Genesis 183

After Life's Reality

Genesis 47:27-31

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Good morning everybody. Let us take our Bibles this morning and open them to Genesis 47:27. The title of our message this morning is "The Reality of the Afterlife."

The Bible wants us to understand that the afterlife is very real. It is just as real as this life. A lot of people think, "Those country bumpkins back in Abraham's day did not understand that." I will be showing you today that they understood it exactly. They understood it very clearly, and they understood it much better than most of us understand it.

We find ourselves continuing on with our verse-by-verse study through the Book of Genesis. God has already raised up the Nation of Israel through the promises He has given to Abraham—those promises being passed down to Isaac and Jacob. What God has done in the Joseph story or account (Genesis 37-50) is He is now preserving the Nation of Israel from famine and from Canaanite immorality, in a place up north in the Land of Egypt called Goshen. This was God's desire for the Nation of Israel all along, and the instrument that He has used to pull this off is none other than a 17-year-old named Joseph.

As we have studied Joseph's life from age 17 all the way into age 30 and beyond, he has had a lot of twists and turns, ups and downs; but God has sovereignly and providentially worked where Joseph has now been elevated to second-in-command in Egypt. He now becomes the instrument through which the Nation of Israel leaves Canaan and comes into Goshen.

Jacob in Egypt (Genesis 47:27-31)

I. Summary: Jacob's family (47:27)
   A. Family in Goshen (27a)
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We conclude Genesis 47 this morning with a record of Jacob—he is the dad, the progenitor of this nation in Egypt. If you take a look at Genesis 47:27, you have a

summary of Jacob's family. Notice the switch in names, Jacob's name being changed to Israel by God. This is where the name Israel came from. Sometimes he is referred to as Jacob; sometimes he is referred to as Israel, because he, in a larger sense, is a synonym, if you will, of the whole Nation of Israel.

Genesis 47:27 says,

> *"Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen..."*

Where is Goshen? Goshen is north there in the Land of Egypt, and Israel was there during this time of tremendous famine. The prophecies that Joseph interpreted were as follows: there would be seven years of prosperity, followed by seven years of scarcity. In fact, the seven years of scarcity would be so severe that you would not even remember that the prosperity ever happened. That is what the prophecies are.

Everything that God said has materialized—it has come to pass. God's agenda all along was to provide for His people by getting them to the land of Goshen, out of Canaan, into Goshen. Not only does this show us the mindset of God to provide for His own, but as God's child God provides for you. "Where God guides, God provides." God actually is really good at this. Look at how He is dealing with Israel in Goshen.

Not only does it show us that, but it shows us that these are actual places on planet Earth that you can look at and say, "That is where that happened." When you are reading the Bible, you are reading actual history. You are not reading fairy tales, Jack and the Beanstalk and those kinds of things. These are not just spiritual truths. They are spiritual truths, but they come out of a real historical context.

It is in the land of Goshen that the Nation of Israel experiences two blessings. You see those blessings spelled out in the second part of Genesis 47:27. Blessing A is material prosperity. Blessing B is numerical growth. Notice again Genesis 47:27. It says,

"Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous."

Why is the Nation of Israel prospering? Because that is what God said would happen all the way back with the calling of Abram, whose name later became Abraham in Genesis 12. God gave to the patriarch Abraham eight promises. One of them is the promise of personal blessing (Genesis 12:2). It says,

"'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;'"

In other words, you will be blessed to be a blessing, which is why God blesses anybody with anything. If God blesses you, His goal is to use you as His instrument with a spillover effect that you would be a blessing to other people. That is what the Nation of Israel is experiencing here in Goshen, in the midst of a famine.

You might look at your own life and say, "I wish I were blessed like that." We just emerged from Thanksgiving (some of us a little fuller than before—yours truly included). It is a time in our country and in our culture where we look back and we thank God for the material blessings that we have. The truth of the matter is, most of us in North America live like kings compared to the rest of the world. We live like royalty in comparison to most people in world history. You may not feel wealthy. You may think, "I do not have as much as so and so." But when you look at the big picture, we are phenomenally wealthy.

