

Genesis 49:29-50:26  
Psalm 47  
Hebrews 11

“The Resurrection”

January 24, 2010

We have seen that the ages of the patriarchs are interrelated.

Abraham died at  $175 = 7 \times 5 \times 5$

Isaac died at  $180 = 5 \times 6 \times 6$

Jacob died at  $147 = 3 \times 7 \times 7$

Joseph dies at  $110 = 1 \times 5 \times 5 + 6 \times 6 + 7 \times 7$   
( $25 + 36 + 49$ )

In other words, Joseph is the fulfillment of all his fathers.

He brings to conclusion the patriarchal narrative.

With the death of Joseph the story is complete.

And yet, as you clearly see from the end of Genesis 50,  
the story is *not* complete!

The story ends with Joseph waiting for his burial.

The story ends with a promise that Israel will “go up.”

For the last couple weeks we have been talking a lot about blessings.

Last time we talked about the benediction –  
the blessing that Jacob gave to his sons.

And we’ve talked about how that relates to our worship,  
in the blessings that are given at the Lord’s Table (“The Lord be with you”)  
and the benediction at the end of the worship service.

Our Psalm of response shows how all nations are included in the blessing of Abraham.

Psalm 47 says that the princes of the people gather *as the people of the God of Abraham*.  
You see that in Genesis 50 as the Egyptians join with the people of Abraham,  
at least for a while!

But Psalm 47 points us to a day when all peoples will acknowledge Yahweh as king –  
which is none other than the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 47  
Read Hebrews 11

The word “bury” is used 14 times in our passage.

And yet I have titled this sermon, “The Resurrection.”

Why?

Because if Jacob’s future is merely to rot and decay in the Promised Land,  
then what’s the point?

If you live, you suffer, you die,  
and then you just become fertilizer –

so what?

But as Hebrews 11 makes clear,  
Jacob and Joseph wanted to be buried in the land because of their faith –  
because they saw something beyond death  
that gave them hope and confidence.

Everything that Jacob has done in these last chapters of Genesis  
is oriented around the land, the seed, and the blessing to the nations.

He blessed Pharaoh – confirming God’s blessing upon Egypt.  
He blessed his sons and his grandsons – emphasizing the promised Seed.  
And now he is buried in the Land.

Our passage today opens with Jacob longing for the Land of Promise –  
the land of his ancestors.

**1. “Bury Me with My Fathers” – Jacob’s Hope in the Resurrection (49:28-33)**

*28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him. 29 Then he commanded them and said to them, “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place.*

Jacob insists that he is to be buried with his fathers in the land.

Bury me in the cave that Abraham bought –  
the one piece of real estate that Abraham actually owned!  
And remember the trouble that Abraham had in getting that piece of land.

Abraham had to engage in some delicate negotiation –  
because Ephron *did not* want to lose the land!

Ephron had offered him free burial rights:  
“take the land for free” – which meant “use it, but it’s still mine!”

But Abraham did not want his bones mingled with the bones of the Hittites.  
Abraham understood that the Hittites were under God’s wrath and curse,  
and he did not want the bones of his people  
to be confused with the bones of the Hittites in God’s judgment.

And now Jacob shows the same faith.  
He identifies the cave to his sons –  
and reminds them of all its history:

*31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife.  
There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife,*

We never did hear about the death of Rebekah –  
but now we learn that she also was buried in the cave at Machpelah.

*and there I buried Leah—  
32 the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.”*

Did you hear that?

“Bury me where I buried Leah”  
He gave the blessing of the firstborn to Joseph, the son of the wife he loved.  
But he will be buried with Leah.  
This is the only time in Genesis that Jacob ever speaks the name of Leah!

He could have said, “bury me in the tomb of Rachel near Ephrath” –  
but he doesn’t.  
He says, “bury me with my fathers.”  
Bury me with Leah.

Why?

Because there is something that matters more than his love for Rachel.  
There is something that matters more than anything else in this world.

And that is God’s blessing.  
In his death he will be buried with Leah because that one piece of land  
is the firstfruits of the inheritance.

