It is about the start of a new race after a flood. It is about the first person called to form a special nation of believers in God. It is about the first person called to redeem that nation for a great Exodus.
 - b) Now contrast the "life" of the Genesis with the "death" of the last chapter.
 - i) Here is a book that is all about life, and ends with a chapter on death.

- ii) In a sense, it does not end with death, but with a promise of greater things to come. The end of Jacob's life and Joseph's life is designed to be a physical witness of greater things to come. Even in death, Genesis is still about "beginnings". It is about the beginning of a promise of redemption. Not only for the Israelites in Exodus, but for all believers in Jesus into eternity with him.
- c) One thing to note about Genesis, and the bible as a whole is how little it says about the next life in heaven. Don't get me wrong, there are hints of a resurrection even in Genesis. Yet, you don't read any description of what that life is like. Even if you go through the whole bible, there is very little description of heaven itself. You would think that with Jacob and Joseph on their deathbed, this would be a hot topic. ☺
 - i) The lesson of a lack-of-heaven-description is that God wants us to focus on our life here on earth. It is almost as if God is saying, "Let me worry about heaven. Here is your instruction book for life on earth. Focus on that, as that is enough. I'll take care of heaven when you get there!"
 - ii) God does give us some clues about heaven. There are references to our rewards in heaven throughout the bible. There is a description of judgment in rewards scattered through the bible and a few chapters at the end of Revelation. But that is a small amount in comparison the bible as a whole. The primary topic of the bible is about how God wants us to live here on earth. Sometimes God gives us direct commands. Most of the time, God gives us stories for us to learn. That is the case of most of Genesis. Speaking of Genesis...☺
- 4. Chapter 49, Verse 28: All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him.
 - a) We left the last lesson with Jacob pronouncing blessings on the 12 sons.
 - i) When you study those blessings, some were more of curses than blessings.
 - ii) Most of those blessings were predictions about the future.
 - iii) They were not so much about Jacob's 12 sons, as it applied to the long-term descendants of those 12 sons.
 - iv) A great lesson to remember about those "blessings" is what happens to you not only affects you, but those who come after you.
 - a) Jacob appears to be saying to some to his sons, "Let's review some key things you did over your lifetime. Here is how your children will be like that too". The point is not that their kids are cursed because their parents are that way, the point is "what we do affects the next generation".
 - b) To use a modern cliché, "We don't live in a bubble". Our lives affect those around us. Which is a reason why I do believe "drugs" should be illegal. Libertarians argue, "Drug users only hurt themselves". The bible teaches the opposite. What you do affects those around you. You cannot harm yourself and not impact other people.
 - b) This verse is the first time in Genesis we read of the expression, "The 12 tribes of Israel".
 - i) Through the rest of Israel's history, they will be divided up into 12 divisions, based upon which son of Jacob was their ancestor.
 - ii) The interesting thing is that this division causes war between those divisions, jealousy, and even the breakup of Israel at one point in their history.
 - iii) So the next question is why divide all the descendants by ranks? Why divide the Israelites into the "12 tribes of Israel"?
 - a) Part of the reason is to keep a sense of order and rank. After the Exodus, there are several million people and an organizational plan was needed.