The Bible, in the New Testament, says there is more to it than that. Paul, writing to the Ephesians in Ephesians 1:3, says,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,"

Notice that He has already blessed us. The moment you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you were blessed. A lot of people think, "I have to do such and such to get blessed." A lot of people in the area of financial giving think, "I have to give financially so God will bless me." When the truth of the matter is, God says you are already blessed. You give and you serve not to get blessed—you give and you serve because you are blessed. It is a completely different motivation.

The blessings that we have are spiritual in nature, meaning nothing can take them away, including inflation, high gas prices, or layoffs. This is true of you. Whether you have a job or do not have a job, are financially well off or not financially well off, God wants you to understand that you are blessed.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ;" (Ephesians 1:3)

We go to God and say, "God bless me, bless me, bless me." God says to the Christian, "What else do you want? Your account is already maxed out." Your blessings can be material, but they are more than material. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Notice that final prepositional phrase there: *"in Christ."* The blessings come into your life from a spiritual standpoint in Christ. If a person does not know Christ personally, then these blessings do not apply. Christ is the barometer, or the standard, through which these blessings come. If a person does know Christ, then all of these resources are right there at your fingertips, and it is just a matter of exploring what you already own.

I own these big Logos programs. I am just barely learning to use some of that stuff. Sometimes I will see a book online and say, "I really want that book over there," only to discover that it is already mine, I just did not realize it. That is how a lot of us live our lives as Christians. We are looking for something when God says it is already yours. Take the time to investigate your account; take time to investigate what you have.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says that at the point of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the child of God receives 33 blessings. Do you know what those 33 blessings are? Chafer's book on salvation would be helpful; and even better than that book, read the Book of Ephesians. It articulates and documents all of these spiritual blessings.

The last half of Ephesians (Ephesians 4-6) says, "Now that you know you are blessed, here is how you are supposed to behave as a Christian. Do not behave this way to get blessed. Behave this way because you are blessed." It is just a matter of learning who we are in Christ Jesus.

The Nation of Israel had some wonderful blessings, but not like these. Their blessings were primarily earthly and primarily material. The nice thing about our heavenly, spiritual blessings is nothing can take them away. Take, for example, Christ's words to the church at Smyrna in Revelation 2. Now there is a church that probably would never be featured in "Christianity Today." That is a persecuted church, a struggling church, a poverty stricken church; yet, what does Jesus say to that particular church? He says to them in Revelation 2:9:

> *"""I know your tribulation and your poverty* [physically] *(but you are rich),"""*

What an amazing, self-contradicting idea. "You are poor from man's standpoint, but you are actually rich because your riches are spiritual in nature—they come from Me." God is in the business of making people rich. The Nation of Israel, in the midst of a famine, was becoming rich. In fact, did you catch Genesis 47:27? They were acquiring property.

When we go back to Genesis 47:19-20, we learned that because of the severity of the famine, the Egyptians all over the land of Egypt had to sell their property. Now here, in the midst of it, are God's people acquiring property, which is a very interesting thing to think about.

When God deals with us, He takes us outside of the pattern of the world. The world at this time, they were so poor they were selling their property; yet, here were God's

people in Goshen acquiring property. In other words, what was happening for the rest of the world was not happening for God's people.

You need to understand this as a Christian, and you need to tell this to your children and your grandchildren, because what they think is, "If I get too much into this Jesus thing, He is going to make my life miserable. He is the cosmic killjoy. He is going to withhold things from me." What you discover as you walk with the Lord is as time passes, not only are you way ahead in so many different areas, but you find yourself receiving blessings that the world itself is not receiving because we function according to a different power and a different paradigm.

The truth of the matter is, following the way of the world is difficult. Proverbs 13:15, in the King James Version says,

> *"...the way of the transgressors is hard."*

As Satan dangles the good life in front of the eyes of us, or our children, or grandchildren, and says, "Follow me and you will get the good life. Emancipate yourself from the cords of Christianity." The Bible is coming at us and saying, "Actually, the way of the transgressor is hard. It leads to difficulty. Doing things God's way in any area leads to blessing."

