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*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

Issue #61

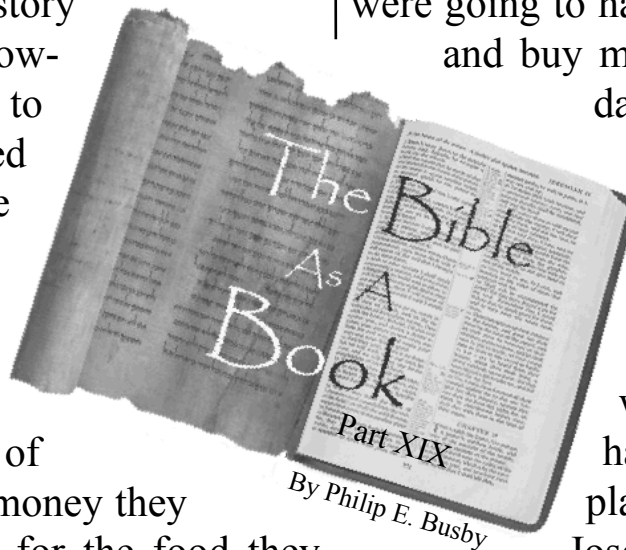
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As we continued our overview of the book of Genesis, we ended our last segment with nine of Israel's sons returning from Egypt where they had been sent to purchase food. In Egypt they had been accused of being spies, and this compelled them to tell the story of who they were. However, this only led to Simeon being detained while the rest were sent home to retrieve Benjamin, the one brother Israel was unwilling to send in the first place. On top of all this, they find the money they took to Egypt to pay for the food they returned with, was also returned in their sacks. Israel is grieved for all this and flatly refuses to allow Benjamin to go, on the grounds it would kill him to lose Benjamin, especially after all that had happened. None of them knew at this point that Joseph was who they were dealing with and he had orchestrated the whole thing. This brings us to Gene-

sis chapter 43.

As time passed, Israel's family consumed the food they bought on that first trip, and the famine continued to be horrible. Finally, Israel tells his sons they were going to have to go again to Egypt and buy more food. However, Judah reminded his father that Joseph had told them they would see him no more if they did not come with Benjamin. Israel is upset with them for telling they had a brother in the first place, and they explain that Joseph asked all the right questions to get the information. They had no way of knowing he would want Benjamin to come down! Ruben offers, once again, to take full charge of making sure Benjamin gets back safely, and makes the argument that if they had not spent so much time on this issue they would have been back with more food from Egypt the second time by now.



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Israel relents and lets them take Benjamin, and a gift of various items as a peace offering of sorts. Also, they took money to buy food and the money they had brought back from the first trip, in hopes the money being given back to them the first time was an error they could simply correct.

When the brothers return to Egypt and Joseph sees Benjamin is with them, Joseph makes them guests at his house. The brothers are greatly disturbed and confused by this. They believe it is just a trick to fall upon them and take them as slaves. Thus, as they come to the house, they plead with the steward of Joseph's house about the money being in their sacks the first time, and how they have brought it back with them. The steward tells them he had, in fact, received their money for the food, and it was God Who gave them treasure in their sacks. With this, Simeon is brought out to be with them, and they all clean up in preparation for a meal. When Joseph comes they present the gifts they had brought, and Joseph again asks them questions about their father. Joseph is very overcome with emotions but when necessary leaves the room so they can not see this fact. As the meal progresses, they were amazed how they had been seated according to age, and Benjamin is treated as a very honored guest being given extra large portions.

The next morning Joseph would send them away with as much food as their

animals could carry, but he once again would put their money in their sacks. He would also put his own ceremonial cup in Benjamin's. A while after they leave, Joseph sends his steward after them to accuse them of stealing the cup. The brothers are so sure they did not do it, they promise that the person with whom it is found could be put to death and the rest of them will become servants. The steward modifies this and says the person who stole it will be put in servitude, and the rest will be blameless. Of course, they were all mortified and scared when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack; and they all returned to the city, where Judah risks his life to recount the story to Joseph, and make it clear their father will not survive if Benjamin does not come home! At this point, Joseph can no longer keep up the charade; and sending his Egyptian servants away, he reveals to his brothers who he really is. Once again, the brothers are taken back and speechless as Joseph asks for their confirmation that Israel is yet alive!

Joseph explains to them that it was God Who sent him to Egypt, not them. It was God's plan all along in order to save them through the famine, of which there is still five years left at this point. Joseph tells them because of this they should waste no time in bringing their father down to Egypt where Joseph can care for them, even giving them land in the upper portion of the Nile valley in the eastern part of the delta. After a time of weeping, the brothers are able to talk to him; and

as Pharaoh himself hears of Joseph's arrangement, he affirms it and tells them not to even care for bringing anything because all they had need of would be taken care of. Pharaoh also sends wagons to assist in making the move. When they return to Israel and convey all this, he at first is unwilling to believe Joseph is alive. However, after he sees all the provisions which had been sent in order to bring them down to Egypt, Israel agrees that going and seeing his son before he dies is what he should do!

In much as was the tradition of Jacob as he left the land in the past, Jacob makes a stop on their journey to worship The Lord. On this occasion it would be in the southern location of Beersheba. There God confirms to Israel that going to Egypt is the right thing, and God will bring the nation He had promised to make from Israel's family back to this land in the future. With that, Israel takes everything and everyone of his household, which by this time was a very large group consisting of seventy people, and moves to Goshen in the land of Egypt! When he arrives, Joseph goes out to meet him, and what a great reunion it was! Joseph explains that they are to be honest about their occupation as herdsmen and this will keep a healthy separation between them and the Egyptians. After this, Joseph introduces a portion of his brethren to Pharaoh. Pharaoh asks what they do for a living, and they confirm what Joseph told them to, about their family

having always been herdsmen. Pharaoh tells them that as herdsmen if any of them were industrious they could take charge of Pharaoh's cattle. This move would eventually put Israel's family in charge of the major animal trade in Egypt. Thus, the intertwining of Egypt's wealth and prosperity with that of Israel's begins to deepen. This would set the stage for Israel someday returning to Canaan, not as refugee slaves, but as a wealthy people!

Joseph also introduced his father Israel to Pharaoh, whom Pharaoh receives blessings from, and shows respect to, as Pharaoh would a dignitary and elder. This was in spite of the Egyptian religious aversion for herdsmen. Pharaoh asks Israel his age, and Israel says he is 130 years old. However, he explains he had not yet attained the years his fathers lived. After this very official welcome, Joseph makes sure his family is settled upon the very best land, which is something Pharaoh had ordered, and Joseph makes sure his family is nourished, especially through the remainder of the famine.