*33 When Jacob finished commanding his sons,  
he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people.*

Now this is interesting.

Jacob dies in Egypt.  
And yet, there in Egypt, he is “gathered to his people.”  
It is only in his burial that his body will be gathered to his people –  
and yet already in some sense, he is gathered to them here.  
Some would say that this is just a euphemism for death.  
But there are reasons why we use the euphemisms we do.

We say that someone has “passed away”  
because we believe that death is a passing from one state of existence to another.  
The statement that Jacob was “gathered to his people”  
does not give us a very clear conception of the ancient view of the afterlife,  
but it does give us a hint that they believed that there was something more.

How do you think about death?

It is interesting to see how Jacob approaches his death.

There is no fear.

Indeed, he almost seems to look forward to being gathered to his people.

Jacob, after all, had the same hope that we do.

The only difference is that he saw it from a distance through the shadows,  
while we see it clearly in the face of Jesus.

But the clarity of our vision does not necessarily correspond to our inward response!

Jacob sees just a tiny piece of the whole plan of redemption –  
and he responds with wholehearted faith, hope, and love.

We see the whole plan laid out through the whole of redemptive history.

How will we respond?

The difference between the OT saints and ourselves is not in how they were saved –  
they were saved by the grace of God through faith –  
they were saved by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ –  
just like us.

The difference is not that we have greater faith, hope or love!  
(Just read the Psalms – how does your experience of God compare to theirs?!)

We share the same salvation.  
We share the same experience of God.  
We share the same faith, hope, and love.

What is different?

This is what Hebrews 11:39-40 tells us:

“And all these, though commended through their faith,  
did not receive what was promised,  
since God had provided something better for us,  
that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

We have what was promised.

Jacob dies eagerly looking forward to the promise.

Jacob is gathered to his fathers  
waiting patiently for the inheritance to come.

And all through Israel’s history they keep looking forward,  
they keep waiting patiently.

What is it that they were waiting for?  
What is that “something better” that God has provided for us?

Well, that is why we had to read the first two verses of chapter 12:  
that something better is the resurrection of Jesus.

Because in the resurrection of Jesus he has received all that God promised Jacob!  
He has received the inheritance.  
He has received all God's promises.

Everything that God promised to the Fathers has come to pass in Jesus.

And – marvel of marvels – the Father has been pleased to adopt you as his children,  
and give to you the inheritance of his Son.

And this he has demonstrated by giving to you the Spirit of his Son  
as the firstfruits – the deposit and guarantee of the inheritance.

## **2. “Go Up, and Bury Your Father” – Pharaoh’s Hope in the Resurrection (50:1-14)**

*50:1 Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him.*

*2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father.*

*So the physicians embalmed Israel.*

*3 Forty days were required for it, for that is how many are required for embalming.*

*And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.*

Israelites do not embalm.

But since Jacob is being treated as Egyptian royalty,

Joseph has him embalmed

(perhaps in part because it will take a long time to get him back to Canaan)

But this is a royal funeral.

In Egypt 70 days of mourning was reserved for royalty.

But if Pharaoh humbled himself before Jacob and received his blessing,

then we should be surprised that Pharaoh also viewed Jacob as royalty!

Joseph had saved Egypt from death.

And so Egypt honors the father of their savior.

*4 And when the days of weeping for him were past,*

*Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying,*

*“If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,*

*5 My father made me swear, saying,*

*‘I am about to die: in my tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan,  
there shall you bury me.’*

*Now therefore, let me please go up and bury my father. Then I will return.”*

*6 And Pharaoh answered, “Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear.”*

Why is leaving Egypt such a delicate request?

For at least two reasons:

Fear of treason and fear of desertion.

This is why they will leave their children and their flocks will stay behind.

The only reason why they would take their children and flocks would be

if they had no intention of coming back.

In Exodus, Moses will insist that the Israelites take their children and their flocks –  
as a polite way of saying, “we are never coming back.”

And Pharaoh understood full well what Moses was saying!

Here, however, Joseph affirms his loyalty to Pharaoh  
by leaving his children and flocks behind.

