

Introduction

We want to examine the *bodies* we encounter in our text.

^ There are the bodies of Jacob and Joseph:

{ Genesis 49:33 And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people...

{ Genesis 50:26 So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Jacob and Joseph died and their physical bodies were embalmed for burial. They were believers whose bodies, in burial, were *in* the earth.

%o There is another "body" in our text. In verses fifteen through twenty-one you read of the fellowship between Joseph and his brothers. Taken together as a group, we can call them a "body." One of the dictionary definitions of "body" is "*a collection of persons...*" Joseph and his brothers were a distinct collection of persons among the Egyptians - a body of believers *on* the earth.

Jacob and Joseph represent the bodies of believers *in* the earth; Joseph and his brothers represent the "body" of believers *on* the earth.

Today the bodies of many believers are *in* the earth; also today there is a "body" of believers, the Church, *on* the earth. What can we learn about both groups from our text?

Both groups await the resurrection from the dead!

#1 The Bodies Of Believers *In* The Earth Sleep
As They Await Their Resurrection

#2 The "Body" Of Believers *On* The Earth Serves
As You Await The Resurrection

#1 The Bodies Of Believers *In* The Earth Sleep
As They Await Their Resurrection
(49:29-50:14 & 50:22-26)

The hope of the resurrection from the dead is the reason Jacob and Joseph gave such careful instructions concerning the burial of their physical bodies in the promised land. They knew that their physical bodies would be raised from the dead.

How did they know that their physical bodies would be raised from the dead? They had the testimony of Abraham and, perhaps, of Job.

^ So strong was the faith of Abraham in the physical resurrection of the body that he was willing to kill his own son at God's instructions - believing that God would raise Isaac up again! You read his testimony in Hebrews 11:17-19

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

Hebrews 11:18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"

Hebrews 11:19 concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead...

%o They may also have had the testimony of Job, who said,

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live *again*? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes.

Job 14:15 You shall call, and I will answer You...

Jacob and Joseph knew that their bodies would be raised from the dead. Their faith in the resurrection is the background of the preparations for their burial we read about in our text.

Genesis 49:29 Then he charged 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,

Genesis 49:30 "in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place.

Genesis 49:31 "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.

Genesis 49:32 "The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth."

Genesis 49:33 And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

Jacob spoke of his *gathering* and of his *grave*, and they are two separate things.

{ His *grave* would be in the cave which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite. There his physical body would be laid to await resurrection. This is why the Bible frequently describes the death of a believer as "sleep." The body *sleeps* in the sense that it waits for a future resurrection.

{ Jacob's *gathering* is something different! It took forty days to prepare his body; the Egyptians mourned seventy days; then the funeral procession stopped at the threshing floor of Atad another seven days. Notice, though, in 49:33 that, at the very instant that Jacob died, he "...breathed his last, and was gathered to his people." His *gathering* to his people describes the destination of his soul and spirit. Immediately at death, his soul and spirit were vitally alive in the presence of God's saints! His body would sleep in the *grave*, but he would be immediately *gathered* alive and conscious to his people!

Where did his soul and spirit go? The Bible declares that, prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the souls and spirits of all deceased persons went to Hades. Hades is a chamber somewhere below the earth's surface. The chamber is described as being

divided into two compartments: a place of torment where unbelievers went, and a place of rest and peace where believers went to wait for the physical resurrection of their bodies.

Jacob was gathered to God's saints in Hades to await the physical resurrection of his body from the grave at a future time.

You next read of Jacob's funeral:

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

Genesis 50:2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.

Genesis 50:3 Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

Genesis 50:4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying,

Genesis 50:5 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.'

Genesis 50:6 And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."

Genesis 50:7 So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

Genesis 50:8 as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen.

Genesis 50:9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering.

Genesis 50:10 Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which *is* beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father.

Genesis 50:11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This *is* a deep mourning of the Egyptians." Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which *is* beyond the Jordan.

Genesis 50:12 So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them.

Genesis 50:13 For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

Genesis 50:14 And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.

A believer's funeral should reflect the hope of the resurrection from the dead. It should be governed by the principle the Apostle Paul states in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "...lest you sorrow as others who have no hope." We learn that grief and sorrow are appropriate as long as the overall context of the funeral is the certain hope of the resurrection.

Jacob's funeral was one of sorrow within the hope of his resurrection. The grief, sorrow, lamentation, and mourning is detailed for you. You also see him being buried in Canaan - a testimony that he believed he would be resurrected to receive his inheritance *in* Canaan at a future time!