On the other hand, the Egyptians, and those in Canaan who knew there was food in Egypt, continued to buy food from Egypt until they ran out of money. This causes them to come to Joseph wanting food in spite of the money being all gone, because surely it did no one any good to let the people die. Joseph proposes a deal that would exchange animals

for food. In the course of one year, this led to Joseph owning all the lands herds, which no doubt were put into the hands of his family as Pharaoh had suggested. After this, the people admitted they had nothing left but their land and their lives. Joseph agrees to continue feeding them, but in exchange the entire land of Egypt would now belong to Pharaoh, and the people would be Pharaoh's servants. This made Pharaoh true master in the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh begins moving the people into cities according to what might be termed a, "master plan." Joseph also made part of the deal, that the people would farm the land with seed he would initially provide, and in return, they would keep four fifths of what they produced, but continually give one fifth of the produce to Pharaoh.

During the years of famine, there were two groups who did not become part of this deal. Pharaoh gave food to the priests who ran the religious establishment in Egypt. Therefore, they did not have to sell their land for food, and they were already servants - of a sort - to Pharaoh. The other group was that of Israel and his family. Joseph made sure they were provided for, and they already lived in a land given to them by Pharaoh. Thus, Israel and his family sold nothing of themselves to Pharaoh, and continued to prosper and grow exceedingly as an independent people.

Jacob would live for seventeen years in Egypt, and knowing Joseph would be

the one who could stand in the way, or make sure it happened in spite of the opinions of others, Jacob made Joseph swear to him that Jacob's body would not be buried in Egypt. Israel wanted his body to be taken back to Canaan and buried with his fathers. This, Joseph promises will happen! As Jacob was sick and near the end of his days, Joseph came to see him, bringing his two sons who had been born to him through his Egyptian wife. Israel took the opportunity to remind Joseph of God's covenant and make it clear Joseph's position in Egypt did not change the fact he was a part of that. However, it would be Joseph's two sons who would be considered direct sons of Israel. This is why there is no tribe of Joseph, but two half tribes called by the names of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Israel would also take this opportunity to directly bless these two sons. In doing so, Israel put the younger (Ephraim) above the elder (Manasseh). Joseph tried to correct him, but Israel needed no correction, and explained he had done it on purpose because Ephraim would be greater. However, both would become great tribes in the nation of Israel!

After this, Israel called, not just his eldest son as was the tradition, but all his sons to his side, that he might give them his final instructions and blessings. Israel would start with his eldest son whom he bore with Leah, named Ruben. Israel would acknowledge it was unto him that traditionally the blessing would go, be-

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A Matter Of Life And Death

Part IV

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

“Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death? Then Jesus comes at the end of time and takes the soul home to heaven.”

In our last segment we continued our discussion about how humans are created in the Triune image of God, and the relationship our mind, body, and spirit have to each other. This took us into a conversation about the teaching of spiritual death and the fact that is not what happened when Adam and Eve fell into sin, nor was that what Jesus was talking about when He said we must be born again. In truth, Jesus was talking about the simple fact, it is our physical form which will experience death, and something must be done about this fact if we are going to obtain true eternal life as God created us to have. Jesus showed by His work on the cross, God can take care of this problem; and what all this tells us about what true salvation is, is what we are going to discuss in this segment of “A Matter Of Life And Death.”

Simply put, your parents giving you life according to the free will God gave to all people is what Jesus referred to as “...born of water...” and being born again by the will of God is what Jesus called being born “...of the Spirit,...” God showed us during creation that it was His will for humans to exist. God also gave humans a tree to eat from which would continually sustain their physical life, showing us it is His will we

live forever. The choices of man has made death part of our reality, but it's still the will of God that we live. This is the real greatness in what Jesus says in verse 6 of John chapter 3. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Take that in the right context of meaning our physical form our parents gave us is what needs to be replaced with something not of this physical, temporal life, which is what God desires to do, and you go right into what Paul was saying in I Corinthians 15. Beginning in verse 51, he explains, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

This is what we are talking about when we talk about being “saved.” We can be saved from the judgment of death which we all must face! However, “saved” is another terminology problem most Christians have, and it's also, in no small part,

due to the fact many believe it's our spirit which needs to be reborn and not clearly the flesh and only the flesh. Just as we like to say we are "born again," we also like to say we are "saved!" Many Christians simply see these terms as the same thing, which in many ways they are because Jesus was telling Nicodemus how one could be "saved," by explaining to him we must be "born again." However, the simple truth of the matter is that we are not saved as yet, anymore than we are born again; because being born again, in like manner as Jesus was, is how we are "saved."

The fact we are not as yet saved is seen in simple facts of this life, and many of these facts really trouble people who claim to serve The Lord. Because people believe they are saved, they don't understand why God allows, especially certain things, to affect them. The visible evidences we are not as yet saved are things such as: at the very time I am writing this, there is much sickness in my family and among my friends. There are also disasters in the world, both economical, environmental, etc. These things affect my life, my home, my ministry, and my everyday walk with God. People who believe they are saved often do not know what to make of these things, and for good cause. If everything in this world of sin is still able to affect us, even after we are saved, then what good is it?

Now, I know some people would scold me for being sarcastic, but I'm not really being as sarcastic as one might think. The problem is, if we are saved at this moment,

things for us should be different than they are for those in the world who are not saved. If we are born again, things should be different, and this truth is not denied by the church. For centuries people have struggled not just with the question of what happens to us after death, but as believers in Jesus, what is happening to us now? Believers wonder why they get sick and have hardship; they wonder why they do not even have some of the things in life held by people who are some of the most evil people they know. Different people have theology on this issue which says we are meant to suffer, and others go the other direction, saying we were meant to be prosperous, it's just that some of us don't know it or how to obtain it. Neither of these teachings are true!

God gives us grace to live for Him, but we are intended to live life just as all people are intended to live life. God grants us all a temporal life so we can make our choice. Temporal is necessary because God did not want people who were simply programmed to be what He wanted them to be. Instead, He wanted people who were free to be what they chose to be, but if some chose not to have anything to do with God, they would continually create a sin-filled world, as we plainly see. Those who still desire to know and be with God will be able to do so; but while in this sinful flesh, they will not be able to commune with the freedom man had before the fall. This is a fact death can correct. With the new form Jesus came to provide, we can be saved from death; and because the new form is incorruptible, there will no longer be pain, suffering, nor death any

more for those who receive them. When those who desire God are born again in these new forms, this will be true salvation!