And Pharaoh affirms his loyalty to Joseph  
by sending an entourage of Egyptians  
to honor the Seed of Abraham:

*7 So Joseph went up to bury his father.*

*With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household,  
and all the elders of the land of Egypt,*

*8 as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household.*

*Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen.*

*9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen.*

*It was a very great company.*

In verses 9-11 we hear the word “heavy” three times.

It was an exceedingly “heavy” company in verse 9.

They made an exceedingly “heavy” lamentation in verse 10.

And then the Canaanites say that this is a “heavy” mourning by the Egyptians.

Of course, in English we do not use the word “heavy” in quite this way!

But it is a “weighty” company – both in the number and in the importance of the people.

And they made a weighty lamentation over the death of Jacob.

*10 When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan,*

*they lamented there with a very great and grievous lamentation,*

*and he made a mourning for his father seven days.*

*11 When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites,*

*saw the mourning on the threshing floor of Atad, they said,*

*“This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians.”*

*Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan.*

This is a royal funeral.

The Egyptians are treating Jacob as a king.

You can see the contrast here with the Exodus –

and yet when Israel goes forth from Egypt,

Israel will go with the gold and silver of Egypt.

But beyond the Exodus you can see the royal Son of Jacob

hailed as King of kings,

when all nations will bow before the Seed of Abraham.

But in verse 12 the focus shifts from the Egyptians to the sons of Israel:

*12 Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them,  
13 for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan  
and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre,  
which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite  
to possess as a burying place.  
14 After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers  
and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.*

Did you notice what day it is?

In verse 10 we were told that they mourned for seven days.

A seven day ceremony is very common in ancient Israel.  
Circumcision was performed on the eighth day –  
seven days after birth.  
The priest was consecrated on the eighth day –  
after seven days of consecration.  
Wedding feasts lasted for seven days (Jacob’s wedding in 29:27).  
And so even as life began with a ritual of seven days,  
with the cutting off of the foreskin on the eighth –  
so now life ends with a ritual of seven days,  
and after the seven days of mourning,  
presumably on the eighth day,  
the sons take Jacob’s body to the tomb and bury him there.

Today, on the first day of the week,  
in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the tomb,  
we will baptize Bellamy and Brinkley Gratrix –  
as Paul says, “all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into his death.  
We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that,  
just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,  
we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4)

### **3. “Please Forgive Our Transgressions” – the Brothers’ Hope in the Resurrection (50:15-21)**

*15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said,  
“It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.”  
16 So they sent a message to Joseph, saying,  
“Your father gave this command before he died,  
17 ‘Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin,  
because they did evil to you.’  
And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.”*

Some people think that this betrays unbelief and fear on the part of the brothers.  
I disagree.

Certainly there is a measure of fear here!  
They know that Joseph has the power to destroy them.  
But they also know that they are *guilty*.

They had acknowledged their guilt in front of him in 42:21 –  
though they did not realize that he understood them!  
Joseph had assured them that he did not hold their sin against them in 45:7-8.  
But we have no indication that the brothers had ever asked Joseph to forgive them!

For 17 years the brothers had apparently lived with this guilt.  
And only when their father died did they realize that they had to deal with it.

The reason why they still *feel* guilty  
is because they still *are* guilty.

It is true that they have apparently repented before God –  
but they have never asked their brother to forgive them.  
Joseph has been ready to forgive – indeed, he has demonstrated his forgiving spirit to them!  
But only now do they come to their brother.

Beloved congregation,  
do not wait 17 years to ask your brother's forgiveness!  
If you have sinned against someone,  
repent!

It is not enough to say, "God has forgiven me" –  
if you have sinned against your brother,  
then you need to ask your brother for forgiveness as well.

If we believe in real guilt,  
if we believe that when we sin we are truly guilty before God and before our brother,  
then we need also to practice real repentance and forgiveness.

If you have sold your brother into slavery, you are guilty.  
And so you *should* feel guilty until you have asked forgiveness.

And so when the brothers come to him and ask his forgiveness,  
they are acting appropriately.  
And when they appeal to their father's words  
they are appealing to their father's confidence in the resurrection.

