

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, 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. ³¹ There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. ³² The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth." 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.

Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him. ² And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. 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. ⁴ Now 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, 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.'" ⁶ And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear." 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, 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. ⁹ And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering. 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. 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, ¹² which *is* beyond the Jordan. ¹³ So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, ¹⁸ '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. ¹⁹ Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we *are* your servants." ²⁰ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? ²¹ 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. ²² Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. ²³ So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ 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." ²⁷ So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Introduction

We are now coming to the last message on the life of Joseph.

It has been a very interesting and challenging series. I hope that you have been both challenged and encouraged with this series.

Our next series will be on the book of Psalms. This will start with Psalm 1 on Sunday 22nd April.

Before this series we have our Easter programme and two guest speakers, on the 8th & 15th of April. This will give you the opportunity of hearing truth from different people.

Our series on the Psalms will last at least until the end of July.

I hope that during that series we will be singing some Psalms and also people from the congregation will be praying these Psalms in contemporary language, in our intercession time.

Today, we will return to where we left off on Sunday 25th February.

Jacob had completed the blessing upon all of his sons, and he now had one last charge for them.

1. Jacob's last charge/request to all of his sons – 49: v.29-33.

In v. 29-33 of chapter 49, Jacob made his last request before he died.

He requested to be buried in the plot of land that Abraham bought many years before. (Genesis Chapter 23: v. 8-20)

Jacob made this request because by faith, he believed in the promises that God made first of all to his grandfather Abraham.

Jacob believed that one day his ancestors would live in the land of Canaan and be a blessing to the world.

At the end of this final request, Jacob died.

The last words spoken by Jacob, were words of **“faith”** in the promises of God.

Application

Where we decide to be buried, may not have the same significance as Jacob, however there are two important applications here for all of us today.

The first concerns our **own last words to our family.**

You may not have even thought about your own funeral arrangements yet, but I think that you should.

This is especially important for **Japanese Christians** who have relatives who are not Christians.

At the A.G.M. you will all be given a pack to read and fill out concerning your own funeral requests.

This is important for a number of reasons.

It is important because none of us know when we will die, and none of us know who will be responsible for our funeral arrangements when that happens.

As Christians we should desire to have our last words read to our family and friends.

It will be a **challenge** to our “Non-Christian” relatives, and an **encouragement** to our Christian friends and family.

As a Pastor I have had to conduct about 40 funerals so far.

The funerals where people have written their requests for songs, Bible passages to be preached about and a short testimony in advance have been the best funerals.

They have been the funerals where God has been glorified the most.

I can honestly say that the better the funeral, the better the relatives will be able to be helped in their grief.

In Japan there needs to be a very clear **difference** between a Shinto/ Buddhist type funeral and a Christian funeral.

DO NOT leave it to your “Non-Christian” relatives to arrange your funeral.

You can put everything in a sealed envelope, only to be opened when you die, and you can take this envelope with you if you move from OIC to another Church.

Also you can change your requests from time to time to update your Christian story.

The second application which is also very important, concerns our future, after we die.

All Christians die in faith, concerning their future.

Unless Jesus returns before we die, if we are a Christian, **we will die in faith.**

We will all die trusting in the **promises of God** concerning our **own personal resurrection.**

Q. What are some of these promises that God makes to us today?

John 11: v. 21-26. – in N.L.T.

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.” ²³ Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ “Yes,” Martha said, “he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?”

Romans 6: v. 5 - in N.L.T.

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.

1 Corinthians 15: v. 19-23 – in N.L.T.

¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. ²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

²¹ So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. ²² Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. ²³ But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

1 Thessalonians 4: v. 13-14 – in N.L.T.

¹³ And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

There are many more promises in the Bible concerning the resurrection to eternal life with Jesus for all believers, and we will uncover more of these on Easter Day in a few weeks.

These two applications are very important, so please take them seriously.

2. Preparations & Burial of Jacob - Chapter 50: v. 1-14.

We now come to chapter 50: v. 1-14.

These verses teach us how important Jacob was to Joseph, and how respected Joseph was in the land of Egypt.

They also teach us something of the **character of Joseph.**

Seventeen years earlier when Joseph was re-united with his father we read that he fell on his father's neck and wept a long time. **(Gen. 46: v. 29)**

Now we see this emotion repeated, **except it is done in grief.**

It is very clear that Joseph loved his father.