The real difference in this life is that we are suppose to live our lives like we believe what Jesus told Nicodemus is able to happen, in spite of the fact we have not yet experienced it! Being saved from this world and its sin, by being born again, should be something we expect to experience because we have a relationship with The One who holds the keys to death and the grave! We also want to see a place, not just where there is no more sickness and pain, but a place which does not have the reason for that sickness and pain! We do not want a place where God is limited by man's free will to reject His direction, but a place where God is loosed to do His will because the only individuals in that place are those who desire God's will! God has the answer to all life's woes, and the fact we suffer here is because of sin. The fact we will die is because of sin! God's plan will save us from this state and the death that comes with it, by using death as a gateway for us to be eternally separate from sin. All we have to do is desire God and His righteousness over sin, and that is a desire we show by seeking after God! (Matt. 6:31-34)

This is what Paul is explaining in Romans. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been

planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:..." Romans 6:4-5 This is not the explanation of a person saved from sin, but instruction for one who is not as yet, who should be walking with the knowledge there is no reason to allow sin to be their master. Sin will ultimately take us to the grave, just as it takes all people to their grave - but who cares? God has already made a way for that fact to be nullified. Because this is true, even now we should live our lives as if we are already saved. This is what Paul lectures on in Colossians chapter 3; and while I would like for us all to stop right now and read that chapter, let me just quote verse 2 where Paul simply instructs, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." These facts are also exactly why Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Romans 6:12

As long as we are walking in the flesh our parents are responsible for, we are vulnerable to the sin in this world. We are tempted to turn from God and do the lusts of the flesh. (James 1:12-15) If we want to be truly saved, we must turn from these lusts and remain turned from these lusts. (Rom. 6:16) We must show, no matter how many mistakes we make in the flesh, we are not desirous to make those mistakes. (Rom. 7:21-25) We should understand that when we suffer from things such as sickness, it does not ultimately matter; because all it is, is the deterioration of the body we must lose in order to receive the

rebirth Jesus said was necessary to see the Kingdom of Heaven. (I Pet. 2:21-24)

Simply put, what a true believer desires is a relationship with God in order to learn how not to make the mistakes, and fall to the sin, which does so easily beset us. (Heb. 12:1-10) If we desire that, instead of the sin of this world, God is waiting, willing, and desirous to have a continual relationship with us. (II Cor. 6:17-18) We don't need what this world has to offer. Faith (which is a relationship with God) is the substance of what going to heaven is all about, and it is the evidence that God is not going to allow the death of our physical forms to separate us from Him. (Heb. 11:1) Why would He? If God is willing to have a relationship with us while we are yet sinners, (Rom. 5:7-10) why would He allow death, which gives us the ability to leave behind the sin of this life, to separate us from Him, when sin is not something we desire to keep on living in? (Eph. 2) This should become obviously true when we consider the fact God has proven, through The Messiah, He has the power to replace our corruptible flesh with a physical form which will never succumb to sin, and thus death, again!

With these facts in hand, the true believer does not fear death. Just like Nicodemus, we understand even people who live for God die. However, even if we do not perfectly understand the process, we know it's possible through Jesus Christ our Lord, not just to be saved from death but through death. In dealing with this question, what we are left with is one glaring fact which all Christians should know. Up

until now, Jesus is the only One Who has ever been truly born again, and not just raised from the dead in these same physical forms which simply die again one day, such as was the case of individuals like Lazarus. Thus, our question comes down to time. If everything an individual is does not die like the body, and if we are not immediately resurrected into new bodies, where do those parts of us go?

Unfortunately, instead of turning to the fact God is greater than we are to answer this question, instead of looking at the fact God created everything we know including time itself, we tend to look only to what our eyes can see; and, many times, we listen to philosophies which those who only live for this physical world come up with. This being true, a very widespread theory, which attempts to explain what happens to the soul after death, tells us the soul does not leave the body at the time of death. That theory by its official name is "grave sleeping." Grave sleeping teaches just what the name indicates. It says, upon the death of the body, the soul goes into the spiritual equivalent of dormancy, which physically we go into during life when we lay down to sleep. The theory says, the soul is still alive but simply unconscious. I find it very odd that so many Christians like this theory, considering the fact many Christians believe - just as we have discussed - that people are spiritually alive only once they receive Christ. If you believe this theory, do you believe we were made spiritually alive only to be put to sleep after the body fails? It doesn't make a lot of sense. However, many

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

We ended last time talking about Genesis chapter 11 verse 4, and the fact man's intent for building a tower was in direct contradiction to the things of God. If man had decided to build a central point for the worship of God, a place dedicated to seeking God and His presence, the entire story of this tower and mankind, in the post-flood world, would have been very different. However, that is not what they did, and the end of verse 4 makes the fact very clear that their intent for building the tower was not a good one.

It says, "...and let us make us a name,..." Now we talked about this issue a bit earlier in this study and how this was really the leaders talking about the fact they wanted to make a name for themselves. They wanted there to be no doubt the ideas they had were the best thing going. Building this great city, with a great central monument, was a way to impress on people there was something larger to be accomplished than the individual could accomplish on their own. This and a false religion that promised the opportunity at prosperity, would be the hook they needed to draw people into one central project and in doing so entangle people with their specific ideas. All that being true, the individuals involved in this situation are still not without blame. The truth is, once you, as an individual, decide to join in and especially as you choose to stay, in spite of the wrong you see in what is actually being projected, you become a

part of the whole, whether you like it or not. Disagreement is not just a mental thing. True disagreement brings actions as well. If you truly disagree with something, you will walk away or at least attempt to separate yourself from it in the ways you can.

This is the kind of sacrifices we see in latter times from men such as Daniel and his friends who were taken from Judah to Babylon as captives. They did not have much choice in the matter. God had instructed the king of Israel to yield to the king of Babylon; and in doing so, Judah would have remained on its land and been able to continue to serve God. (Jer. 27:12) However, the king did not heed this instruction and instead decided to rebel against the king of Babylon. In doing so, the kings of Judah brought the king of Babylon to Judah more than once, where he eventually destroyed the land and leveled Jerusalem. The king of Babylon also carried many of the Jews away captive. Daniel and his friends were among those carried away; and so I say again, they had little choice in the matter.