Here was the Nation of Israel in the midst of a famine, a predicted famine, acquiring property when the rest of the world was having to sell their property because of the severity of the famine. That is not the only blessing that they enjoyed. They began to grow numerically again. The second part of Genesis 47:27 says, concerning Israel,

> *"...and were fruitful and became very numerous."*

Why are they becoming numerous? Because God said that would happen. It is a promise that goes all the way back to Genesis 15:5, as God is dealing with Abram, and He says to him as follows:

> *"And He took him outside and said, 'Now look to the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"*

In other words, "Ha ha ha! You are not going to be able to count the stars."

It is interesting, as you travel through history and look at some of the great philosophers of the ages, they all felt they could count the stars—there was some finite number that they could come up with. Now, with modern-day technology and the Hubble telescope and all of these things that we have, we have learned that counting the stars is a waste of time. There are so many stars we do not have a number big enough to quantify the number of stars that are out there.

This is what God is saying to Abraham. "Try to count the stars if you can"—meaning you cannot—"but go ahead and try. In the same way, your descendants are going to be as innumerable as the stars." God makes this promise in other ways. He says

elsewhere, "Your descendants are going to be as innumerable as the sand of the shore" (Genesis 22:17). "They are going to be innumerable as the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16; 28:14).

What is very interesting is thus far in the biblical story, that promise has not materialized. Do you remember Genesis 46:26-27? Exactly how many people of this ragtag fugitive fleet, coming out of Canaan, how many people did this nation constitute? Genesis 46:26 says there were only sixty-six persons. If you count things a slightly different way, there were seventy persons (Genesis 46:27). Sixty-six to seventy persons is not an innumerable flock. The interesting thing about the promises of God is if you give God enough time—because a lot of times we are impatient with God—God will always make good on what He said, because His nature is such that He cannot lie.

Now, for the very first time, not even in their own homeland, in this foreign place called Egypt, the Nation of Israel is multiplying. In fact, they are going to multiply so much that there is going to arise a Pharaoh, in the Book of Exodus, that did not know Joseph. He is going to say, "We need to subjugate these people. We need to get these people under control. They are going to be running things very shortly if we do not subjugate them, because there are so many of them."

Exodus 1:7 says,

> *"But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them."*

Of course, the whole biblical story is not just about the numerical growth of the Nation of Israel. It is not just the multiplication of the seed, but there is coming a special Seed from the seed. Paul, in the Galatians 3:16 talks about how the word "seed" is a collective singular.

What is a collective singular? It is a word that can be used in the singular and in the plural at the same time. It is like saying, "Pastor, did you get a haircut?" I said, "Yeah, this one over here I got cut." We can use the word "hair" as a collective singular. It can refer to a strand of hair or a whole bunch of hair on one's head. The word sheep—are you talking about a little cute, cuddly white sheep over here, or are you talking about a flock?

Paul, in Galatians 3:16, makes a big deal about the collective singular. He says, "Now the promise is not just for seed (generic), but it is a particular seed, an individual Seed coming from the Tribe of Judah." We are going to see this in Genesis 49. His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension we celebrated at the Lord's Table this morning. As you are watching God make good on His promises of seed multiplication, keep your eye on the specific Seed that is coming that is promised as early as Genesis 3:15.

The fact of the matter is, God is making good on all of His promises. I appreciate very much what the Apostle Peter said about God's promise of taking this earth and dissolving it, and replacing it with a new heavens and new earth—a promise that has never been fulfilled. Peter says,

> *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

God has not forgotten about His promise of dissolving this world by fire, and replacing it with a new heavens and a new earth; but He is slow in keeping it because He is giving people an opportunity for repentance. However, a delay is not a denial. Every time God says something, you can 100% take that to the bank. I am not even sure that analogy works well anymore, because we are in the middle of bank failures and things of that nature; but the point is that the promise is ironclad.