It is important to note that Joseph commanded the **"physicians"** to embalm his father's body.

In Egypt at that time, under the influence of the cult "Osiris", every person who died had their body embalmed in some way, depending on the amount of money they could afford.

This embalming was normally done by the **'Pagan Priests'** and not by physicians.

This teaches us that in spite of the power and authority of Joseph in Egypt, he was still honouring the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Joseph didn't want any unhealthy pagan influence to be involved in his father's embalming or funeral arrangements.

Joseph wanted to make a clear distinction between the God of the Bible and the god of the Egyptians.

This is something that we should strive to do in our lives too.

People notice us when our lives are different.

There was a 70-day period of mourning declared for the death of Jacob.

The normal period for Egyptians to mourn their dead was 40 days.

The set period of 30 days was the usual Hebrew time of mourning.

(Num. 20:29 in N.K.J.)

²⁹ Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

(Deut. 34:8 in N.K.J.)

⁸ And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses ended.

It appears that these two periods of mourning, the Egyptian and Hebrew periods were added together to respect the Jewish Faith and the Egyptian culture.

Most people regarded Joseph as an Egyptian, but he was really a Hebrew.

In v. 4 we are told that after Joseph had completed his mourning, he made arrangements to take the body of his father and bury it in the family grave in Canaan.

Joseph explained to Pharaoh that the reason for this was due to a promise that was made to his father. The whole operation of taking his father to Canaan for his burial was a big challenge.

In v.7- 9 we are told that there was a large gathering of people.

This involved both servants from Pharaoh's palace, and all of the Elders of Egypt, plus the king's chariots and horsemen.

Also, Joseph's family, including all of his brothers.

They only left behind their livestock, children and of course mothers to care for young children.

There would have been at least 200 plus people involved.

The soldiers were involved to protect the people from any gang raids along the way.

It would have been something **like a state funeral that we have today, when a president, prime minister or king or queen dies.**

The burial process would have taken **at least three weeks.**

One thing to note and that was that they stopped for 7 days of mourning at the **threshing floor of Atad.**

This period of mourning made such an impact upon the local people in that area, that they changed the name of their town to "**Abel Mizraim**".

This word means "Mourning of Egypt"

Hebrew mourning was quite dramatic in those days.

It involved loud weeping, tearing of clothes, fasting, going bareheaded, barefooted and wearing sack cloth.

It would have been quite a **visual sight to observe for local people.**

The question you might ask is why stop at a threshing floor for mourning?

The answer to that question is a very interesting one.

The reason for stopping at a "Threshing floor" becomes much clearer when we see the spiritual significance of a "Threshing Floor".

At a Threshing floor you find two large flat stones.

They are fitted and joined.

The top stone is known as the female and the bottom stone is known as the male

The grinding of grain between these two stones **was a picture of marriage.**

The act of marriage is a physical depiction of the spiritual communion that God desires between Himself and mankind.

When God's people drift away from Him and worship other gods, God calls this an act of adultery.

(Hosea 4: v. 12, and 9: v. 1 –in N.K.J.)

¹² My people ask counsel from their wooden *idols*,

And their staff informs them.

For the spirit of harlotry has caused *them* to stray,

And they have played the harlot against their God.

Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like *other* peoples,

For you have played the harlot against your God.

You have made love *for* hire on every threshing floor.

For the Hebrew people the "Threshing Floor" spoke to them as a place of worship and encounter with God.

A threshing floor is where the wheat is separated from the chaff.

The chaff is the crust that protects the grain while it is growing but it is discarded when the grain is ready to be harvested.

When we come to worship at OIC, we are stepping on to **“God’s Threshing Floor”**

It is at our worship services where we should be open to **God refining or lives** and **encouraging us to let go of things that are unhelpful to our spiritual relationship with the God of the Bible.**

The period of seven days when Joseph and his family stopped at the threshing floor was more than just for mourning, it was to encounter God and be refined and prepared for the future.

Application

I hope that you do not see our worship service at O.I.C. as just a place to sing songs, meet your friends and have lunch together.

I hope it is more than that.

I hope that your heart is open to an encounter with the living God.

3. Joseph reassures his brothers of God’s Grace and Providence – v. 15-21.

It is clear from v. 15-18 that Joseph’s brothers had **not fully understood the grace and forgiveness that Joseph had bestowed upon them 17 years ago.**

They thought that now that Jacob had died, that Joseph would hate them and take revenge upon the brothers.