Let's look ahead in the text to Joseph's death:

Genesis 50:22 So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

Genesis 50:23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third *generation*. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

Genesis 50:24 And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

Genesis 50:25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

Genesis 50:26 So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Joseph had the same confidence in the resurrection that his father had. He wanted his bones to be carried to the Promised Land so that when the resurrection of Israel occurred he would receive his inheritance in Canaan.

Why wasn't he buried in Canaan immediately?

{ A natural reason is that he had become so popular and famous in Egypt that Pharaoh and the Egyptians would have prevented any attempt by his brothers to bury Joseph elsewhere.

{ There is a spiritual reason as well. Joseph was a prophet and was enabled by God to see ahead to the future enslavement of Israel and her eventual exodus from Egypt. All of this is hinted at in the phrase, "God will surely visit you..." Moses would carry Joseph's bones out of Egypt as a testimony to that future generation of Israel of the hope of the resurrection from the dead.

, Jacob and Joseph knew that at death the soul and spirit of a believer is immediately *gathered* to God's saints in Hades, while the body in the *grave* sleeps, awaiting its resurrection.

They knew a lot; but we know more! They had the testimony of Abraham and Job; we have the testimony of the completed Scriptures. They looked forward to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; we look back upon it.

All resurrection promises are centered in the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Without the resurrection of Jesus all those in the Old Testament who died in faith would have died in vain. Likewise, without the resurrection of Jesus from the grave the hope of all New Testament believers would be in vain. As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14,

1 Corinthians 15:13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty.

But Jesus *is* risen from the dead! He is a living Savior! He is, just as He said of Himself, "...the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead,

yet shall he live: And whoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die..." (John 11:25-26).

I would like to give you a summary of what the whole Bible teaches concerning the resurrection from the dead, prior to the resurrection of Jesus and then after His resurrection from the dead.

^ *Prior* to the resurrection of Jesus...

{ The souls and spirits of believers were gathered to God's saints in Hades, to a place of rest and peace.

{ The souls of unbelievers went to Hades as well, but to a place of torment and suffering. The place of suffering and torment was divided from the place of peace and rest by an unpassable chasm.

%o *After* the resurrection of Jesus...

{ The souls and spirits of God's saints waiting in Hades were taken to heaven. You read in Ephesians 4:8-10,

Ephesians 4:8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."

Ephesians 4:9 (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

Ephesians 4:10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

Before the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, ascended into heaven, He descended into the lower parts of the earth - into Hades. When He ascended into heaven, He did not go alone! He took God's waiting saints from Hades with Him. He led them, a multitude of captives, to heaven. These saints are in heaven today, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies.

{ Hades is no longer the destination of God's saints at death. Paul said in Philippians 1:23 that he desired to "depart to be with Christ." Since Jesus is in heaven, when a believer dies his soul and spirit go to heaven to be with Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 Paul uses even stronger language, saying that to be "absent from the body" in death is to be "present with the Lord" in heaven. When a believer dies, he or she is consciously alive in the presence of Jesus, awaiting the resurrection of the body from the grave.

{ Hades *is* still the destination of the souls of unbelievers at death. They are consciously alive waiting in torment and suffering until the resurrection of their bodies.

Now we know where everyone is *gathered* at death. What about the body in the *grave*? When does the resurrection of the body occur? It occurs in several stages, corresponding to God's prophetic plan for the human race.

We are awaiting the rapture of the Church. Rapture is a Latin word meaning "to catch away." Jesus is coming to "catch away" His Church. Concerning this event, you read in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16,

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

The "dead in Christ" are the deceased believers of the Church Age - from the Day of Pentecost forward. At the rapture of the Church they will rise; that is, their sleeping bodies will be raised as glorious, incorruptible bodies and reunited with their souls and spirits.

Something else happens as well. There will be living believers at the rapture. They are described in verse seventeen:

1 Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Living believers will be changed into their glorious, incorruptible bodies without ever tasting physical death. All of the believers of the Church Age, from the Day of Pentecost to the rapture, will be taken to heaven to be with Jesus.

Meanwhile, on the earth, the seven year Great Tribulation will begin. At the end of the Tribulation Jesus Christ will return to earth with His Church. At that time the Old Testament saints in heaven are raised from the dead. Their souls and spirits are united with glorious, incorruptible bodies. They are raised to inherit the Kingdom that Jesus will establish on the earth for one thousand years. Saints who were killed during the Great Tribulation are also raised from the dead at that time.