They understand that Joseph has received the blessing of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.  
Their future is tied to his blessing.  
And so they humble themselves before him and ask his forgiveness.



*Joseph wept when they spoke to him.*

*18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said,  
“Behold, we are your servants.”*

They have identified themselves as the servants of God –  
and now as the servants of Joseph.

*19 But Joseph said to them,*

*“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?*

*20 As for you, 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.*

*21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.”*

*Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Twice here Joseph says, “Do not fear.”

This is the same thing that God will say at Mt. Sinai when Israel comes before him.

The question, “am I in the place of God?” is perhaps more ambiguous than it may sound.

In one sense it demands an answer of ‘no’!

Joseph is not the one who will decide their fate.

God has already demonstrated his purpose in this.

But in another sense Joseph is indeed in the place of God.

He has authority to do them harm.

He has authority to do them good.

But Joseph says “Do not fear.”

He agrees with them that they are guilty – “you meant evil against me” –  
but he does more than just forgive them!

He declares God’s forgiveness.

Their evil intent has been overridden by God’s good intent –  
and so Joseph will align his attitude toward them  
in submission to God’s ruling.

When your brother comes to you and asks for your forgiveness,  
you must remember what God has said about his sin:

“you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”

Think of how Paul puts this in Romans 8

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,  
for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28)

All things?

Yes.

All things.

Even the earthquake in Haiti?

Yes.

Even what happened to me when I was child?  
Yes.

God's purposes do not turn evil into good.  
Evil remains evil.  
Joseph's brothers *were* guilty.  
They *sinned* against their brother – grievously.

The suffering and death in Haiti remains evil.

But for those who love God,  
even the evils of this age *work together* for good.

How?

Because God uses these things to conform us to the likeness of his Son.  
Joseph does not say, "Oh, that's okay!"  
Joseph does not say to his brothers, "No problem, guys!"  
Joseph agrees with them that what they did was evil.

But he reminds them that evil does not win.  
God overrules the folly and wickedness of this age –  
and through his great wisdom and righteousness  
he uses even the most dastardly deeds of the wicked  
to bring about the triumph of his kingdom.

Genesis concludes with Joseph's hope of the resurrection.

#### **4. "God Will Surely Visit You" – Joseph's Hope in the Resurrection (50:22-26)**

22 *So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house.*

*Joseph lived 110 years.*

23 *And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation.*

*The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own.*

24 *And Joseph said to his brothers,*

*"I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land  
to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."*

This is the first time that the names of the three patriarchs are used together in this way.

God's promises to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob  
are at the heart of Israel's hope.

25 *Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying,*

*"God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."*

26 *So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*

Why doesn't Joseph get buried in the land?

If he wants to be buried in Canaan,  
why not do as Jacob did?

Joseph does not want to be buried in Canaan until the promise comes to pass.  
He will wait until God raises Israel out of bondage and death in Egypt,  
and then he will be buried in the land  
when Israel begins to partake of the firstfruits of the inheritance.  
And so perhaps it is no accident that Joshua will also live to be 110.

Genesis concludes with the bones of Joseph being put in a coffin in Egypt.  
I wish that they did not translate this “coffin” –  
because if you translate this “coffin” you miss the point.  
They put Joseph in an ‘aron.  
In Exodus 25 God told Moses to make an ‘aron  
and put the 10 commandments into it (Dt 10:5).

This word is everywhere and always translated “ark.”  
Joseph is put into an ark.

When Israel comes up out of Egypt they are carrying an ark –  
with the bones of Joseph.  
And they come to the holy mountain where God tells Moses to build another ark –  
this one for the ten commandments.

And so for 40 years in the wilderness Israel is carrying *two* arks:  
the ark of the covenant,  
and the ark of Joseph’s bones.

What is the relationship between these two arks?  
As Jewish tradition would put it,  
“The dead man enshrined in the one fulfilled the commandments enshrined in the other.”

All of which pointed forward to the one who fulfilled *both* arks:  
our Lord Jesus Christ who truly fulfilled all the commandments –  
and who also passed through death until life eternal.

And it is for this reason that we are baptizing Bellamy and Brinkley Gratrix today.