We have a tendency to give up on the promise because it is not happening fast enough. Yet, what we learn is there is a reason why God delays His promises. Rest assured, every promise He has ever made in this Book will be 100% fulfilled. We are not just in the life of Isaac; we are at the latter end of the time of Jacob. God now is finally doing what He told the patriarch Abraham He would do. "You are going to have so many descendants, they are going to be innumerable."

It is not just numbers—it is a given Seed that is coming through the line of Judah, that will be the Savior of the world. It took a long time from the human perspective for this to start to happen, but it happened because God said it would happen. His nature is such that He cannot lie.

Go down to Genesis 47:28, and you are actually given Jacob's age here. It says,

> *"Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years."*

Back in verses Genesis 48:7-8, we learned that he was 130. Now 17 years have elapsed, and he is 147 years old. He is the youngest patriarch who would die at that age. His father Isaac would die at 180 years. His grandfather Abraham would die at 175 years. Here, Jacob is ready to die at the age of 147. He is finally seeing the hand of God move. It took that long.

His son Joseph is alive and has been providentially promoted to second-in-command over all of the Land of Egypt. Look what God is doing with what He said to Abraham regarding the multiplication of the seed and the personal blessing. It took Jacob this long in his life to see those things materialize. May we be like Jacob, where we continue to believe God, even though we do not see the promises materialized right away.

This is why Jacob, to a very large extent, is a man of faith. You see his faith coming to the forefront as he gives a charge to Joseph in Genesis 47:29-31. Notice there is an occasion for this charge (Genesis 47:29). See the switch in names there—you see the name Jacob (Genesis 47:28) and you see the name Israel (Genesis 47:29).

That is how the rest of the Bible is going to read. It is going to use those two terms interchangeably—synonymously—because the Book of Genesis wants you to understand where the name Israel came from. In fact, when Israel passes through the time of distress, Jeremiah 30:7 calls it a time of *"Jacob's trouble"*, which means that you,

as a Christian, cannot be in that time period because you are not Jacob. You are the Church that is never called Jacob or Israel.

Genesis 47:29 says,

> *"When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph..."*

Jacob, now, at the age of 147, senses his imminent death. He calls over his favorite son, Joseph. We know that Joseph is Jacob's favorite son because that is what it says back in Genesis 37:3:

> *"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all of his sons..."*

That is why he brings Joseph towards him. He wants Joseph to make a promise to him. The charge that Joseph is to follow is given in Genesis 47:29-3. It says,

> *"When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'Please, if I have found favor in your sight...'"*

Joseph's loyalty to his father Jacob, and Jacob's loyalty to his son Joseph was the basis for this charge. He goes on to describe a ritual which, quite frankly, is completely foreign to the Western mind. It is foreign to the Church Age, but this is how oaths transpired in the time period of the patriarchs that we are reading about here. It says,

> *"When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh...'"*

This is something that we have already seen back in Genesis 24:2, when Abraham sent out his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, not in Canaan, but up north in Haran. Abraham and the servant went through a very solemn ritual. Genesis 24:2 says,

> *"Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, 'Please place your hand under my thigh.'"*

What is this ritual all about? Arnold Fruchtenbaum describes it this way:

> "'Put, I pray you, your hand under my thigh.' As in a previous passage (24:2), that idiom indicated the holding of the genitals, the source of vital power, which emphasized the solemness of the oath."[1]

That is the seriousness through which this particular oath that Jacob is calling Joseph to execute—the idiom, the culture of the day, the solemness. This is how this particular oath came into existence.

What is the content of the oath? What is the promise about? Genesis 47:29-30:

> *"When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'If I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under*

[1] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 623.