- b) God uses the number “12” as a symbolic picture of a perfect government by God’s standards. When you study the bible, you often see patterns in numbers. If you study any specific number used throughout the bible, you often see a pattern associated with that number. As for the number 12, it is associated with “Government, as God desires it to be.” This also works with multiples of 12. For example, there were 24 divisions of priests (1st Chronicles 27). In the book of Revelation, there are 144,000 witnesses (12 x 12 x 1,000) sealed by God during the tribulation.
 - c) That doesn’t mean the United States should scale down to 12 states, 12 Congressmen and 12 Senators. ☺ It just means that the number “12” is associated with division in the bible as God intended to be.
- 5. Verse 29: Then he (Jacob) gave them these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite,³⁰ the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field.³¹ There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah.³² The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites. "
 - a) Jacob is now moments from his death. His last words were in a sense, “I want to be buried in the same cave as my grandparents, my parents and my wife Leah. Here is where the cave is located.”
 - b) Remember they didn’t have roadmaps and street signs in those days. Therefore the description of the cave had to be described in the manner of the text.
 - c) That cave still exists today. There is a monument built on top of that cave. One can visit the monument, but one cannot peak into the cave itself.
 - d) OK, the big question: Why did Jacob want to be buried there?
 - i) Let’s face it. He was about to die. Jacob understood God could resurrect him from any spot on earth. Further, he could be buried in Bethlehem next to favorite wife Rachel. Why pick the spot where mom and dad and the grandparents are?
 - ii) This gets back to my opening theme of “dying well”. Jacob wanted to use his death as a life-lesson for his children.
 - iii) When Jacob’s grandfather Abraham bought this burial ground, Genesis spent a whole chapter (Chapter 23) describing the “haggling session” of Abraham buying some land from someone named “Ephron the Hittite”. Reviewing a little, why would God waste so much ink just to describe the negotiations to buy this piece of ground? A clue is that this same ground is so important to Jacob that it is mentioned in his final words.
 - iv) The answer is that this is the only plot of land owned by Abraham. In a sense, it is also the only plot of land owned by any Jewish person until they conquered the land some 400 years later. Yes Rachel was also buried near her hometown of Bethlehem. In Rachel’s case, it was just a grave spot. Abraham’s burial ground is the only significant piece of ground owned by any Jewish person at that time.
 - v) God promised Abraham would inherit all of Israel. Yet Abraham, who was very rich never made an effort to buy any land other than this one spot. His son Isaac never bought any real estate. Jacob never bought any real estate.
 - vi) What’s the point? The point is we all are in this world, but not of this world. In a sense, the entire world is “Egypt” to us in that we are part of it, but our future home is somewhere else. That “home’ is in heaven.

- vii) A related point is Jacob is using his dying breath to teach his sons, “You are to live in Egypt, but not be too comfortable in Egypt. Just like I don’t want to be buried here (and Joseph does the same in Chapter 50), I don’t want my children “buried” here. God made a promise of a future home somewhere outside of Egypt, and that is in the land promised to us. The same word-picture applies to us as well.
- e) Before I move on, I also remembered the fact that Jacob’s favorite wife was Rachel, and not Leah. Yet Jacob wanted to be buried next to Leah and not Rachel.
 - i) There have been sermons preached how this “vindicates” Leah for all of her years of loyal service even though she was the unloved wife.
 - ii) Personally, I don’t think that is the point. The point is Jacob chose to make God a priority over his favorite wife. This isn’t about Rachel and Leah. This is about loving God first, and trusting in His promises. Those promises included a future redemption for Jacob’s children.
 - a) In a word-picture, both burial grounds represent promises to us. The burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob represent the land promised to the nation of Israel. The burial place of Rachel is Bethlehem, which of course became the source of new-life through Jesus.
 - iii) As important as it was to teach your children about loving your spouse, the more important lesson is to love God over your spouse. My greatest hope for my young daughters is that they marry men who love God more than those men love my daughters. It is through God’s love that God will give them the ability to truly love my daughters far more than they can through their own strength.
 - iv) That’s the word picture of Jacob being buried next to the less-loved Leah. It is not that “I now love Leah more” or “I want to make it up to Leah”. It’s about choosing God first. In Jacob’s case, this is about trusting in God’s promises even as one faces death. Therefore, he chose the burial place with his “fathers”.
 - v) Notice in Verse 29, Jacob says, “I am about to be gathered to my people”.
 - a) I can hear Jacob’s sons say, “What do you mean gathered to your people. Who are we, chopped liver?” ☺
 - b) That verse does not mean Jacob’s sons are not “his people”. “His people” are those in heaven who have put their trust in God. All people who make it into heaven become Jacob’s people, my people and your people.
- 6. Verse 33: When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.
 - a) Here we have the actual death recorded of Jacob. Like the funeral I mentioned in the opening of this lesson, this is a victory, not a defeat. Jacob despite all of his faults believed in God and struggled to do God’s will. Jacob was “gathered to his people” not because Jacob was a good person, but because Jacob trusted in God’s faithfulness to carry out His promises to Jacob and to his children.
 - b) In the Book of Hebrews, Chapter 11 is called the “Hall of Faith”. It lists the great men of the Old Testament. Here is the only thing said about Jacob in that chapter:
 - i) “By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.” (Hebrews 11:21 NIV)
 - ii) Notice Hebrews has no mention of Jacob wrestling with an angel. There is no mention of any of the years with Laban, the struggles with Esau or any other part of his life. The one aspect the New Testament emphasizes is that by faith Jacob on his deathbed blessed his sons.
 - iii) What’s the point? The point is Jacob lived and died trusting in a future, better day for his children. Let’s face it, life has its wonderful moments, but it also has lots of pain and suffering. If this life is “all that we get”, well, I’m disappointed.