Once in Babylon, Daniel and the others were chosen as men the king of Babylon wanted to groom for his purposes, and they were taken into the king's care and education system. There they were housed and fed, but some of the foods they were provided were not allowed by the Law of God

for the Jews to eat. In this situation, Daniel did not just say, well if you can't beat them, join them; he said, we will not eat this food because it violates our God's Law. The officer in charge said he was not going to take it upon his shoulders to let them choose what they wanted to eat and see them become unhealthy. That would be exactly the opposite of what the king wanted out of the program. If the officer did such a thing, the king would have his head! Daniel, knowing the ways of God are true, proposed that they be allowed to eat only the fruits and vegetables which would not violate God's law, just for a trial period of time. If the officer believed it was a bad idea at the end of that time, he could make a judgment call before it was too late to reverse course. However, if Daniel and his friends were well, all would be good. When the time of the trial ended, Daniel and his friends were better than well. They were better than all the others who had followed the king's diet, and the officer not only determined Daniel and his friends could continue on this clean diet, he determined all the men in the program should be on the diet! (Dan. 1:1-16)

Now, not all stories end with this kind of victory for the right. Many prophets, and believers in God, have stood against evil and lost their lives in the process. "Bad" endings are exactly why many people will not buck the system in any way; but as a true believer in God, we should understand what Paul was talking about when he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21 We do not always know if we will be accepted, rejected, or even given the chance to try; but in either

case, God has made a way for those who believe in Him. We do not have to fear the one or ones who can only destroy the body. We only need fear and respect The One who will be our ultimate judge at the end of this earth. (Matt. 10:28) At the time of the building of the tower, we see the beginnings of men putting, or at least attempting to put, other men at this crossroads between serving God or "fitting in." This system of sinful men, which brings destruction, is illustrated as a "beast" in the book of Revelation. (Prov. 14:12, Rev. 13:1-4) The beast is the systems of men that attempt to make the things of the flesh the top priority in life, and by the very nature of doing this, it automatically attempts to push out the things of God from the lives of the individual.

Today we see a vehemency to this, which has not existed in a worldwide way ever before. You'll remember that Jesus said the end of this earth would not come until the Gospel of the kingdom be preached in all the world. (Matt. 24:6-14) Well, this is because God has always matched man's efforts to displace the truth. As the world is more and more taken in by the beast of man's ideas, driven and affected on a daily basis by them, so too will the Gospel, teaching us the simple truth about what God did in sacrificing His Son Jesus Christ, be there for individuals to reach out and hold onto. However, it will come to a point where the beast will overtake so much of the system that there will be little to no way for any true believers in God's ways to maintain their righteous ways and still involve themselves in the system enough to gain the daily necessities they

need. This truth is illustrated in the book of Revelation as the mark of the beast. At the time of the Tower of Babel, there is not a very large population. It had grown in number over almost a century; but in starting out with just eight people - two of which would not have any more children - there was not going to be a significant population in just the space of about one hundred years. Thus, what we are seeing here in Genesis 11 verse 4, about a name being made, is not the overbearing beast we deal more and more with today, but the beginnings of such a beast. That being true, the big problem at the tower was that the entire population of mankind was still going to be dragged down by this tower's intent, not because it was the climax of man's achievements on this issue, but because there were not many barriers to a few men affecting the whole!

You see, God wanted a world of individuals who would interact with each other and Himself; but man wants to make a name for himself without having to care about righteousness. The corruption this brings is no different than that which led to the flood in the first place. The first two people living on this planet (Adam and Eve) had two sons, and the one, Cain, killed the other, Abel. This is because man's attitude can be, and very often is, fleshly. When men choose to live in the flesh - as Cain did - instead of living as the whole being God created man to be, they begin to respond to the animal like instincts of their flesh without the counter balance of truly using their mind. Instead of the

flesh being the tools we need to interact with other physical things, it becomes the driving, decision-making faculty of our lives. This is what created the thought in Cain's mind about building a city before there was even enough people to inhabit one.

A vast majority of animals respond to living in herds, schools, flocks, and the like. This is how God created them. Animals have a set pattern and way of life that persists generation after generation, but humans did not evolve from animals. We were intended to have dominion over the animals, not act like them. (Gen. 1:26) It is an animal-like instinct to fear the uniqueness of individuals and form unyielding social groups to deter and defend against it. It is the fear of what free will might bring or even cost us personally, which causes us to find safety in conformity. This was Cain's thought. In many ways Cain killed Abel because Cain took what happened with their offerings as a direct insult or threat to his personal life and accomplishments. This is a ridiculous way for humans to think, but a very prevalent way when the flesh is in charge. While talking to God after he had murdered his brother, Cain was concerned that anyone who found him could abuse him. (Gen. 4:1-16) This was Cain reflecting his thoughts on others. It was Cain's desire that others conform to what he wanted, but under the circumstances, he feared he would automatically be at the bottom, not the top, of some social pool which did not even exist as yet.

Cain had also seen death firsthand. He knew how fragile life had become; and being all about the flesh, Cain became a man with exactly the attitude so many people do not understand we need to fight directly against. It is an attitude the Bible tells us in I Peter 5:8 Satan has. Man knows his time is limited and so he seeks what will get him to where he wants to go with little concern for, and even the desire to devour, the lives of others to make it happen. This is why Cain built a city. Cain hoped to use this city idea to gain what he wanted, but would never have the ability to build on his own. Because we live so deep in the belly of the beast today, this may seem at first glance to be a good thing, but there are a couple of problems we should see as obvious if we pull back and understand God gave each individual a free will for a reason.

Community can be a good thing, but only under the right circumstances. A community should be built a piece at a time by those who desire, of their own free will, to be together and build a community they all agree is in their interests. This was definitely not what Cain was doing. Cain was building a city before there was even enough people on the planet for a city to exist. Cain was building a place where his children and others would live without even thinking about there being another way. Instead of being a father who would encourage his children to explore and have dominion over the planet as God had commanded, Cain was hoping to foster conglomeration of his family; and raising his children in a city would cause many of them to simply believe this was the way

life was meant to be. As we have talked about before, this stunts the individual development of humans. Why? Because conglomeration done, not out of cooperation, but in a forced or obligated way, can mostly only serve the purposes of a few.

This is the simple dynamics of it. If we lived for eternity everyone could work on their ideas, and those with similar or connective ideas could work on them together as they found each other and desired to do so. However, with limited time, many feel we can not work with this leisure. Since it's true you can physically do things faster together than apart, this is the route many want to take. The catch is, you must decide on an objective. Some must win while others must lose, and in a limited timespan this is not a temporary or rotating thing. A grand objective will consume the life span of many and often many life spans. There is simply not enough time to do everything. So some will see their ideas implemented and others will simply spend their lives working on the projects of others.

Another problem is that you will not get everyone to work together on just every idea. So, even if the working of projects was a rotating thing, some ideas are things you can easily convince many to work on, while other ideas will never get a second look. In an overall way, the problem comes down to what was faced at the Tower of Babel. Bad ideas as well as good ideas can be quickly furthered through this kind of living, and sadly it is the bad ideas that get implemented in many cases. This is because it is mostly people like Cain who hold the desire to build this kind of system

and push forward their thoughts in the first place. They care not for those who they have to hurt or how much they have to lie, etc. This kind of thought pattern taken to its extreme is why full-blown slavery can and does develop in the world.

