

Epilogue to Genesis: Prologue to Exodus

Our journey has brought us to the end of the Book of Genesis. We have seen the account of creation, the entrance of sin into the world, the fall of man, the destruction of man, and man's re-creation in the family of Noah. We have met the great patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the progenitors of the nation of Israel. Most recently, we have considered the role of Joseph in God's work. Now we are prepared to make our concluding observations about Jacob and his twelve sons before the Bible story falls silent for several centuries, not resuming until the account of the Exodus.

Throughout this history we have noted that it is peculiar history, often leaving us with great gaps of time between events and only sketchy information about the main characters. We concluded that this history becomes understood only when we recognize that it is about God's work and not about the men through whom he fashioned it. It is with this thought in mind that we close our remarks on Genesis and prepare to move to the next stage of Divine revelation.

Joseph, having reconciled with his brothers and received Pharaoh's approval to bring his family to Egypt, sends for his father. God appears to Jacob for the final time to allay any fears that he might have (Gen. 46:2-4). He reveals that it is in Egypt that Jacob (Israel) will be built into a great nation, as promised to his grandfather Abraham. He further promises that "I will also surely bring you up again," and that "Joseph will put his hand on your eyes," meaning that Jacob will die in the company of his lost son and one day his bones will be laid to rest with his fathers.

There is little doubt by the end of Genesis, in spite of the important role that Joseph has played, that Jacob is the protagonist in this part of the story. Jacob's preeminence is manifested by his blessing of Pharaoh, his blessing of Joseph, his adoption of his grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim to be co-heirs in his legacy, his conferring upon Judah a position of kingship, and his prophesy for Israel, the nation (Gen. 48-49). The final verses of chapter 49 record Jacob's death and chapter 50 chronicles the extensive mourning for him, not only of Joseph and his brothers, but of all Egypt. According to Joseph's vow, he had his father embalmed in Egypt and carried to the land of Canaan to be buried with his father and grandfather. There together in one burial plot lay the three great patriarchs who were the progenitors of the Nation of Israel and the direct ancestors of the Lamb of God who would come to take away the sins of the world.

Chapter 50 closes with Joseph's reassurance to his brothers that he would not take vengeance against them now that their father was dead. He recognized that God's providence was in all that had happened to him. He reassured them, "Do not be afraid for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good in order... to save many people alive (Gen. 50:19-20)." Joseph was an instrument of God to work a salvation for his family. It was revealed to Joseph before his death that his work in Egypt foreshadowed an even greater work.

Joseph says to his brothers, "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 (Gen. 50:24)." The next stage, over four centuries hence, in God's mysterious work with mankind is the deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. But this event, much greater as it will be, will itself be a foreshadowing of a still greater work, the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin by the Great Deliverer, the Promised Seed, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Son of Almighty God, Jesus the Christ.

From the outset of Genesis with, "In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth," to the end of Revelation where is recorded, "Surely I am coming quickly" Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen," the Scriptures encompass a marvelously unified testimony with a single purpose and a central theme: Glory to God for the salvation of sinful man through the loving intercession of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All things before Christ point forward to Him and all things since point back. It is of this incomprehensible work of God that Paul speaks:

... to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord... (Ephesians 3:10-11).

To this we only add "Amen!" [Read Exodus Chapter 1-3