- iv) The reason God created us is because He wants to spend eternity with us. His only requirement is that He wants us to freely-choose Him over our life here on earth. That is why our eternal destiny is based on our life here on earth. It is God saying, "OK, you can choose to live for yourself here on earth or for me. How you choose affects your eternal destiny. If you don't choose me here on earth, why would you want me for eternity?"
- v) C.S. Lewis once remarked that, "The gates of hell will be locked from the inside." He meant that people go to hell because they willfully chose to ignore God all of their life. Living a sinful life is simply the "natural consequence" of ignoring God. In a sense, God sending people to hell is giving them what they want.
- vi) Which leads us back to Jacob. If you live your life following God, you are naturally going to end your life following God. If you ignore God all of your life, it is difficult to change. This is why statistically most people choose to follow God as teenagers. The problem is the older you get, the harder it is to change habits. (You can still change. The power of God is greater than our habits!)
 - a) Jacob ends his life stating how much he trusts God and how God will resurrect both him to heaven and the nation of Israel to a future promise.
 - b) Hebrews emphasizes Jacob's deathbed request because it shows Jacob's life-long trust in God. A man that trusts God most of his adult life will end that life also being a witness to God.

7. Chapter 50, Verse 1: Joseph threw himself upon his father and wept over him and kissed him.
² Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, ³ taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.
- a) I envision all of the brothers standing around Jacob, but the emphasis is on Joseph as he has the power as Prime Minister to organize and pay for the embalming.
 - b) OK, the next big question, why discuss embalming? The text makes a big deal about how Jacob was to be embalmed for burial.
 - i) First of all, if anyone understood embalming it was Egyptians. Their whole culture was obsessed with death. If you ever visit Egypt, the main attractions are pyramids, which are essentially giant mausoleums full of mummies.
 - ii) To this day, we don't understand how the Egyptians embalmed so well. Some of the mummies that have been found still contain the last meal they ate.
 - iii) Back to the question, why embalm Jacob this way? Let's face it, God can resurrect us no matter how we die or how we are buried. My personal view is that God resurrects our DNA signature and puts it in a new body. It's just my view and if I'm wrong, well, so be it. ☺ Back to the question: Why take the 40 days for the Egyptian high-quality burial technique for Jacob?
 - iv) The answer is about being a witness in death as well as life.
 - v) Jacob's sons are about to hold a big funeral procession to Israel. The text coming up even makes notice of how those who lived around the burial cave made note of this funeral procession.
 - vi) The message of the funeral is, "See this funeral coming out of Egypt? You ain't seen nothing yet. Wait 400 years and then you'll see a real procession!" ☺
 - a) Notice it says, "The Egyptians mourned for him 70 days". Joseph, as a Prime Minister, still had power in Egypt and arranged a formal state funeral for his father to be honored by the country.
 - b) The idea is to make his father's funeral "a witness" to a world of nonbelievers around him.