> *my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.'"*

This is something that is happening in Egypt. The Nation of Israel is in Egypt, in Goshen. Jacob is at the end of his life. He says, "If I die here, I do not want to be buried here. I want you to take me back to their burial place." What burial place is he speaking of? He is speaking of the cave at Machpelah, that Abraham purchased from the Canaanites, to be a burial place for his wife, Sarah. Genesis 23:17-20 goes into all of this detail about how Abraham, in the land of Canaan, purchased this particular land. It says this:

> *"So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah ,which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth"* (Genesis 23:17-20).

Abraham actually purchased this real estate plot as a burial plot. That is where he buried his wife Sarah when she died. It is interesting the way Jacob is describing it. He uses the word there: *'"...but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.'"* "Their" is plural; "fathers" is plural. You get the idea that many patriarchs were buried alongside Abraham's wife at the cave of Machpelah.

If you go over to Genesis 49:29-33, you get a description of all of the patriarchs that were buried in this particular cave in the land of Canaan. It says,

> *"Then he charged them and said to them, 'I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebecca, and there I buried Leah—the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth.'"*

When you look at the big picture, who was buried in that particular cave? Number one, Abraham; number two, Sarah; number three, Isaac; number four, Rebekah; number five, Leah. Jacob is saying, "I want to be buried there also. I do not want to be buried here in Egypt, although we are having this conversation here in Egypt." Why in the world is Jacob so concerned about being buried in that particular cave in the land of Canaan? Here is the short answer to that question: he believed God's promises.

He believed what God said going all the way back to the days of Abraham, where God entered into a special covenant with Abraham and his descendants, the Nation of Israel. He said to them, "You are going to have all of this land. The land is going to start from the Nile in modern-day Egypt, and it is going to go all the way to the Euphrates in modern-day Iraq." Jacob is saying, "I want to be buried there because I am waiting on God to fulfill His promise."

Here is a map of everything which God had promised to the patriarch Abraham. It is a tremendous chunk of real estate. When all of these patriarchs died, that promise had never been executed, but they died believing it would happen. Abraham is the one that was given this promise. What did he get? He got this little burial plot. He did not get anything like this. This promise is yet to be fulfilled. From our standpoint in the 21st century, it has never been fulfilled. We believe it will be fulfilled exactly like it is written in the Millennial Kingdom.

Jacob said, "I believe that promise. That is where I want to be buried." A tremendous walk here of faith. "God is not slow or slack concerning His promises. I know God is going to do what He promised to do. When my time comes to go, I do not want to stay here in Egypt—I want my bones to be buried in that cave of Machpelah, because I know the day is going to come where that whole territory is going to be turned into millennial glory."

What a great way to leave this life—completely, 100% sold out on and trusting the promises of God. These patriarchs are not the only ones that receive promises from God. Do you realize that the Bible makes about 7,000 promises to you? That particular figure comes from Hal Lindsey, who passed away this week, a guy that had a great impact upon me in terms of his writing and media ministry. He wrote a book called "Combat Faith." His most famous book is "The Late Great Planet Earth," which is also a great book. The book "Combat Faith" is all about standing on the promises of God in the midst of adversity.

We are not Israel, and we do not have all of the direct promises to Israel—although maybe indirectly—but there are 7,000 kinds of promises to you. When you understand that God is not slow nor slack concerning His promises, you can stand on those promises in the midst of the tumult and the storms of life. It is just a matter of figuring out what these promises are.

Jacob, Abraham, Isaac, and the rest of them had this promise also, where God, when He entered into the Abrahamic Covenant said,

> *"'Then in the fourth generation [Israel] will return here...'"* (Genesis 15:16).

Where is "here"? It is in the Land of Canaan. "You are going to go into Egypt, but you are going to come out with many possessions and you are going to come back here."

> *"'Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete'"* (Genesis 15:16).

God was giving the Canaanites about 400 years to repent, but the day will come when God's judgment will come upon the Canaanites because of their unwillingness to repent. The Nation of Israel, under Joshua, will go into the Land of Canaan and conquer the Canaanites. "You are going to go into Egypt and you are going to come back here."