Remember the story?

Joseph’s brothers treated him badly, sold him as a slave to passing traders, and faked his death by dipping the blood of an animal in his favourite coat.

The brothers lied about what Jacob had said.

The lie was designed to protect themselves from any possible harm.

Joseph responded to their lie in a positive way.

Firstly, Joseph pointed out to the brothers that he had no desire to act as if he was “God” in their situation.

Joseph was certainly in a very powerful position in Egypt.

I am sure that he was tempted by Satan to do something negative towards the brothers, **but he didn’t.**

Joseph had a very clear view of the God of the Bible.

He also had a very good understanding of who **he was** in relation to God.

Joseph was a **“Servant”** of God.

He trusted **God** to deal with people according to **His grace and forgiveness.**

Only God knows the heart, and the heart alone knows God.

Therefore, God administers His justice based upon our **hearts towards Him.**

Two New testament verses come to mind, when we think about this subject.

Romans 12: v. 19 in N.L.T.

¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the LORD.

1 Thessalonians 5: v.15. in N.L.T.

¹⁵ See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people.

Secondly Joseph pointed out to his brothers that God’s providence was at work in spite of their evil behaviour.

Joseph did not excuse their evil behaviour. He pointed out that God was able to use the difficult situation **to further the purposes of God.**

This is the difficult part of the Joseph story for many people to understand.

One commentator said **“Through the sins of wicked men, God works out his purposes for Good.”**

The prophet Jeremiah spoke the same truth to encourage God’s people when they were about to go into captivity in a foreign land.

Jeremiah 29: v. 11 in N.L.T.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Thirdly, Joseph spoke kindly to his brothers and promised them support, both practically, emotionally, and spiritually.

God was working his grace through Joseph to provide for his brothers.

Joseph was able to love and support his brothers because he understood God's Love and Grace fully.

God's love **overflowed** through Joseph to his brothers.

Application

This is the great challenge for us as Christians. If we are full of God's love in our hearts and minds, then it overflows to other people.

If we are empty of God's love, then we have nothing to offer people.

Human love is very different. God's love is supernatural.

This is why Paul kept telling the Christians to be "filled" with the Holy Spirit.

(Ephesians 5: v. 18)

God's love to hurting people in our cruel world can be a very powerful witness.

It can sometimes give us an opportunity to present the Gospel.

Joseph was the most complete type of Christ in the Old Testament.

Therefore, His love to others reflected that of Jesus Christ.

What do I mean by a type of Christ?

A Type of Christ, is someone who reflects Jesus in the Old Testament.

There are about 50 recorded events in the life of Joseph, that also happened to Jesus in a similar way.

We do not have time to work through these situations, but you can do your own private study on this matter if you wish.

4. The death of Joseph – v. 22-26.

In v. 22-26 we are informed about the death of Joseph. He was 110 years old when he died.

Ninety-three of Joseph's 110 years were lived in Egypt, and most of those years he was in a privileged position.

Joseph was also able to spend time with his grandchildren.

Proverbs 17: v. 6 (N.L.T.)

⁶Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged;
parents are the pride of their children.

Those of you who are old enough to have grandchildren will know something about the blessing of spending time with your grandchildren.

The Bible says that it is one of the privileges of old age.

I am looking forward to spending a week with my daughter's twins this August.

They will be 18 months old and plenty of fun.

Wendy and I can have one each to play with and give my daughter a rest.

The Bible is true, grandchildren can be a great blessing in your old age!!!

Apart from being thrown into a pit and left for dead, being sold as a slave, accused of attempted rape, and spending some years in prison, Joseph had a life that was blessed of God.

In v. 24, Joseph assured his family that God would visit the Hebrew nation in Egypt and lead them out to the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Joseph asked his relatives to take an oath to promise to carry his bones out of Egypt.

He didn't burden them to have his body sent ahead of time, he was content to know that he would travel later in a coffin, with everybody else in the future.

And so the book of Genesis ends in faith.

Joseph and his family believed that at some future date, God would lead them out of Egypt and into the promised land.

We will discover in the book of Exodus that their faith was rewarded in a wonderful way.

We will definitely cover the first 20 chapters of Exodus at a later date.