- vii) I truly believe the funeral procession is meant as a message not only to the Egyptians, but as a message to the future children of Israel who were stuck in Egypt for 400 years. The message is "This horror is not forever. God made promises and God keeps his promises. Don't put your trust in man or yourself because we are not perfect and we fail. God is perfect and God does keep his promises. Just as Jacob will be taken out of Egypt, so will the whole nation of Israel be taken out of Egypt."
 - viii) In the same way, we also don't trust in our faithfulness, we trust in God's faithfulness. We also want to end our lives well as we live our lives for God. We trust in God's faithfulness to resurrect us, not our ability to get into heaven "because we're good people".
8. Verse 4: When the days of mourning had passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh's court, "If I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, ⁵ `My father made me swear an oath and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan." Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.' "
- a) Joseph essentially asks Pharaoh, "Look, I need a leave of absence from my job for a short time span. I made this promise to my father to bury him in Canaan (Israel). So let me go and I'll be back when I'm done".
 - b) OK, why include this text? Why mention Joseph asking permission to leave?
 - i) Again, the point is about being a witness for God to those around us.
 - ii) Joseph says, "I will return". Joseph is saying, "I am trustworthy. I was hired to do this job and I'm keeping oath." God wants us to be trustworthy in all aspects of our life. If people can't trust us in say, our jobs, how will they ever trust us when it comes to telling people about God?"
 - iii) The specific witness of the funeral processing is also about "practicing for the big Exodus". It is to show the Egyptians that "The God" does promise greater things and "The God" does redeem man. Thus the funeral procession is about showing outsiders how God keeps his word.
 - iv) Notice Joseph does not say, "Hey you pagans, I have to go bury dad as a model of how my descendants will plunder Egypt and millions will walk out". ☺ He simply makes the request to leave Egypt.
 - c) Verse 6 makes a point of announcing that Pharaoh agreed to do this.
 - i) This is the last we read of a "cooperative Pharaoh". In the first chapter of Exodus we start reading of an uncooperative Pharaoh who opposes the Jewish people.
 - ii) A point to consider from all of this is that God is behind the scenes "swaying the minds" of unbelievers, even pagan kings.
 - a) It was God's desire for Joseph to be Prime Minister of Egypt and God was behind the scenes persuading the Pharaoh to promote a non-Egyptian to the #2 man in power.
 - b) Here we are many years later. We can assume it is now a different Pharaoh in charge. Remember that it is not just a matter of letting Joseph go for a few days, but with a large caravan of Egyptian officials as we will read in the next few verses.
 - c) This verse is a good reminder for us to pray for our government appointed leaders (Romans 13:1). That includes ones who haven't committed their lives to serving God and the one's we don't like. If God can sway the hearts of a Pharaoh, he can work with anyone.
 - d) "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (Proverbs 21:1 NIV)

9. Verse 7: So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him--the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt--⁸ besides all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen.⁹ Chariots and horsemen also went up with him. It was a very large company.
- a) Now that's a funeral! Some of you may have witnessed a president's funeral or a pope's funeral. Remember this is the funeral of a "nobody" as far as the Egyptians were concerned.
 - i) Think about it this way: Have you ever seen a state-funeral for an insignificant father of a United States Vice President? That is what we have here. Joseph is the #2 man in Egypt and he organizes an official state-sponsored funeral for his father, complete with Egyptian dignitaries.
 - b) OK, onto the big why question: Why did Joseph do this?
 - i) The easy-answer is "Joseph loved his father. Joseph was a powerful man in Egypt and had the power to arrange this funeral."
 - a) It's not a bad answer but it misses the big-picture. ☺
 - ii) Remember Verse 3 of this chapter says, "And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days."
 - a) I don't think all of Egypt took off work for 70 days. I believe it means that word was spread all over Egypt that the father of the Prime Minister (or former Prime Minister) was dead and that for 70 days they all need to honor him. Remember a few chapters back every Egyptian gave all they had to Joseph in order to survive. I suspect they had no choice but to honor the death of his father.
 - iii) Let me paraphrase what is the "big answer":
 - a) Joseph is saying to the Egyptians: "Hey, we Hebrews are here in Egypt. My brothers and I want to show you about the "true God" and not the pagan gods that you follow. We want every Egyptian to know we are burying our father back in the land promised to him, even though he doesn't own it. I'm organizing a big state-sponsored funeral so you can all see how one day all the Hebrews will return to this land just like my brothers and I are carrying out my father right now."
 - b) Joseph is also saying to his brothers and their children: "The words spoken to Abraham are true, even though he didn't own any land other than the burial site. The words are also true how we will be in Egypt for 400 years and we will be redeemed. One day, our decedents will come out of Egypt with a big procession just like we are doing to this day."
 - c) So the answer to the question of why is Joseph doing this is to act out prophecy. It is to remember what God will do in the future.
 - d) Which leads to us. A lot of what we do as Christians is to look back to what Jesus did for us. The redemption for us was "past tense". For Joseph, the redemption is "future tense". Joseph performed a ritual pointing to the future as we perform rituals such as communion to remember the past.
 - e) Let's look at something written in Hebrews:
 - (1) "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for." (Hebrews 11:1-2 NIV)
 - (2) That applies to Joseph. He was sure of the promise of a future redemption. He trusted in that promise so much he was willing to perform this big funeral as a witness to his fellow Jews as well as to the nonbelievers around him.