This is what Jacob is thinking about as he is dying. That is why he does not want his bones to stay in Egypt or his body to stay in Egypt. "I want it to be in the land of promise. Specifically, I want to be buried in that cave of Machpelah. The only sliver of land Abraham ever got, although he was promised much more." It is easy to get to the end of your life and just think, "I guess God broke His word—I guess God lapsed." When in reality we confuse a delay with a denial. A postponement is not a cancellation. God cannot cancel a promise—His very nature prevents that.

This is how we are to live as Christians. Paul writes to us in 2 Corinthians 4:18:

> *"While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

There are a lot of people out there today that deny the reality of the afterlife. There are a lot of evangelical theologians that say the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then later Joseph did not believe in an afterlife. They will tell you that the concept of a future resurrection and a future afterlife does not begin until the prophet Daniel, which is not until the sixth century BC. Surely Daniel did speak of the afterlife, because in Daniel 12:2 he said, in a prediction or a prophecy,

> *"'Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.'"*

People say that is the first time the concept of the afterlife is ever mentioned in the Bible. Abraham did not believe in the concept of the afterlife. Isaac did not. Jacob did not. But did you catch the order here in which Jacob spoke? Genesis 47:30:

"'but when I will lie down with my fathers...'"

Now people say, "That is just him dying and being buried with his fathers." No, there is an order here. "I will lie down with my fathers. You shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place. Number one, I am going to lie down with my fathers—that is the first thing that is going to happen. The second thing that is going to happen is I need you to take my body out of here, out of Egypt, and bring it back to Canaan."

If that is the sequence, you cannot say that "I am going to lie down with my fathers" is the same thing as being buried in the cave of Machpelah, because he gives a sequence here. It is very common for people to look at this and say, "Lying down with your fathers, that is no knowledge of the afterlife. That is just him being buried in the cave of Machpelah." But that cannot be the right interpretation because he gives a two-fold sequence. "When I lie down with my fathers" is the first part of the sequence. "You shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." Do not confuse "lying down with my fathers" with "being buried in Egypt." Being "buried in Egypt" is different from "lying down with my fathers."

If that is true, then what does it mean "he is going to lie down with his fathers"? It means he is going to die and he is going to enter the afterlife. Who is he going to see? His fathers. He is going to see Isaac, and he is going to see Abraham. In other words, he is demonstrating a belief in the afterlife, which is not to be confused, as people typically run these concepts together with the body's burial in Egypt. The burial—the body's burial in Egypt—is the second part of the sequence.

The first part of the sequence is "I am going to lie down with my fathers. I am going to die, and I am going to see my father. I am going to see my grandfather, and I am going to see others. As I am up there enjoying that, you all down here, when you leave Egypt, make sure you take my body back to Canaan where it belongs, because I want my body to go into the land of promise."

"How do you know Canaan is the land of promise?" "Because that is what God said. God said it, I believe it. That settles it, right?" Actually, even that statement is not right. God said it; that settles it. Now, you can believe it—take the easy road or not—but it is going to happen. In this case. Jacob is walking by faith. I want to do that on my dying day. On my dying day, I want my mind to be so filled with the promises of God that I am going out believing and trusting in God, who cannot lie.

Concerning this sequence, Arnold Fruchtenbaum says this:

> "First, the timing is: 'when I sleep with my fathers;' Jacob expects to join them in the afterlife upon death. Second, he specifies: 'You shall carry me.' The sequence here is: Jacob will go to be with his fathers, and after he has gone to be with his fathers, then Joseph is to carry his body to that cave. The order shows a clear belief in the afterlife; he asked Joseph to carry his body to Machpelah; however, prior to that he will be gathered to

> his 'fathers.' This shows that being gathered to his 'fathers' is not the same as being buried in the cave."[2]

If you take your Bible for a minute and you look at Genesis 22. This is a passage we covered a long time ago—hopefully it is in your memory banks—but it has to do with the command that God gave Abraham. "You are to go to Mount Moriah, and you are to sacrifice Isaac." Do you recall what Abraham said when that command was given? Genesis 22:5 says,