As the system grows and the ideas of selfish people is the name that engulfs man's thoughts, there becomes little room for any good to be accomplished in the system. It is a simple truth that good opposes bad. This is why Jesus told us, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24 Caring about mammon is the path man has chosen to walk and you can see the result. Because conglomeration serves only a few and almost never the true individual needs of the many, we also find there is very little any one person or even a small group of righteous people can do to change the pattern. This is the exact corner Satan wanted to paint us into. If the good can be diminished it will seem more and more as if it is simply unimportant. This is what we see today. Biblical standards are being degraded in our society right and left. People see no reason to follow Biblical standards because they are not held by a large portion of the group, and even if they used to be, the fact that more and more they no longer are held makes them seem as if they are archaic. People feel they were simply a leftover portion of our evolutionary journey into higher thinking humans, and that it is no longer important and probably never was necessary.

As individuals feel more and more that no one cares about living the life the Bible asks us to, they wonder why should they?

As the systems get worse and worse, it becomes more obvious that righteous standards do, in fact, hinder what people see as human progress. The people who hold them - and certainly those who teach them - are seen as standing in the way, and the reaction to this truth can and does turn violent if the righteous will not yield. (Rev. 12:10-11) Even ministers will often simply yield to the attitude that the truth can't be taught anymore, because "No one will listen."; and if no one will listen what's the point in preaching it? Many may hold on for years but eventually develop the feeling they simply can not make it in a world with no scruples while holding scruples themselves. This leaves the door open even more for Satan to freely use the system of men to serve the purpose he desires, and our own greed for the things of this life has played right into his hands. (Eph. 6:11-13) No matter how many people may turn from it, we need to realize the word "righteousness" is not just a term, but a truth. We must do what is right, not just because God said so, but because God created it to be just that way. You can build a house faster if you don't take the time to put down a good foundation. It may even stand for a good while, but in the end, you will not have a house that will last! (Num. 32:20-23)

Yes, verse 4 tells us the leaders wanted to make a name for themselves; but to do this, they understood they needed others. They were able to draw others in because many of them also wanted to make a name for themselves or be a part of the name man was making overall. This is how there develops such a thing as the mark of the

beast. Then verse 4 of Genesis chapter 11 goes on to tell us they wanted to make a name for themselves so they would not be or before they could be, "...scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Clearly this is that pack and herd mentality again. As humans, why should anyone care? You can see how parents might want to see their children stay close by, and loved ones in general. However, the post-flood world started out with three distinct family groups in the three sons of Noah. Why would there be a general concern that it was a problem for these three groups to stay together instead of spreading across the entire world? The answer is simply - there shouldn't be. Only people desiring to keep people together to accomplish the goals they deem important would feel this way.

This is why the mark of the beast can be taken in two different ways. First, you can be part of the group that desires to make a name for yourself. At the Tower of Babel there were those who were part of the original leadership group putting forth these ideas, and there were those who whole heartily agreed this was the way to go. For those in this category, the book of Revelation says the mark is taken in the forehead. It is not just something you work for, you are a part of the mindset which brings about the system. The second group receives the mark in their right-hand, and as amazing as it may seem, these are more of the real problem of why God would need to confound the languages. There are a vast majority of followers. They range from those who do not care one way or the

other about the direction things are headed, especially if it brings them some comfort, all the way to those who believe they simply have no choice but to follow because getting along in this world requires doing what is expected. This is driven by the truth God points out in Revelation, which is that without the mark you will not be able to buy or sell. (Rev. 13:16-17) One of the most prevalent thoughts about why there is a need for a system in the first place has to do with there being a way for people to obtain basic supplies for their lives. These things can be a lot of work to obtain yourself. This is why Nimrod was revered for being a "...mighty hunter..." Genesis 10:9 Because it is a simple physical truth that many hands can make for light work, people are very easily spoiled by the beast when things are going well.

Just think about it the next time you're at the market. Look around and think of all the things you are able to buy or need to buy that would be anywhere from hard to impossible to obtain if it were not for the market system! Now, I'm not saying the buying and selling of goods and services is a bad thing at its heart, but we should understand this is not what the Bible is saying either. What it is saying is, the more we as individuals desire the things this world has to offer, the more we will want, or have to be involved with the system in order to live the lifestyle it can grant. The more dependent on the market place you are, the more the system can and will tell you how you must live. It does this with the excuse it is necessary in order to maintain the system, which may, in fact, be true

to a great degree, and further human progress, which is not true. Those who, according to righteousness, will not allow the system to tell them what to do because it asks of them things they know are not of God, will find it harder and harder to do business in the system as it grows more corrupt.

The truth is, many individuals can live off the land - so to speak. People living in many areas of the world could live off the plant life all around them with no problem. The problem is that human flesh is not so animal like in its desires for comforts. Many people are not so thrilled with eating grass like a cow all the time. This is why God said to Adam he would have to work by the sweat of his brow to eat bread. Bread is not grass or simply grain. To have more than an animal eats on a regular basis, an individual will have to grow the grain of choice, harvest it, grind it, work the dough, and bake it. It is a process unlike the one Adam and Eve were use to in a garden where fruits and vegetables grew in plenty and were available all year long for the picking and eating. So while an individual, even if you do not have much land, can usually plant some food and/or survive off the things around you, it is not the lifestyle of choice!

Other factors are such things as: if you want to have friends, there is a good likelihood you will not be the popular one if what you serve for dinner is grass salad. In places such as the United States, the system is even coming directly after people who for no religious reason per say desire to live more naturally. The government

will tell you it is for the good of the many that the system tells you what kind of houses we must all live in, and how your food must be processed. This is why, if you have children, the system will be even more demanding on the issues of housing and food. The point is simply this, many people will not for one reason or another be willing to live outside the system, and as the system gets bigger, it gets harder to live in a way that is outside the system, no matter what your desires or willing sacrifices. The way many of us currently survive is by buying the things we need, and selling the things we can produce, which often includes selling our direct time and energy. When the system tells you - such as it did Daniel and his friends - you must do something you know to be contrary to what God has asked of you, you need to say no! In doing so you may lose your job, or be unable to handle money in the way the system tells people it has to. The more the system is contrary to the things of God, and the righteous ways He created us to live, the harder you will find it to interact with the system and maintain Godly ways. The more you cannot interact with the system, the more you will be unable to buy and sell. The more you are unable to buy and sell, the more you will be unable to live life, at the very least, in the ways commonly expected. This causes many to simply believe there is no choice in the matter but to give in and do what the system says. This trap is exactly why those at the Tower of Babel wanted to make a name for themselves before man spread out across the face of the earth and created opposing systems, competing systems, or were lost from the

group gaining knowledge about how to live in no system at all.

