

As we read of Jacob's passing, we rejoice at his submission to God in the face of death and his contentment in God's ordination of "whatsoever comes to pass." But may the Lord lift our eyes of faith beyond the grave to the realities of life after death to which Jacob by faith looked. May we, with Jacob and Joseph, choose humble death and resurrection with God's people rather than the riches, fame and praise which unbelieving men clutch onto as they pass from this world. The bonds of fellowship we enjoy with God's people are to be treasured in this life; how much more at death is reunion with them in the Lord one of our highest expectations and joys!

**Monday: Read Genesis 49:29-50:1 and 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6**

**Honor through Imitation**

When we see Jacob face death with calm and repose as he "gathered up his feet" onto the bed (Gen. 49:33), we ought not to think that Jacob and his family found it easy to face death. Joseph's great grief at his father's death (Gen. 50:1) shows us how hard death was! Therefore, learn with Jacob and Joseph that being content under God's dispensations can sometimes mean sore losses and many tears. Joseph will journey with his father's body up to Canaan – proof that despite his grief Joseph saw beyond the grave, content to leave the wealth, riches and security of Egypt behind, preferring burial, for his father and himself, in the wilderness of Canaan!

**Meditate and Pray:** There are many just now who are weeping with real sadness at the loss of loved ones through physical death. Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. But, our Lord also set His face to go to Jerusalem and embraced His own death on the Cross as the will of His Father. We cannot imitate Christ in His determination to save sinners or in His sinless life. But just as Joseph dried his tears in order to carry out his father's instructions for burial, we can pray that God would give us new firmness of purpose to honor those who have departed - especially by honoring their faith, and imitating it. Thank God for His Spirit who gives us the resolve to become "imitators" of such, and at the same time gives us joy as we share in the same Gospel which enlightened their lives. The Holy Spirit of 1 Thessalonians 1:6 will ensure that we follow in the footsteps of Jacob and rejoice in the same Gospel which saved and comforted him.

**Tuesday: Read Genesis 49:29-50:1 and Psalm 31:14-16**

**My Times are in Thy Hands**

Do you know the hymn which describes the Lord as the "Potentate of time"? It runs like this in Hymn # 295 of our hymn book:

*Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.  
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.  
Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,  
And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.*

*Crown Him the Lord of years, **the Potentate of time,**  
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.  
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For Thou has died for me;  
Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.*

We understand how perfectly the Lord uses time in our lives when we consider how time *healed prejudices* in Jacob's life. For example, God, over time, weaned Jacob from the destructive favoritism shown first towards Rachel and then Rachel's eldest son Joseph. Jacob's other sons hated Joseph because of the favoritism shown him (Gen. 37:4). Jacob also "loved Rachel more than Leah" (Gen. 29:30-31). Yet, God took Rachel from Jacob in childbirth, and enslaved Joseph in Egypt at the age of 17. Not easy lessons, but God used these tragedies to soften Jacob's heart. There is something beautiful in Jacob's orders that he be buried alongside Leah, the wife who loved him more constantly, whose love he had seldom returned.

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord, we ask you to constantly remind us of your control of each day of our lives – control of each moment. Thank you that your care for us through Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, is constant, and that your love for us does not wax or wane. Please give us the resolve which comes from Hymn # 684:

*My times are in Thy hand;  
My God, I wish them there;  
My life, my friends, my soul I leave  
Entirely to Thy care.*

*My times are in Thy hand;  
Whatever they may be;  
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,  
As best may seem to Thee.*

*My times are in Thy hand;  
Why should I doubt or fear?  
My Father's hand will never cause  
His child a needless tear.*

*My times are in Thy hand,  
Jesus, the crucified!  
Those hands my cruel sins had pierced  
Are now my guard and guide. Amen!*

### Wednesday: Read Genesis 49:29-50:3 and Matthew 22:29-33

### The God of the Living

The Egyptians, along with every other ancient civilization, believed in an after-life, and sought to prepare their departed loved ones as best they could for the “journey” through death. This was why they embalmed their dead and carefully laid them in tombs away from any decaying force of nature that would disrupt their loved ones’ resting place. Moreover, at the funeral, loved ones would fill the Egyptian tomb with dishes of food, clothing, wealthy objects, and other staples in order to prepare the departed for the after-life. Even the organs of the deceased were preserved in jars sealed with supposed protective powers from the “gods” of Egypt! In this way, and despite their ignorance of the living God, the Egyptians bore witness to the need for preparation if one was to enter safely into life after death. The huge retinue of Egyptians who accompanied Joseph in burial procession up to Canaan in Gen. 50:7-9 also bears witness to not only the importance of Joseph their prince, but also to the serious regard which Egyptians had for death.