> *"Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.'"*

Over where? "Over to Mount Moriah, where I am going to sacrifice Isaac, because that is what God told me to do." *"'I and the lad [Isaac] will go over there.'"* What is the next word? *"'And we will worship and return to you.'"*

I have a question: If you are going to Mount Moriah to sacrifice Isaac, how is it that the two of you are going to come back? Hebrews 11:17-19 says that Abraham's faith in God's promises was of such strength that he knew that even if Isaac was killed, God would bring him back to life. A person's faith does not get any higher than that, in my opinion. That is the height of faith.

He knew that Isaac was the child of promise. Through Isaac the nation would continue. Through Isaac the messianic lineage would continue. "Even if I killed Isaac"—because it seemed completely irrational to Abraham to receive that mandate from God—"God's promises are so certain that God will just bring him back to life." That was his mental state. Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us what Abraham was thinking about, reasoning, as he was walking these things out.

Jacob is doing the same thing. "I am going to die. I am going to go and be with my fathers in the afterlife." The concept of resurrection is in the patriarchal stories. The concept of the afterlife is in the patriarchal stories. "I believe God's promises so aggressively that make sure when you guys leave—because you are leaving Egypt at some point because God said you were—make sure you take my body and bury it back in the cave of Machpelah, because I know that whole area is going to be a millennial blessing one day."

We wobble so much on what God says. Does God really mean what He says? Is He really going to fulfill what He said He would do? These patriarchs as, up and down as so much of their lives were, they believed God. Hebrews 11:6 says,

> *"And without faith it is impossible to please [God]..."*

May we grow in faith. Do you believe in God's promises of the afterlife? Do you believe this one, for example? This is among your 7,000. Now you just have to study 6,999 more:

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[2] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 623.

"Absent from the body [is] *to be at home with the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Do you believe that? Do you believe that if you were to die today, that your soul goes immediately into the presence of the Lord and you immediately see all of your deceased loved ones in Christ face to face? How about this one? Do you believe Philippians 1:21-23?

> *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better."*

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I stay alive, I can be fruitful for you, Philippians; but that is not even my choice. I would rather just check out of here and be at home with the Lord; but for your sake I guess I will stick around." Paul seems irritated when he talks to them. These are the promises of God that we are to build our lives upon—to cling to.

You have in all of this Joseph's agreement (Genesis 47:30):

> *"And [Joseph] said [to Jacob], 'I will do as you have said.'"*

Then if all of this was not enough, Joseph takes the oath. Jacob says to Joseph, "Swear to me." Joseph agrees to all of this in the second part of Genesis 47:31. They went through the ritual that we described a little earlier. How does this whole exchange conclude but with worship? Genesis 47:31 says,

"Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed."

What is worship? We have churches that are at war with each other over worship styles. They're called the worship wars. Books are written and conferences are given on the topic; yet, most of these people involved in this activity could not tell you what worship is. I am convinced of it. Worship is not the liver quiver. Worship is not some subjective experience. Worship is a response to truth. You are so overwhelmed at the truth of God and His nature and who He is that you cannot help but want to praise Him.

It has got nothing to do with style. It has got everything to do with a heart that wants to glorify God in some form, because you cannot believe who He is and what He has done for you, and what He has given to you. The Book of Revelation says you have two biggies as the basis on which to worship God. Number one—He is your Creator (Revelation 4). He is the one that spoke and the heavens and the earth leapt into existence. He is the one who is keeping your heart pumping as I am speaking.

In fact, that is what God said to Belshazzar. You remember in Daniel 5 (the handwriting on the wall chapter), as God through Daniel was condemning Belshazzar, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, he says, "Belshazzar, you have not glorified God, even though your very life and breath are in His hands." The first reason you glorify God is as your Creator; and He is also your Sustainer.