- c) One last thing: Notice Verse 8 says they left their children and flocks in Egypt.
 - i) On one hand, that is “stating the obvious”. It would be tough to travel a long distance with little kids.
 - ii) I also believe the point of that is to tell the Egyptians, “We’re not running away for good. We will be back. God told our ancestor Abraham that we have to stay here for 400 years and be mistreated as slaves (Genesis 15:13). We obey what God says, even though we don’t like it.”
 - a) The application is that God also calls us into situations we may not like. The point is we must be obedient to God even when we don’t like the situation or makes us uncomfortable.
10. Verse 10: When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. ¹¹ When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning." That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.
- a) This funeral procession has now left Egypt and is back in Israel. They are now at the burial ground where they stopped and had a 7-day funeral (now that’s a funeral! ☺). The local residents are so impressed by this procession of foreigners they renamed the place in order to remember the event.
 - b) In a sense, that is what Joseph wanted the locals to do -- remember this event. Remember that after the Exodus 400 years later, the Israelites go back to this land and start conquering the local residents in order to take over the land. That is why this funeral procession is such a big deal in terms of prophecy.
 - i) Remember that Genesis is a book of beginnings. It is not only the beginning of man’s existence and Israel’s existence, but it is the beginning of redemption.
 - ii) Genesis is ending with a prophetic word picture of a promise of a future redemption. This future redemption will be “very public”. This refers to the redemption of the Nation of Israel, but also ties to our redemption through Jesus.
 - a) “Look, he (Jesus) is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.” (Revelation 1:7 NIV)
 - c) The local residents rename this place “Abel Mizraim” which means “Egyptian mourners”.
 - i) Why would the text mention Egyptian mourners? Certainly Joseph could have explained how the key people were not Egyptians.
 - ii) Again, this is prophetic of the future Exodus, but the “mourning” is not for the Jewish people. Let’s face it, the Hebrews will leave Egypt with lots of stuff. The ones who suffer the 10 plagues and lose all of their possessions in Exodus are the Egyptians. They are the ones who will mourn.
 - a) Given that, I see this as prophetic of the future suffering Egyptians.
 - iii) Further, it is a prophetic warning to those who refuse to bend-the-knee to Jesus. Jesus is coming a second time. Not only to reward those on earth who still follow him but to judge those who refuse. Jesus’ Second Coming is mainly about judgment. You can see that word-picture in this whole procedure.
 - iv) “All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left... Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” (Matthew 25:32-33,46 NIV)
 - d) On that happy note, let’s get back at the funeral procession. ☺

11. Verse 12: So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them: ¹³ They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field. ¹⁴ After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.
- a) This text states that Jacob's children obeyed their father's wishes. They buried him in the same cave as Abraham, Isaac, their wives and Jacob's wife Leah. The text then states how they all went back to Egypt as they promised Pharaoh.
 - i) Stop and think that no Hebrew was to set foot in the Promised Land again for over 400 years. I believe that is why Genesis describes all of these details of the children of Jacob making the last visit to Land prior to the Exodus.
 - b) One thing I notice about the bible is that a lot of text is always dedicated to obedience. It is almost as if every time someone is obedient to God's commands, the bible goes out it ways to describe in verbatim how people obeyed God's commands.
 - i) The command is one of the 10 commandments: "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12). "Honoring" your father is also to fulfill what your father asked you to do and that was to bury Jacob in Israel.
 - ii) The other command was to "Not give false testimony against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16). Joseph promised Pharaoh they would return. To not return would have been a violation of this commandment. Remember God wants to be a good witness to others. As I stated earlier, if people don't find us trustworthy in what we say, how can they find us trustworthy when we talk about God?
12. Verse 15: When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ `This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.
- a) We now switch topics. To paraphrase Joseph's brothers, "You know we are worried. Years ago we sold Joseph into slavery. Sure Joseph wouldn't punish us as long as dad was alive, but now that dad's dead, he may seek vengeance on us."
 - i) Remember that all the Jewish people were living as shepherders while Joseph was working (or retired) as the top administrator in Egypt. I suspect the other brothers were still intimidated by Joseph.
 - b) If I had to describe one of man's greatest needs of God, it is the assurance of forgiveness.
 - i) Remember that Joseph has already stated to the brothers how he has forgiven them of their sin. (See Genesis 45:5). Yet, there is still this sense of lingering doubt in their brothers' hearts. They still feel guilty about what they did.
 - a) What they also feared is retribution. Now that their father is dead, they were afraid of what Joseph might do to them.
 - ii) Yes we Christians understand that God forgives us and walk by faith in that command. The hard part is trying to forgive ourselves. Our ego's say, "We are better people than that. We shouldn't have committed that sin." In a sense we want (or fear) punishment if no other reason, to alleviate that guilt.
 - a) That guilt is a lack of trust in God. God promises 100% forgiveness and we have to trust in God. The opposite of "faith" is "fear". To fear God's retribution for a sin God has already forgiven us for is lacking the faith in his promise of forgiveness.