All this information leads us up to the event of verse 5 where we are told God comes down to see this city and tower man was building. This, as we have touched on before, is much like what happened after Adam and Eve took of the fruit God told them not to, and God came to them walking in the garden. God was not coming with wrath or judgment, He was coming to commune with those He had created. This is why He calls to Adam when they did not come to Him. (Gen. 3:8-10) Though many people may miss it, here in verse 5, at the Tower of Babel, God is doing much that same thing. Man was building and developing on the earth, and God came down to interact and see what man was doing. Yes, God always knows before these moments if and what we have done wrong, but He gives us a chance to interact with Him on a level we understand. He comes to us with an openness to discuss the direction we are headed. It is simply up to us what we will do with this opportunity. Adam and Eve used the opportunity to make excuses for why they had done wrong, as if somehow they could deflect their personal responsibility in the situation or justify their actions. (Gen. 3:11-13) Cain attempted to ignore God as much as he could, and in the end only worried about being able to go out from the presence of God and lead his life the way he wanted without interference. (Gen. 4:9-16)

Here, there is not a specific account of what God said, did, or who He interacted

with at this time as there was at those earlier times. However, we too often connect verse 5 and verse 6 without understanding the meat in-between. First, we need to understand this situation was not one which only involved one or two individuals and their direct actions. This situation was about something man was doing as a whole. As God came down to see the work man was doing at the tower, it is possible there was no one to interact with, and this is often the state we find ourselves believing. We tend to think there was no one who cared to commune with God and that is why He confounded the languages. However, God did not allow the world to get that bad before He sent the flood, and at that time God still had Noah to work with. In that situation, God also determined man needed to be wiped from the face of the earth! (Gen. 6:5-7) This makes it hard to believe people at the time of the tower were so bad it grieved God He had even made man, as it did before the flood. Some may speculate all this is because God had promised after the flood He would never again destroy every living thing as He had done with the flood, but that promise was not made as a way to handcuff God from destroying evil. The truth of the matter is, God made that promise because He would not allow it to come to that place again, until He was ready to put an end to this entire world! (Gen. 8:20-22) The more likely answer as to why we do not have recorded for us God interacting with individuals, is the fact He interacted with many of them!

Until next time, Shalom!

Christians like this theory, because they like or believe in the idea of the graves being physically opened as people are resurrected at the return of Christ.

In many people's minds this is what happened when Jesus rose. We even portray it, many times, when we act out the story of Jesus' work. It's that dramatic scene where the stone is rolled away and Jesus comes forth in glorious light from the tomb's opening. However, this is not really what happened, and is also something which may only have gotten started mostly because of what those in the performance business like to call "dramatic license." Dramatic license means you have the ability to tell the story with a little more flare in order to get the point across, invoke the emotion you want, and/or just make the story more interesting than it would be if you stayed right with the truth.

I'll admit, it is very emotional and truly shows the point that Jesus rose from the dead if we see Him actually leaving the tomb, especially in dramatic fashion! The problem is, it's simply not true! As we covered earlier, the tomb was not opened for Jesus to get out. Jesus proved such a thing was not necessary just after His resurrection. After His resurrection, Jesus did not need doors or windows to enter a room; (John 20:18-29) and lest we forget, we are already talking about a man who, even before His death, was capable of feats, such as walking on water! (Matt. 14:22-32) The truth that Jesus was already gone from the tomb is why the angel asked the women why they sought the living -

which is what Jesus already was - among the dead? The angel did not ask this because he had just released Jesus from the tomb. That would be snide if the angel had only moments before that question opened the tomb for Jesus to get out. How could the women have known the angel had released Jesus just before they got there? The real point of the angel's question was to ask why they were coming to the tomb at all? Jesus was not there, just as He had explained to them he wouldn't be! (Matt. 17:22-23) The only reason the tomb was opened was for us to see that fact we really would never have accepted any other way!

In the end, I don't think we can fully blame dramatic license for this misnomer. Grave sleeping also has a relationship to why we like to portray the story this way. Grave sleeping teaches one simple belief, and that is the idea the soul is in someway, even after death, still connected to the body. Before I go any further, let me say people believe a lot of variations on this issue; and I realize there are those who would argue my information is incorrect on the basis, some do not believe the soul is actually, or that it has to be directly, with the body, in the grave. This point is a technicality though. Some do not force the issue of the soul staying directly with the body, and in some cases this is because they see that the Bible does not appear to support this idea. Nonetheless, it all comes out the same, and brings us to the main point of this whole argument which is: grave sleeping has to do with the soul, even after the death of the body, having some attachment to the body, and thus the time it was meant to walk in.

Now, right off the top we need to understand, grave sleeping is not a Christian idea. This is important because when people believe something is a Christian idea, they, as Christians, often believe it must have some merit because someone who knew the Bible must have come up with it. The problem is, this is often not the case about many ideas within the church. In fact, just the opposite is more often true. What happened in the case of grave sleeping was, because no one knew the Bible for themselves, or because it was the desire of, at least, certain people to integrate teachings of non-Christians into the doctrine of Christianity for the sake of making the transition into Christianity easier or desirable, already existing cultural practices and ideas were adopted. When this happens, the original cultural idea is, many times, bent or covered with Biblical sounding ideas and/or names; but they really are just the practices a culture had before the religion of Christianity was important or forced upon them.

Grave sleeping exists in many false religions and cultural thoughts about death in some form or another. It will take on differing forms depending on what makes a certain culture or its leaders comfortable. However, they all boil down to that problem Christians wrongly accuse Nicodemus of, and that is, many people can't see past the physical. This is why some of the most well known cultural ideas about death, which comes directly from the ancient world, are those held by the ancient Egyptians. Many of us are familiar with the

Egyptian practice of mummification. There are a lot of gruesome details about how this is done, but the baseline reason behind the practice has to do with preserving the body for as long as possible. Thus, for mummification, the body is stripped of those things which facilitate deterioration, and wrapped up using procedures which preserve what is left for a very long time. Even those solid parts which are removed from the body are often placed in jars where they will be kept - or at least what is left of them can be kept - with the body.

All this is something modern men both marvel at, as well as scoff. People marvel at the fact the Egyptians put such great effort into figuring this out and doing it, especially for their greatly revered members of society. They also marvel at the fact ancient people had such great success at it. This is one of the reasons we put mummies in our museums! At the same time, people scoff at the fact ancient people went to such effort to do such a thing because of the religious beliefs which drove them. I for one think this is greatly hypocritical on the part of modern men; because while we love to call ourselves "scientific" instead of "superstitious," we use our modern knowledge to preserve bodies in much the same way. In societies such as in the U.S., something which the Bible simply tells us is made from dust and unto dust it will return, (Gen. 3:19) is carefully treated with chemicals, placed in a sealed coffin, and encased in a concrete vault as it is put into the ground. It really is quite ridiculous to go to all this effort in

order to ensure natural forces can not affect a body before we put it into the ground, when that should be the whole point!

