

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS CHAPTER 50

Here is,

I. The preparation for Jacob's funeral, **#Ge 50:1-6**.

II. The funeral itself, **#Ge 50:7-14**.

III. The settling of a good understanding between Joseph and his brethren after the death of Jacob, **#Ge 50:15-21**.

IV. The age and death of Joseph, **#Ge 50:22-26**. Thus the book of Genesis, which began with the origin of light and life, ends with nothing but death and darkness; so sad a change has sin made.

Ver. 1.

Joseph is here paying his last respects to his deceased father.

1. With tears and kisses, and all the tender expressions of a filial affection, he takes leave of the deserted body, **#Ge 50:1**. Though Jacob was old and decrepit, and must needs die in the course of nature--though he was poor comparatively, and a constant charge to his son Joseph, yet such an affection he had for a loving father, and so sensible was he of the loss of a prudent, pious, praying father, that he could not part with him without floods of tears. Note, As it is an honour to die lamented, so it is the duty of survivors to lament the death of those who have been useful in their day, though for some time they may have survived their usefulness. The departed soul is out of the reach of our tears and kisses, but with them it is proper to show our respect to the poor body, of which we look for a glorious and joyful resurrection. Thus Joseph showed his faith in God, and love to his father, by kissing his pale and cold lips, and so giving an affectionate farewell. Probably the rest of Jacob's sons did the same, much moved, no doubt, with his dying words.
2. He ordered the body to be embalmed (**#Ge 50:2**), not only because he died in Egypt, and that was the manner of the Egyptians, but because he was to be carried to Canaan, which would be a work of time, and therefore it was necessary the body should be preserved as well as it might be from putrefaction. See how vile our bodies are, when the soul has forsaken them; without a great deal of art, and pains, and care, they will, in a very little time, become noisome. If the body have been dead four days, by that time it is offensive.
3. He observed the ceremony of solemn mourning for him, **#Ge 50:3**. Forty days were taken up in embalming the body, which the Egyptians (they say) had an art of doing so curiously as to preserve the very features of the face unchanged; all this time, and thirty days more, seventy in all, they either confined themselves and sat solitary, or, when they went out, appeared in the

habit of close mourners, according to the decent custom of the country. Even the Egyptians, many of them, out of the great respect they had for Joseph (whose good offices done for the king and country were now fresh in remembrance), put themselves into mourning for his father: as with us, when the court goes into mourning, those of the best quality do so too. About ten weeks was the court of Egypt in mourning for Jacob. Note, What they did in state, we should do in sincerity, *weep with those that weep*, and mourn with those that mourn, as being ourselves also in the body.

4. He asked and obtained leave of Pharaoh to go to Canaan, thither to attend the funeral of his father, **#Ge 50:4-6**.

(1.) It was a piece of necessary respect to Pharaoh that he would not go without leave; for we may suppose that, though his charge about the corn was long since over, yet he continued a prime minister of state, and therefore would not be so long absent from his business without licence.

(2.) He observed a decorum, in employing some of the royal family, or some of the officers of the household, to intercede for this licence, either because it was not proper for him in the days of his mourning to come into the presence-chamber, or because he would not presume too much upon his own interest. Note, Modesty is a great ornament to dignity.

(3.) He pleaded the obligation his father had laid upon him, by an oath, to bury him in Canaan, **#Ge 50:5**. It was not from pride or humour, but from his regard to an indispensable duty, that he desired it. All nations reckon that oaths must be performed, and the will of the dead must be observed.

(4.) He promised to return: *I will come again*. When we return to our own houses from burying the bodies of our relations, we say,

"We have left them behind;"

but, if their souls have gone to our heavenly Father's house, we may say with more reason,

"They have left us behind."

(5.) He obtained leave (**#Ge 50:6**): *Go and bury thy father*. Pharaoh was willing his business should stand still so long; but the service of Christ is more needful, and therefore he would not allow one that had work to do for him to go first and bury his father; no, *Let the dead bury their dead*, **#Mt 8:22**.

Ver. 7.