- c) Let's get back to the text: The brothers sent a message to Joseph asking for forgiveness. The text says Joseph wept when he read the message.
 - i) Notice Joseph didn't say, "You dummies, I forgave you and I meant it. Now quit groveling and get back to the sheep." ☺
 - ii) Notice Joseph didn't say, "Yeah, your right...Now that dad is dead, let's talk about the time you sold me into slavery". ☺
 - iii) The response is Joseph wept.
 - a) Jesus wept two times (Luke 19:41 and John 11:35). In both cases, Jesus wept over a lack of faith. Jesus wept once over Jerusalem because they failed to recognize Him as the Messiah and Jesus wept once for his followers because they didn't believe he could raise Lazarus from the dead.
 - b) I state that because I believe Joseph also wept over a lack-of-faith. If we understand Joseph by now, he is not a man of revenge. He understands God and God's purpose for allowing tragedy.
 - c) I also believe Joseph wept because again, he saw the changed hearts of their brothers. Their message said, "Forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." They didn't ask for forgiveness in their name, but in the name of the God of Jacob.
 - d) A modern comparison is not to say, "God please forgive my sins because I'm a rotten person and I can do better". Forgiveness is to say in effect, "God forgive me because the bible teaches your standards for right and wrong. I gave my life to follow you and out of gratitude for your salvation I am obedient to your laws. Since I failed to keep those laws, I ask forgiveness because I gave my life to follow you and out of gratitude for your salvation I want to live in obedience to your commandments. Since I failed to keep those laws, I ask forgiveness in your name and ask that you work through me to make me a better person".
 - (1) You don't have to invoke that long prayer every time you confess a sin, just remember that it is our trust in God to forgive us and not in we forgiving ourselves.

13. Verse 18: His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

- a) Notice the brothers did not wait for Joseph to respond to their message. After they sent the message, they came to him personally, bowed before him and said in effect, "We'll be your slaves forever, just don't kill us".
 - i) On a negative note, the guilt of what they did reached a point where they were willing to commit their lives to slavery in order to avoid punishment. Carrying around the guilt of sin leads us into a "mental bondage" of slavery due to guilt.
 - ii) On a positive note, this is good model of forgiveness:
 - a) The fundamental gospel message is God gives us a set of laws that He states is the basis of our judgement for eternity. Failure to live up to those laws is punishable by death. God himself paid the price for our sins as God still demands full payment for our sins.
 - b) Here are the brothers. They are stating that because of their sin, "they deserved death, but are pleading for mercy". They are willing to be sold as slaves in exchange for their life. In a strange sense, that is word-picture for us. Out of gratitude, we agree to be "slaves to God" for His forgiveness.