This entire sequence of resurrections is called the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the righteous. It will *not* all occur at once. Different groups will be raised at different times corresponding to the prophetic events of the Last Days.

What about unbelievers? As we said, their souls go to Hades and this will continue to be their destination throughout human history. Every deceased unbeliever from Cain to the last rebel at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ on earth will be incarcerated in Hades. Then they will be raised all at once to stand before the White Throne Judgment of God. They will be judged for having rejected salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. They will be cast alive into Hell, the Lake of Fire burning eternally.

, You and I live inbetween these great events! We are awaiting the resurrection that occurs next, at the rapture of the Church. As we wait we are a "body" of believers *on* the earth.

#2 The "Body" Of Believers *On* The Earth Serves
As You Await The Resurrection
(50:15-21)

Joseph's brothers identified themselves as "the servants of the God of..." Jacob, and they offered themselves as servants to their brother. They acted in harmony, as a distinct "body," submitting themselves to his will. For his part, Joseph promised to serve his brothers.

In these things they are an example for us. We are the "body" of Jesus Christ on the earth; we are to serve Him and each other as we await resurrection and rapture.

Three things characterized Joseph and his brothers: Fear, Faithfulness, and Fellowship.

^ *Fear...*

Genesis 50:15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."

Concerning our fears, Warren Wiersbe writes,

"If people are afraid, it is because of something in the past that haunts them, or something in the present that upsets them, or something in the future that they feel threatens them. Or it may be a combination of all three."¹

Joseph's brothers were afraid of their past - they had sold Joseph into slavery and it haunted them. They were afraid of the present - the death of Jacob upset them. They were afraid of the future - Joseph's revenge threatened them. Yet there was no real danger at all, because of Joseph's love for them!

{ Are you afraid of something in your past that haunts you? While you were still a sinner, Jesus Christ already loved you! How much more now that you are a saint...

{ Are you afraid of something in the present that upsets you? Jesus Christ loves you in every possible circumstance! In Romans 8:38-39 you are told,

¹*The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 521.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,
Romans 8:39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

{ Are you afraid of something in the future that threatens you? In His love Jesus lives to intercede for you. You can trust that nothing awaits you in the future that hasn't been approved at the Throne of God's grace. In Genesis 50:16-17 you read,

Genesis 50:16 So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying,

Genesis 50:17 "Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

The brothers sent a "messenger" to speak with Joseph. You have a *mediator* Who speaks with God on your behalf, the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven!

The love of Jesus Christ for you should eventually dispel all your fears - past, present, and future! In 1 John 4:18 you read, "perfect love casts out fear." This *perfecting* of God's love is usually a matter of growth. When you are lost, you live in fear and know nothing of God's love. After you trust Jesus for salvation, you find a mixture of both fear and love in your heart. As you grow in fellowship with Him, gradually fears vanish and you rest more and more confidently in His love for you.

‰ *Faithfulness* characterized Joseph's brothers...

Genesis 50:18 Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we *are* your servants."

They offered him their service. They were asking Him to receive them as servants with the promise of their proving themselves faithful.

You are to present yourself as the servant of Jesus, with the promise of proving yourself faithful. The body of believers on the earth has a commission from Him; each member has his or her own tasks to perform. Whether the task seems great or small, it ought to be performed faithfully.

^ *Fellowship* characterized Joseph and his brothers...

Genesis 50:19 Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God?
Genesis 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.

Genesis 50:21 "Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

The statement in verse twenty is the summary of Joseph's whole life. It is what God shared with him at the end of twenty-two years of struggle and suffering. God shared Himself with Joseph, and Joseph in turn shared what God had shown him with his brothers. They thus enjoyed God in common - they had *fellowship* with God and with one another.

The body of believers on the earth is to be a fellowship - a sharing in common together in the life of God. in 1 John 1:3 you read,

1 John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

As a believer you share together in the life of the living God, and with each other your experience of His life in you.

Conclusion

We have examined the bodies in Genesis Forty-nine and Fifty:

- { The bodies of believers *in* the earth sleep as they await their resurrection.
- { The "body" of believers *on* the earth serves as you await the resurrection.

God wants us to examine our own bodies:

- { Is your body the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit?
- { Is our Church "body" serving as if we were awaiting the imminent Rapture?