The point is, much like the Egyptians, we go to a lot of effort to ensure bodies are not simply allowed to go through a natural process of returning to the dust, and for many people this is because they do not want that process to happen. There are even Christians who believe cremation is wrong based on the idea it intentionally destroys the body. All this has to do with the fact people often have looked at death as a sleep of one sort or another. The monogram R.I.P. is synonymous with death, and it means, "Rest In Peace." The idea of sleeping has always been associated with death because it is what most physically describes what we see when we watch someone die, and because we do not understand death, we hold to that description.

People also like the idea of sleep because of a couple of facts we all know about sleep. First, we know we are not fully inactive during sleep. We dream, and many of the dreams people have feel very real, just like being awake. However, at times we are not even able to rightly describe what we dream because it makes no sense once we are awake, in spite of the fact it made perfect sense while we were in the dream. This is mainly due to the fact our dreams are not just the activity of the brain, such as an animal's dream. Humans are also experiencing activity of the mind and spirit, which causes many people to think about living, or even that they have,

at times, lived in a different world, realm, or even that they have left their bodies altogether. The truth is, they have not. As long as the body is alive, we are here in this realm, and directly connected to our bodies.

The fact our spirit, and even our mind, can have a heightened sense and/or level of activity when our flesh is not constantly inputting is why inducing severe fatigue, and even the use of drugs, can cause "visions," and the like. These facts are why there are those who believe they have actually seen heaven, or traveled through time. Many do not realize or believe the mind and spirit both exist. They do not believe or understand the spirit is still active, even though, and in many ways especially because the flesh is inactive, or impaired. During these times, the mind is still doing what it does, and it's still receiving input from the spirit. While the spirit can give input equal to the flesh, it's not the same as what the physical would be inputting. For lack of a better way to put it, the spirit's input is also not coming from the same senses or channels as the flesh would receive its input, and people can be unfamiliar with it. Because we do not understand and/or believe this, many are baffled by the fact people in comas, and the like, can, in fact, wake with knowledge - or what seems like knowledge - they did not have before and should not have been able to attain while being physically inactive.

Even many people of the church do not understand things of the spirit; and thus, they do not understand practices such as

fasting. Fasting is meant to free up time for something other than the flesh, but many people just don't see the value in suppressing the flesh. This is, in no small part, due to the fact they have never taken the time to listen to the spirit. However, fasting trains our flesh to be in submission to our mind, which is something we need to do, as we talked about earlier. It can also serve the purpose of denying input from the flesh for a time so we may hear the spirit, both our own spirit as well as The Holy Ghost, which our spirit was intended to commune with.

This is exactly why we close our eyes, fold our hands, and bow our heads, when we pray. Blocking out input, which the flesh is continually willing and desirous to give, is beneficial to our mind's ability to clearly receive input from something else. This is not mysticism. It is a truth of our existence, and this fact is likely the reason God built us to have a standard sleep cycle to begin with. Remember, He could have created us any way He chose. The fact physical things have to rest, and most of that rest happens at the same time darkness comes, is only a truth because God created it to be so; and if God chose it to be so, there is a good reason for it!

Now, the second fact we all know about sleep, and one flesh-loving individuals love the most, is the simple fact we wake up! We go to sleep, but it's not eternal nor irreversible. If we look at death as a sleep instead of something quite different, we hold onto the hope death, like sleep, and

like so many things we observe in the universe, is nothing more than a cycle, and will come back around to life. This is exactly why some cultures believe in reincarnation, and others want to preserve the body as long as possible. For the ancient Egyptian this idea was well defined, and that is why they did what they did without excuse. They believed as long as the body was intact to some degree, the person would live on in the "afterlife." It's likely most of us are familiar with that term, "afterlife," because of the Egyptians; but the very belief the body is somehow necessary for the "afterlife," means it's not really an afterlife as much as it is the struggle to maintain what is left in this life or return to it. Thus, all these stories and theologies are diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches us!

In our next segment, we will talk more about what does, in fact, happen to us when we die. We will take a look at the differences between the resurrection - people such as Lazarus experienced, the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection we need to truly be saved. This will take us into the heart of answering the question we are discussing in this series. Until then, I pray you will grow in His assurance and comfort as you prepare your life to meet The Lord at His return!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 4

cause as the first son in the family he brought the assurance there will be an heir to carry on the family name. However, Ruben was not to be the strongest of the tribes because he did not make good decisions. Israel would then speak to his next two eldest sons, which were also from Leah, Simeon and Levi. These two, because they showed they were men who when together allowed their anger to lead them, would need to be separated and not allowed to become one strong group. Levi would specifically be scattered throughout Israel and granted no specific territory because his tribe was given the work of the priesthood.

Judah, Israel and Leah's fourth son, would be next, and unto him was granted the blessing more traditionally given to the first-born. Judah would be strong against the enemy and be praised of the other sons. Judah would remain solid throughout the ages and see great prosperity. Today, we know Judah's position became so great that eventually all the people of God's chosen nation came to bear the name "Jews," which is derived from "Judah." Jacob also says Judah's leadership, in both ruling as a king and in making judgments according to the law, would continue until the time The Messiah would come and gather all people unto Himself. This, of course, is a reference to Jesus' Second Coming when He will sit on the throne of David, who was of the tribe of Judah. This is a position Jesus, being of the lineage of David, offered

Himself for at His first appearing. However, at His Second Coming, Jesus will rule, not just Israel but all nations, with a rod of iron. (Rev. 19:11-21)

After Judah, Israel breaks away from going oldest to youngest overall, and continues with the sons of Leah. However, he jumps over the fifth son of Leah to Zebulun who was her sixth, and tenth overall. Israel explains Zebulun would be a quiet and relatively peaceful tribe. Its territory may never have literally involved the sea. However, it would be in that area Jesus would spend His childhood and conduct much of His ministry there as a safe harbor from kings and the religious establishments which sought to kill Him. (Matt. 2:19-23) This also afforded Jesus the opportunity to reach out to those outside the Jewish nation directly. Israel would then go back to Leah's fifth son Issachar, who was Israel's ninth. He would be the tribe which would see great value in the promised land and its ability to yield an abundance. Issachar would be a very industrious tribe continuously gaining profit from their agricultural activities.