- b) Joseph reminds his brothers he is not God. This word-picture of forgiveness gets very literal to remind us we worship God and not Joseph.
- c) When I first started to write about Joseph in Chapter 37, I stated that the most important verse to remember about Joseph is here in Chapter 50. It is Verse 20:
 - i) “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20 NIV)
 - ii) If you told me only to memorize one verse from Genesis, I might pick this one.
 - iii) This verse states that Joseph understood that all the events of our lives are God-filtered. Joseph could forgive his brothers because Joseph understood that God intended for good.
 - a) Now does that mean if someone tries to hit us with a baseball bat, we should stand there, take it and say, “I forgive you because God meant it for good?” Not exactly. ☺
 - b) First of all, we don’t know the future, so yes, you should duck when someone tries to hit you and defend yourself.
 - c) Second, the bible never states we are to forgive those who don’t ask for forgiveness. Let me clarify that by saying we need to forgive those who don’t ask so we are not living with anger for the rest of our lives. That anger blocks our relationship with God, and we need some sense of forgiveness in order to unblock it.
 - d) Remember Joseph’s brothers do ask for forgiveness. We assume they ask God as well as Joseph. If that is the case, they are forgiven.
 - iv) Let’s get back to Joseph’ statement. The reason I believe this may be the most important verse in Genesis is not because it’s near the end of the book ☺, but because that verse is a great attitude for our own happiness.
 - a) The great lesson for us is that everything happens to believers for a reason. Chapter 50, Verse 20 is the Old Testament Equivalent of Romans 8:28:
 - (1) “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.” (Romans 8:28 NIV)
 - (2) One of my favorite bible teachers used to joke that he checks Romans 8:28 about once a day to make sure it is still there. His point is during the rough moments of our lives, we have to remember that everything is God-filtered for our learning.
 - (3) You may ask, “Then why am I going through the same problem over and over again?” The answer maybe that God is still trying to get you to learn some specific lesson or get you to surrender your will to His will.
 - (4) You may ask, “Why does this particular suffering last so long?” The answer may be to teach you patience. For all you know, that suffering may teach you to help minister to others going through the same trauma.
 - (5) Am I saying I can explain all tragedies in life? No. Notice that Romans 8:28 only applies to believers. Read it again and see!
 - (6) Remember that we live in a sinful world. People who willfully choose to ignore God “naturally” commit sins. Those sins have consequences upon innocent people. The principal of Romans 8:28 as well as Joseph’s statement is that God uses all the events of our lives to shape us and mold us into the person God wants us to be.

- d) Let's get back to the text: Verse 21 says, "So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them."
- i) The brothers approach Joseph fully expecting to be in slavery the rest of their lives. They walk out of the room with the assurance they are free men and that Joseph will provide for them for the rest of their lives.
 - ii) That is a great model of God's grace.
 - a) Mercy is to be forgiven of a punishment you don't deserve.
 - b) Grace simply means to get something positive that you don't deserve.
 - c) We approach God as sinners and say, "God we are wrong. We deserve to be your slaves forever." God then smiles and says in effect, "You still need to comprehend just how much I love you. Not only do I forgive you of your sins, but let me give you lots of blessings that you don't deserve just because I love you."
 - d) A perfect God is perfect in love.
 - (1) If a person loves to paint pictures, they will paint even if they never sell a painting in their life. They do it for the love of it. The same applies to a musician who loves music.
 - (2) If God is perfect in love, He needs someone to show that love upon. He chose mankind to express that love upon. In order to show that love, first God has to deal with the "sin problem" as God is also perfect in judgement. The point is once there is forgiveness, and then God can shower His Grace upon us.
 - (3) I am convinced we would all (myself included) be much happier people if we stop every now and then and realize just how much God loves and wants to bless us. Not because we deserve it, but just because God wants us to. We can alleviate our guilt of our sins by trusting in God's forgiveness and then expect God to bless us simply because that is what God wants to do in our lives.
14. Verse 22: Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years ²³ and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees.
- a) These last few verses are an epilogue to Joseph's life. It says in effect, "God blessed Joseph and made up for the rotten years. Joseph got to live to see his great-grandchildren.
 - b) I have found that the people God use greatly also suffer greatly. I have yet to meet a person used by God in a mighty way that doesn't also go through a lot of years of tough-maturity in order to be used by God as such.
 - c) Further, when God "makes up" for the tough years, he usually blesses us in far greater measures than those difficult years.
 - i) When you read of the suffering in the book of Job, the epilogue is he then gets double the possessions he originally lost. (Compare Job Chapter 1 and 46).
 - ii) Jesus says that anyone who gives up possessions or family members for the sake of the gospel receives a hundred times more in this lifetime. (Ref Mark 10:29-30). Jesus point is no matter how painful it maybe to give up something for God's sake, the reward in our lifetime as well as in heaven is far greater than what you gave up. This applies to Joseph. Joseph was used greatly by God, and Joseph needed to be tested in order to be used greatly by God.
15. Verse 24: Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." ²⁵ And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place." ²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