We have here an account of Jacob's funeral. Of the funerals of the kings of Judah, usually, no more is said than this, *They were buried with their fathers in the city of David*: but the funeral of the patriarch Jacob is more largely and fully

described, to show how much better God was to him than he expected (he had spoken more than once of dying for grief, and going to the grave bereaved of his children, but, behold, he dies in honour, and is followed to the grave by all his children), and also because his orders concerning his burial were given and observed in faith, and in expectation both of the earthly and of the heavenly Canaan. Now,

1. It was a stately funeral. He was attended to the grave, not only by his own family, but by the courtiers, and all the great men of the kingdom, who, in token of their gratitude to Joseph, showed this respect to his father for his sake, and did him honour at his death. Though the Egyptians had had an antipathy to the Hebrews, and had looked upon them with disdain (#Ge 43:32), yet now, that they were better acquainted with them, they began to have a respect for them. Good old Jacob had conducted himself so well among them as to gain universal esteem. Note, Professors of religion should endeavour, by wisdom and love, to remove the prejudices which many may have conceived against them because they do not know them. There went abundance of chariots and horsemen, not only to attend them a little way, but to go through with them. Note, The decent solemnities of funerals, according to a man's situation, are very commendable; and we must not say of them, *To what purpose is this waste?* See #Ac 8:2; Lu 7:12.
2. It was a sorrowful funeral (#Ge 50:10,11); standers-by took notice of it as a grievous mourning. Note, The death of good men is a great loss to any place, and ought to be greatly lamented. Stephen dies a martyr, and yet devout men make great lamentations for him. The solemn mourning for Jacob gave a name to the place, *Abel- Mizraim, the mourning of the Egyptians*, which served for a testimony against the next generation of the Egyptians, who oppressed the posterity of this Jacob to whom their ancestors showed such respect.

Ver. 15.

We have here the settling of a good correspondence between Joseph and his brethren, now that their father was dead. Joseph was at court, in the royal city; his brethren were in Goshen, remote in the country; yet the keeping up of a good understanding, and a good affection, between them, would be both his honour and their interest. Note, When Providence has removed the parents by death, the best methods ought to be taken, not only for the preventing of quarrels among the children (which often happen about the dividing of the estate), but for the preserving of acquaintance and love, that unity may continue even when that centre of unity is taken away.

I. Joseph's brethren humbly make their court to him for his favour.

1. They began to be jealous of Joseph, not that he had given them any cause to be so, but the consciousness of guilt, and of their own inability in such a case to forgive and forget, made them suspicious of the sincerity and

constancy of Joseph's favour (#Ge 50:15): *Joseph will peradventure hate us.* While their father lived, they thought themselves safe under his shadow; but now that he was dead they feared the worst from Joseph. Note, A guilty conscience exposes men to continual frights, even where no fear is, and makes them suspicious of every body, as Cain, #Ge 4:14. Those that would be fearless must keep themselves guiltless. If our heart reproach us not, then have we confidence both towards God and man.

2. They humbled themselves before him, confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. They did it by proxy (#Ge 50:17); they did it in person, #Ge 50:18. Now that the sun and moon had set, the eleven stars did homage to Joseph, for the further accomplishment of his dream. They speak of their former offence with fresh regret: *Forgive the trespass.* They throw themselves at Joseph's feet, and refer themselves to his mercy: *We are thy servants.* Thus we must bewail the sins we committed long ago, even those which we hope through grace are forgiven; and, when we pray to God for pardon, we must promise to be his servants.

3. They pleaded their relation to Jacob and to Jacob's God.

(1.) To Jacob, urging that he directed them to make this submission, rather because he questioned whether they would do their duty in humbling themselves than because he questioned whether Joseph would do his duty in forgiving them; nor could he reasonably expect Joseph's kindness to them unless they thus qualified themselves for it (#Ge 50:16): *Thy father did command.* Thus, in humbling ourselves to Christ by faith and repentance, we may plead that it is the command of his Father, and our Father, that we do so.

(2.) To Jacob's God. They plead (#Ge 50:17), *We are the servants of the God of thy father;* not only children of the same Jacob, but worshippers of the same Jehovah. Note: Though we must be ready to forgive all that are any way injurious to us, yet we must especially take heed of bearing malice towards any that are the servants of the God of our father: such we should always treat with a peculiar tenderness; for we and they have the same Master.

II. Joseph, with a great deal of compassion, confirms his reconciliation and affection to them; his compassion appears, #Ge 50:17. *He wept when they spoke to him.* These were tears of sorrow for their suspicion of him, and tears of tenderness upon their submission. In his reply,

1. He directs them to look up to God in their repentance (#Ge 50:19): *Am I in the place of God?* He, in his great humility, thought they showed him too much respect, as if all their happiness were bound up in his favour, and said to them, in effect, as Peter to Cornelius,

*"Stand up, I myself also am a man. Make your peace with God, and then you will find it an easy matter to make your peace with me."*

Note, When we ask forgiveness of those whom we have offended we must take

heed of putting them in the place of God, by dreading their wrath and soliciting their favour more than God's.

"Am I in the place of God, to whom alone vengeance belongs? No, I will leave you to his mercy."

Those that avenge themselves step into the place of God, **#Ro 12:19**.