From there, Israel speaks of his fifth son Dan, who is the first son born through Rachel's handmaiden Bilhah. Israel would tell of how Dan would be a judge among the nation and also a disruption at times. The great judge Samson was from the tribe of Dan. (Judg. 13) It would be in the territory of Dan that a false god would be placed, when ten of the tribes broke

from the leadership of David's house. The new king of the northern kingdom established two statues of calves as national gods. The one in Dan was placed to specifically hinder those in the North from continuing to go and worship The One True God in Jerusalem!

The next son Israel would prophesy about would be Gad, the first born son through Leah's handmaiden Zilpah. Gad's tribal land would be on the east side of the Jordan River with Ammon directly east of it. The tribe of Gad would have to continually fight and be vigilant against attacks from the east. Next would be Asher, the second son born of Zilpah. Asher's future territory in the promised land would be far to the north and border the Mediterranean Sea. This land, much like the legendary land of Lebanon, which lay just to the north of Asher's, would be renown for its production of some of the finest and highest valued products in the region and the world! After Asher, Israel would speak of Bilhah's second born, named Naphtali. Naphtali's tribe would also receive good land in the North just to the east of Asher's. There, the tribe of Naphtali would live peacefully and go about its business in a way that was honorable and of good report. (Phili. 4:8)

Lastly, Israel would speak of his two youngest sons, both born through Rachel. Of Joseph, Israel would speak mostly of what had already happened but confirm

God would continue to bless Joseph and his family in all they did, in spite of those who might hate them! Of Benjamin, Israel would speak to the future territory occupied by his tribe being of strategic importance. Jerusalem would lay just on the southern border of its territory. Early on, this tribe was not known as a peaceful tribe and even fought with the other tribes of the nation to the point it was almost exterminated. In spite of this, a man from this tribe would later be named the first king of Israel. However, Saul would eventually be rejected by God for his disobedience, and David would be established as king instead. (I Sam. 10:17-24, 16:1-13) In spite of this, when the ten tribes broke away from the throne of David, the tribe of Benjamin was the one tribe which remained with Judah to form the southern kingdom.

In closing, Israel charges all his sons that they not bury him in Egypt but in Canaan, in the very same cave Abraham had bought from the sons of Heth, for a family burial place in the land. Abraham bought it at the time Sarah died, but Abraham, Isaac along with Rebekah, and even Israel's wife Leah had been buried in that cave. After setting all these things in order, Jacob lay back down in his bed and his life came to an end at the age of 147! Being in a position of leadership, Joseph would be the one to bestow upon his father the farewell kiss. Then Joseph would order that his father's remains be embalmed in the way the Egyptians did

for great individuals. It takes about thirty days to get through the initial treatment of a body being prepared for mummification. It takes another forty days using spices to bring the body to a right state being wrapped in linen cloth and placed in a sarcophagus or casket, which was likely of wood or stone. This seventy days of preparing the body would also be declared a national period of mourning. Thus, recognizing Israel's place as a great leader of a respected nation!

The cave Israel made them swear they would take his body back to is very much so in the heart of the nation of Israel's later territory. It is in that southern end of the land of Canaan, between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean where all the patriarchs sojourned. This would be the last territory held by the Jews before Judah was carried away to Babylon. This would also be the area of land the returning captives from Babylon would return to in order to re-establish the nation and rebuild Jerusalem. Joseph, because of his mourning for his father, would not be in a state to come directly before Pharaoh. However, he would send word to Pharaoh's house asking to excuse his absence as he went into Canaan to bury his father, with the promise he would return. By freely granting this request, Pharaoh was, once again, recognizing Israel's right to be a separate nation with a leader of their own who deserved the right to be buried with his fathers in the place of their true territory.

The respect for Israel would not end there, as a large procession was made from Egypt to Israel's burying place. This procession would include all the servants and dignitaries of Pharaoh's court. Of course, all of Israel's family went up to Canaan as well, but they left their possessions in the land of Goshen, indicating their intention to also return to Egypt. This great procession also included horsemen, chariots, and thus, all the fanfare meant for a king! As they traveled, they took a very direct route from Goshen, and up through the territory to the south of Hebron without concern for any Canaanite or other interference. Before they got to the cave, they stopped at a place called the threshing floor of the thorn. This is likely because it was a large open space, not planted with crops, and possibly a place of more general use, which did not belong to any specific Canaanite family. Here, they would spend seven days in a final mourning and tribute to Israel, and it would be such a great mourning that it would be noted by the surrounding Canaanites. They would know this person was of great importance, not just to his family but to the great nation of Egypt. The Canaanites would even rename the place calling it, "The Mourning of Egypt."

After this, his sons would fulfill his final request and lay Israel's body in the cave just outside Hebron, which Abraham had bought 170 years prior. The burying of the patriarchs of the nation of Israel was now complete, as the first three

couples through which God was to bring His chosen nation were resting inside. It would now be up to the twelve sons of Israel to go forward in growing into that nation, and as the words of Israel had shown, everyone of them would be a part!

All those who had traveled to Canaan for Israel's burial would now return to Egypt. However, Joseph's brothers were afraid the only thing that had kept Joseph from destroying them was that their father was still alive. They now feared Joseph's anger for what they had done to him in the past would surface, and as Joseph held such a high place in Egypt, he could do with them anything he wanted. The brothers would send a messenger unto Joseph telling him it was their father's wish that he forgive his brothers for what they had done. They also directly begged Joseph's forgiveness. The news his brothers thought the past mattered after all he had done, made Joseph weep. The brothers eventually come to see Joseph directly and fall at his feet offering to be his servants. Joseph re-emphasizes to them they had nothing to fear. While they wanted to do something bad to Joseph, God had used their actions to bring him to the position he now held. This had served to save many lives, and bring about the situation they were in where Joseph would be able to take care of his father's house and ensure they were cared for. This also facilitated the family staying together, and becoming the fulfill-

ment of the promise of God that they would be a chosen nation unto Him!

Joseph would live to the age of 110. He would see great great grandchildren born through his oldest son Ephraim, and great grandchildren through his youngest Manasseh. Before Joseph dies, he tells all those who are of the house of Israel that they are to remember, God has a plan for them as a people. Joseph tells them God will someday visit them and bring them out of Egypt in order to take them back to the land they had come from. The land his father Jacob, his grandfather Isaac, and great grandfather Abraham had lived in. Upon Joseph's death, he would be buried in Egypt, no doubt with great reverence as one of Egypt's greatest leaders. However, Joseph made those of his father's house promise that in spite of this, when the day came that they were to leave Egypt, they would take his remains with them! Joseph did not want to remain in Egypt as one of their great leaders. He wanted to be recognized as a part of the promise God had made to his fathers; and with this the book of Genesis comes to a close!

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