- a) Here we have the last recorded words of Joseph.
 - i) His final words were in the promise of a future redemption.
 - ii) His final instructions were to be embalmed and for his descendants to carry his embalmed body to Israel when that redemption occurs.
 - iii) There is a mention in the Book of Exodus of this being fulfilled:
 - a) "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place."" (Exodus 13:19 NIV)
 - b) Notice what Joseph did not say:
 - i) Joseph did not say, "I lived a good life. I lived it for God and now its time to die."
 - ii) Joseph did not say, "I did a good job as Prime Minister, I saw my family again, I lived to see my great grandchildren. Now its time to go".
 - iii) Joseph spent his whole life being God-focused and using the gifts that God has given him for the benefit of those around him. Joseph lived as a witness for God. He wasn't about to stop now that he was on his deathbed.
 - iv) This gets back to my opening idea of "one dies as one lives". As Joseph lived for God all of his life, so he died the same way.
 - c) My point is that Joseph ended his life looking toward the future, not the past.
 - i) Joseph's final words focus on the future promise to the nation of Israel.
 - ii) Joseph is in heaven because in the end, his hope was in a future promise for the Nation of Israel.
 - iii) In a sense, that should be our final words. Except while Joseph looked forward, our redemption comes from looking back. Our hope is in what happened on the cross and the trust in that fact as the hope of our redemption.
 - iv) If I have the privilege of having my family around me at my deathbed, I need to be like Joseph. I need to not focus on my accomplishments, but to tell my children to have trust that God will redeem them. My last words is to tell my children to live out their lives for God and to live a life that is significant for God, be it on a small scale or large scale.
16. On that happy note, it's time to wrap up Genesis.
- a) My hope is that I have glorified God in these lessons and that it helps people grow and mature in their faith.
 - b) I have learned "The best way to learn the bible is to teach it." Part of my motivation for these lessons is for my own personal growth. I am grateful and humbled by those who take the time to read them and hope that they have benefited you as much as myself.
 - c) I hope you have enjoyed reading them as much as I have writing them.
17. Let's pray: Heavenly Father we thank you for these lessons on life. May we live our lives for your glory. May our lives be significant for you and be used greatly by you. May we draw upon your power and strength to be witnesses to those around us. When our final days come, whenever they are, may they also be witnesses for you and make a difference to others who are witnesses to those final days. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Supplement: Bibliography

“If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and the The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on Genesis are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to “audio” commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in Real Audio® or MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated.

1. Commentary on Genesis by Jon Curson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format <http://joncourson.com>
2. Commentary on Genesis by David Guzik. It is available for free in text format. The web address is <http://enduringword.com/commentaries/01.html>. It is also published in book format.
3. Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. 1: Pentateuch (no copyright); Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 2000, Findex.Com. All rights reserved.
4. Audio Commentary on Matthew by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org/>. It is also available at <http://firefighters.org/html/library.cfm>
5. Gleanings In Genesis by Arthur Pink, Kessinger Publishing 2003 ISBN: 0766142302
6. Audio Commentary on Matthew by Chuck Smith, from the “6,000 series”. It is available at Chapel Store, at Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA. Other sermons by Chuck Smith are available online at <http://www.thewordfortoday.org/>
7. Commentary on Genesis by Ray Steadman 51 sermons (in 4 series) on Genesis 1-25 preached at Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto by Ray C. Stedman in 1967 and 1968. Messages are in HTML, PDF, and MP3 audio format. <http://pbc.org/dp/stedman/genesis/index.html>
8. Joseph Great Lives Series: Volume 3 by Chuck Swindoll, W Publishing Group (1998) ISBN: 084991342X
9. The Defender’s Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris World Publishing (1995) ISBN: 052910444X
10. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
11. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing <http://www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm>
12. The Expositor’s Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
13. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999 (Available at Christian Bookstores.)