The second reason you glorify God is He is your Redeemer. Not only did He create us, but when we stepped out of line He entered history and fixed a problem for us that we could not fix. We worship God on that account, not based on some style or subjective experience, but who God is. Worship is not man-centered, selfish, "the do not do things my way" mentality. It is a mentality that understands who the Lord is. You cannot wait to get into the presence of God's people and worship God in spirit and truth.

That is what Jacob is doing at the end of his life. He is worshiping because he got this issue fixed. "I am not going to be buried here in Egypt. I am going to be buried in Machpelah." With the truth of that, he wants to explode in worship to the Lord.

There is a big debate in Hebrew concerning this expression "at the head of the bed." It says, *"...Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed"* (Genesis 47:31b). Others say, "No, he did it, leaning on his staff." Notice what Arnold Fruchtenbaum says:

> "Then in verse 31b, Jacob was now able to rest easy: 'And Israel bowed himself,' meaning he turned over in bed to assume a bowed position. It was an act of worship; it was a position from which to worship God in adoration. It then states: 'upon the bed's head.' The 'Masoretic Text,' which is the 'Hebrew Text' upon which all translations are based, uses the word 'mittah,' which means 'bed.' However, the 'Septuagint' used a Greek word meaning 'staff'; and so it is obvious that the translators of the 'Septuagint,' the Greek Old Testament, took the word 'mittah' to be 'mattah,' which means 'staff.'"
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> "The three letters for both the word 'bed' and the word 'staff' are exactly the same; the only difference is in the vowel pointings, but these vowel pointings in the 'Hebrew Text' were put in about a.d. 900-1000. So one is a mistranslation of the other. The question is: Which is the original reading? Hebrews 11:21 clearly sides with the 'Septuagint' version, because Hebrews 11:21 describes Jacob as having worshiped, 'leaning on the top of his staff.' Therefore, in this section Jacob was leaning upon his staff, which he kept near to assist him in movement because apparently his old age had weakened him greatly."[3]

Did he worship God in bed or did he worship God while leaning on a staff? I am of the view that he worshiped God leaning on his staff. If he worshiped God leaning on his staff, that means he worshiped God as a physically weak person. He is leaning on something to hold him up.

Does that not change in your mind what worship is? You can worship God anywhere, anytime. You can worship God in times of prosperity; you can worship God during times of adversity; you can worship God when things are going well; you can worship God when things are not going well. Because worship is a response to truth, it is something that can happen any time, any place. You can worship God full of energy as a young

[3] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis*, 623-24.

person, and you can worship God leaning on your staff as an older, weak person because that is the nature of worship.

Doesn't the story of Job reveal that when Job lost it all? It says,

> *"Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped"* (Job 1:20).

You will find that in early Job. This is a guy that was godly when he was prosperous. This is a guy that was godly and worshipful when he lost it all. Worship is not so much about our individual comfort, or our individual energy. It is praising God for who He is as our Creator and our Redeemer.

Worship is a lifestyle. You will worship God in the highs; you will worship God in the lows. That is why I so love these patriarchal stories. Watching how these men of God, who left this world and went into the next, believing and standing on the promises of God with a heart full of worship. I say, "Lord, I want to be just like that."

You might be here today and you might have no relationship with God. If you have no relationship with God, it is hard, if not impossible, to worship Him the way He deserves to be worshiped. Yet, God created you to be a worshiper. Did you know that? In fact, God seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). If you are not a worshiper, then you are living outside of the purpose for which you were created; but you cannot worship God unless you know Him personally.

There is a way to know Him personally; that is through the shed blood of His Son. Because through the shed blood of His Son, He fixed our sin debt and our problem. He tells us to trust in what Jesus did on the cross 2,000 years ago—that gives us access to God. As I have access to God, I can fulfill my purpose in God as a worshiper.

I hope and trust that many, many people within the sound of my voice, even as I am speaking, will fix this issue and trust in the God that made them, through the provision of Jesus Christ. I hope people are doing that now in the building. I hope people are doing that watching online, watching or listening by archive—trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, giving them access to God, then allowing them to fulfill their potential as a worshiper of His.