2. He extenuates their fault, from the consideration of the great good which God wonderfully brought out of it, which, though it should not make them the less sorry for their sin, yet might make him the more willing to forgive it (**#Ge 50:20**): *You thought evil* (to disappoint the dreams), *but God meant it unto good*, in order to the fulfilling of the dreams, and the making of Joseph a greater blessing to his family than otherwise he could have been. Note, When God makes use of men's agency for the performance of his counsels, it is common for him to mean one thing and them another, even the quite contrary, but God's counsel shall stand. See **#Isa 10:7**. Again, God often brings good out of evil, and promotes the designs of his providence even by the sins of men; not that he is the author of sin, far be it from us to think so; but his infinite wisdom so overrules events, and directs the chain of them, that, in the issue, that ends in his praise which in its own nature had a direct tendency to his dishonour; as the putting of Christ to death, **#Ac 2:23**. This does not make sin the less sinful, nor sinners the less punishable, but it redounds greatly to the glory of God's wisdom.
3. He assures them of the continuance of his kindness to them: *Fear not; I will nourish you*, **#Ge 50:21**. See what an excellent spirit Joseph was of, and learn of him to render good for evil. He did not tell them they were upon their good behaviour, and he would be kind to them if he saw they conducted themselves well; no, he would not thus hold them in suspense, nor seem jealous of them, though they had been suspicious of him: *He comforted them*, and, to banish all their fears, *he spoke kindly to them*. Note, Broken spirits must be bound up and encouraged. Those we love and forgive we must not only do well for but speak kindly to.

Ver. 22.

Here is,

I. The prolonging of Joseph's life in Egypt: he lived to be *a hundred and ten years old*, **#Ge 50:22**. Having honoured his father, his days were long in the land which, for the present, God had given him; and it was a great mercy to his relations that God continued him so long, a support and comfort to them.

II. The building up of Joseph's family: he lived to see his great-grandchildren by both his sons (**#Ge 50:23**), and probably he saw his two sons solemnly owned as heads of distinct tribes, equal to any of his brethren. It contributes much to the comfort of aged parents if they see their posterity in a flourishing condition,

especially if with it they see peace upon Israel, **#Ps 128:6**.

**III.** The last will and testament of Joseph published in the presence of his brethren, when he saw his death approaching. Those that were properly his brethren perhaps were some of them dead before him, as several of them were older than he; but to those of them who yet survived, and to the sons of those who were gone, who stood up in their fathers' stead, he said this.

1. He comforted them with the assurance of their return to Canaan in due time: *I die, but God will surely visit you*, **#Ge 50:24**. To this purport Jacob had spoken to him, **#Ge 48:21**. Thus must we comfort others with the same comforts with which we ourselves have been comforted of God, and encourage them to rest on those promises which have been our support. Joseph was, under God, both the protector and the benefactor of his brethren; and what would become of them now that he was dying? Why, let this be their comfort, *God will surely visit you*. Note, God's gracious visits will serve to make up the loss of our best friends. They die; but we may live, and live comfortably, if we have the favour and presence of God with us. He bids them be confident: *God will bring you out of this land*, and therefore,

(1.) They must not hope to settle there, nor look upon it as their rest for ever; they must set their hearts upon the land of promise, and call that their home.

(2.) They must not fear sinking, and being ruined there; probably he foresaw the ill usage they would meet with there after his death, and therefore gives them this word of encouragement:

*"God will bring you in triumph out of this land at last."*

Herein he has an eye to the promise, **#Ge 15:13,14**, and, in God's name, assures them of the performance of it.

2. For a confession of his own faith, and a confirmation of theirs, he charges them to keep him unburied till that day, that glorious day, should come, when they should be settled in the land of promise, **#Ge 50:25**. He makes them promise him with an oath that they would bury him in Canaan. In Egypt they buried their great men very honourably and with abundance of pomp; but Joseph prefers a significant burial in Canaan, and that deferred too almost 200 years, before a magnificent one in Egypt. Thus Joseph, by faith in the doctrine of the resurrection and the promise of Canaan, gave *commandment concerning his bones*, **#Heb 11:22**. He dies in Egypt; but lays his bones at stake that God will surely visit Israel, and bring them to Canaan.

**IV.** The death of Joseph, and the reservation of his body for a burial in Canaan, **#Ge 50:26**. He was *put in a coffin in Egypt*, but not buried till his children had received their inheritance in Canaan, **#Jos 24:32**. Note,

1. If the separate soul, at death, do but return to its rest with God, the matter is not great though the deserted body find not at all, or not quickly, its rest in

**the grave.**

- 2. Yet care ought to be taken of the dead bodies of the saints, in the belief of their resurrection; for there is a covenant with the dust, which shall be remembered, and a commandment is given concerning the bones.**