How should we reflect on this complex and advanced civilization in Egypt compared to our simple Christian burials? The Egyptians put extra effort into each part of the dying process. They had the greatest technology of the day: forty days to embalm! seventy days to mourn! But Jacob gives us reassurance in his last words that *all we need* to be ready to leave this world is the straightforward confidence that our God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32) and that our loved ones who die in the Lord still live with Him, awaiting reunion with us. This is why Jacob speaks of “being gathered to his people” in Gen. 49:29. He knew that Abraham and Isaac were still alive because He knew that all God’s people live for God’s glory forever! All the Egyptians’ sacrifices added not one whit to their eternal life.

**Meditate and Pray:** Let us thank God for the consistent testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ to the Resurrection of the dead. May the Lord help us not to “grieve as those who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13), but instead to be reassured by the words of this hymn (# 426):

*“Till He come,” O let the words  
Linger on the trembling chords,  
Let the “little while” between  
In their golden light be seen;  
Let us think how Heaven and home  
Lie beyond that, “Till He come.”*

*Clouds and conflicts round us press;  
Would we have one sorrow less?  
All the sharpness of the cross,  
All that tells the world is lost,  
Death and darkness, and the tomb,  
Only whisper, “Till He come.”*

*When the weary ones we love  
Enter on their rest above,  
Seems the earth so poor and vast,  
All our life joy overcast?  
Hush, be every murmur dumb;  
It is only, "Till He come."*

### Thursday: Read Genesis 50:1-6

### Respect from Outsiders

What a miracle that God implanted within Pharaoh a respect for Joseph's faith sufficient to grant his highly unusual request for an Egyptian burial party to be sent to Canaan with the body of Jacob. After all, had not all Egypt mourned for Jacob *in Egypt* for 70 days, and had not the aged patriarch's body been embalmed just like the Pharaohs of Egypt – so that all would expect a state burial *in* that land? It was not always the will of the Pharaohs to allow such acts of worship and devotion to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Remember how, in Exodus 5:1-5, a later Pharaoh harshly forbade Moses and God's people from going out three days' journey into the desert to worship! But Jacob's instructions were to be followed. God moves Pharaoh and all of Egypt to respectfully send Jacob's body back to Canaan. God even plans the way our bodies will rest "until the Resurrection."

**Meditate and Pray:** How great and glorious are God's ways of moving the hearts of men.

Thank you, Lord, that our hearts are in your hands, and when it comes to the safe conduct of your saints in this world, and even out of it, not even the mightiest of Pharaohs can obstruct the path which you want us to take! Truly the old Gospel hymn by Fanny Crosby is right (# 605) when it says:

*All the way my Saviour leads me—  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt his tender mercy  
Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in him to dwell—  
For I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.*

**Friday: Read Genesis 50:7-9 and Hebrews 11:39-40****For Those Living Far from the Promised Land**

Take note, as you see Joseph the mighty Prince of Egypt leading this large retinue in mourning to bury his father, that this trip was the first time that Joseph laid eyes upon his long-lost home in the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey! But the flowers of Canaan were not for Joseph to pick. He spent his whole life, after the age of seventeen, away from the Promised Land and away from the visible proof of the Promises of God – content to live on the Promises by faith even though he did not “receive what was promised” (Heb. 11:39)! Joseph had a keen sense of his duties in Egypt and feared taking even one step in the direction of home unless directly guided by God to do so. Now he had received such guidance, and he returns in solemn assembly to bury his father in the land of Canaan. What memories must have crowded Joseph’s mind of his boyhood with his father!

**Meditate and Pray:** Thank God for the faith which we share with Joseph. Like Joseph, we are looking not for a return to the physical land of our birth but for a far greater Homecoming. Like him, our faith is measured not by how much it attains in this life, but by the greatness of that for which we wait, even the redemption of our bodies. One day we, along with Jacob and Joseph, will rise imperishable and victorious over death!

Lord, grant that we, along with Joseph of old, might find our chief joy and contentment, even our perfection one day, in Christ alone. Thank you, Father, that in your Son, to whom we turn now in prayer, dwells “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and we are complete in Him, who is the Head over all (Col.1:19).” Amen!