

Joseph's Bones

No. 261

Introduction.

I. These words of God are recorded in Genesis the 12th chapter. (Gen. 12:1-7).

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. " 4 So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. 6 And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.

- A. Moses informs us of the great promises made to Abram who we know better as Abraham. Among the great promises made to Abraham was the promise to give to Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan.
 - B. This **promise was repeated** to Isaac his son, and Jacob his grandson. **All Israel** lived in hope of living in the land of Canaan - the land flowing with milk and honey.
 - C. **In the latter part of the book of Genesis we read of Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel.** At the age of 17 his brothers had sold him to some Ishmaelite traders who in turn sold him into Egyptian bondage. Through the guidance of God Joseph interpreted the dreams of the Pharaoh concerning the 7 years of plenty that would be followed by 7 years of famine. Pharaoh was pleased with the interpretation of the dreams and made Joseph head over all Egypt with the exception of himself. Years later during the famine Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for grain and Joseph recognized them and forgave them and sent for his father and all his father's descendants to come to Egypt and live in the land of Goshen. There his family enjoyed great blessings through the providence of God.
- II. **Though Israelites were enjoying great blessings, they were still in a strange land.** They were not in the land of Canaan that God had promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

III. **Joseph had lived most of his life in Egypt,** but he still did not consider it home. He looked forward to the home in Canaan.

A. Near the end of his life, these words are recorded. (Gen. 50:22-26).

22 Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. 24 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to

Jacob." 25 Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." 26 So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

B. Joseph knew he was going to die. He knew he was going to be buried in Egypt. He knew he would never see the promise land and enjoy the great promises God had made to His people, but he did not want his bones left there. Joseph prophesied that Israel would leave Egypt and Joseph made the sons of Israel promise when they left Egypt that they would not allow his bones to remain there. He wanted his bones buried in Canaan and likely in the burial place of his ancestors.

C. Joseph died and the bones of Joseph remained in Egypt for hundreds of years, but finally the time of the Exodus came.

1. Moses and Aaron led the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage in about 1446 B.C..

2. These words are recorded at the time of the Exodus.

EXO 13:19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God shall surely take care of you; and you shall carry my bones from here with you."

3. The Israelites carried the coffin of Joseph with them across the Red Sea and during the 40 years they wandered in the wilderness. This was not an easy task as they sweated in the wilderness and sometimes had little food or water.

4. **Forty years after the Exodus** the Israelites crossed the Jordan river into the land of Canaan carrying the bones of Joseph.

III. Some might think "The Bones of Joseph" are really insignificant, but this far from true. Many times what we consider insignificant is really very important. There are many lessons we can learn from "Joseph's Bone."

I. Every One Of Us Must Die - The first lesson we learn that every one of us must die.

A. God had originally intended for man to eat of the tree of life and live forever. (Gen. 3:22-24), but because of Adam's sin physical death was introduced into the world.

1. All men must die. (Eccles. 3:2; Heb. 9:27).

2. **There have only been 2 exceptions** - Enoch and Elijah. (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11).

B. **Joseph, as great as he was, also had to die.** Though he lived to be 110, he was mortal and could not escape death.

C. **If Joseph could speak to us, he would say.** (Job 14:1; Eccles. 12:1,13 ; Psa. 90:12; Rom. 8:28).

II. No Man Is Indispensable To God's Plan - A second lesson we learn from Joseph's bones in that no man is indispensable to God's plan.

A. **He was one of the greatest men who has ever lived.** Joseph had held the highest position in the Egyptian government, and he was an important tool in God's plans for Israel. . Even the Pharaoh recognized his greatness and said. (Gen. 41:38).

B. **However, as great as he was, he was not indispensable in God's plans.** His death did not alter God's course

for His people. It did not keep Him from saving His people

C. Others have been equally prominent, but none indispensable.

1. Moses was a great man, but he died and Joshua took over.
2. David was a great king, but he died and Solomon reigned in his place.

D. Each of us are important to the kingdom.

1. **Each of us has a work to do.** Each of us should use our talents to the glory of God. But none of us are indispensable.
2. **I am thankful God's work does not depend on one person.** I am thankful that the existence of God's church does not depend on one person.
3. We should labor intensely for God's glory, and should train others to work with us for God's glory and to take our places.

III. Hope Of Deliverance - A third lesson we learn from Joseph's bones is the hope of deliverance.

- A. After the death of Joseph, there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph, and because he feared the strength of Israel, he enslaved God's people. (Exod. 1:7-14)

7 But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them. 8 ¶ Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 10 "Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land." 11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 13 And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

- B. **As Israel struggled under slavery**, they were aware that the bones of Joseph were in the Egyptian tomb. They served as a reminder of God's promise and gave them hope of deliverance.
- C. Those who trusted in God knew that one day God would deliver Israel from bondage and deliver the bones of Joseph from the grave in Egypt.

IV. God Will Do What He Says He Will Do - A fourth lesson we learn from Joseph's bones is that God will do what He says He will do.

- A. Many years passed and I am sure that many thought God had broken His promise to Israel. They were doomed to be slaves in a foreign land forever.
- B. **But this was far from true.**

1. God fulfilled His land promise to Abraham.
2. The children of Israel entered the land of Canaan and enjoyed every inch of land that God had promised them. (Josh. 21:45; 23:14).

JOS 21:45 Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.

JOS 23:14 "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.

3. The promise was also fulfilled that Joseph bones would be re-buried in the promise land. (Josh. 24:32).

JOS 24:32 Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of money; and they became the inheritance of Joseph's sons.

C. God keeps all His promises to us.

1. God will not keep some or most of His promises, but all of His promises. God will do exactly what He has promised.
2. We can have absolute confidence in His promises. (Heb. 6:18). Over and over again, the Bible declares "God is faithful."

V. **Interesting Comparisons And Contrasts With Christ-** A fifth lesson we learn from the bones of Joseph are some interesting comparisons and contrasts with Christ.

- A. The body of **Joseph saw decay and corruption**, but the body of Christ did not see corruption. Joseph's body was in a tomb hundreds of years. Jesus died late Friday afternoon and He was raised early on Sunday morning. He was only in the tomb about 36 hours and did not decay at all. (Psa. 16:10; Lk. 24:5b, 6a).
- B. **Joseph's burial in Egypt was requested or prophesied, and Jesus' burial was prophesied.** (Isa. 53:9).
- C. The death of Joseph and his tomb confirmed **all men must die**, but the empty tomb of Jesus proclaims that all men shall live. (1 Cor. 15:20-22).
 1. Joseph did not bring life and immortality to light. His corpse rotted in the grave.
 2. **Only Jesus did that.** (Jn. 3:36; 5:28, 29; 6:47; 11:25). Only Jesus answered Job's question. (Job 14:14).
- D. **Joseph's bones are significant**, but they were not essential to man's salvation.
 1. Our salvation is not dependent on Joseph and his bones, but on Jesus Christ and His blood. (Heb. 9:22; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).
 2. The prophecy about the bones of Joseph were the basis of Israel's hope of deliverance from Egypt. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ are the basis of our hope of deliverance from the grave and eternal life with God in heaven.

Conclusion

- I. **The bones of Joseph teach us many important lessons.**

- II. Let us recognize they show God is trustfully and will keep His promises to mankind.
- III. God promises to save those who will trust in His Son, turn from their sins, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. He promises to save those who love Him and keep His commandments. Come to Him now as we stand and sing.

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