

Lessons from the Bones

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. 2Sam. 21:9-14 - The bodies of King Saul's sinful progeny and Saul himself were respected by Rizpah, who reminded David to respect the dead.
 - 1. The bodies and bones of the dead are to be treated with respect. They are not ornamentation or prizes or objects for contempt.
 - 2. The Law of Moses had strict requirements regarding the burial rites for Jews and for enemies killed in battle.
 - 3. Treating the dead with disrespect is the equivalent of treating the living judgmentally; both presume God's role as Judge
 - 4. "If we no longer treat the dead with dignity, what hope is there for the living?" (David Brennan)
- B. 1Kings 13:28-32 - The man of God and the old prophet in Israel; the old prophet did not appreciate him until after he died. He then asked to be buried in his tomb.
 - 1. The teaching and wisdom of humankind is often not understood or believed until one sees the corpse. A sudden awareness brought on by a great tragedy.
 - 2. "The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone." (Harriet Beecher Stowe)
 - 3. "Say not in grief he is no more - but live in thankfulness that he was." (Rabbinical Proverb)
- C. These are practical lessons from the bones; this sermon considers spiritual lessons from the bones.

I. JACOB AND JOSEPH'S BONES

A. Gen. 49:29-33, 50:23-26

B. Parashat Vayechi, the Torah portion at the very end of the Book of Genesis, begins with a promise and ends with a promise. The Torah portion describes the last years of Jacob in Egypt. It begins with the promise Joseph makes to Jacob: an oath that he will bury his father Jacob in the cave of Machpelah. As Jacob says: "Bury me with my fathers..." It ends with the promise that Jacob's brothers make to Joseph that when their descendants leave Egypt, Joseph's bones will accompany them. Joseph said: "Carry up my bones from here." What can be learned from these two promises?

- C. Jacob desired to be rejoined with the land on which he lived, and with those whom he loved most.
 - 1. The promise to Jacob looks to the past. The cave of Machpelah is the family tomb. Jacob desires to be rejoined with the land on which he lived, and with those whom he loves most.
- D. The promise to Joseph looks to the future.
 - 1. Because he is an important Egyptian official, Pharaoh would not consent to bury him in Canaan. Joseph's relatives promise, that when God causes the Hebrew tribes to leave Egypt, they will retrieve Joseph's bones and carry them to the land of Promise.

2. Joseph does not specify a burial site; he only says: "Carry up my bones from here." Joseph is concerned with the future nation and land God promised Abraham

E. Fulfillment - Ex. 13:19; Joshua 24:32

1. Joseph's Tomb is a funerary monument located at the eastern entrance to the valley that separates Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, 300 metres northwest of Jacob's Well, on the outskirts of the West Bank city of Nablus, near Shakhmu in the Late Bronze Age and later Biblical Shechem. The general area of Shechem is accepted as the resting-place of the Joseph and his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Joseph's tomb has been venerated throughout the ages by Samaritans, for whom it is their second holiest site.

II. LESSONS FROM JOSEPH'S BONES

A. Human mortality

1. No one can stay in this world forever - Gen. 5:24; 2Kings 2:11
2. The departure can happen unexpectedly - Luke 12:19-20
3. Human must live with awareness of mortality - Ecc. 7:2; Psalm 90:12

B. No human is indispensable to God's plan - Gen. 45:5, 7-8; 50:20

1. Matt. 3:9; Rom. 9:20-21; Ecc. 12:13

C. Hope for deliverance

1. Gen. 50:24; Ex. 2:23; Psalm 105:17-20, 107:17-20

D. God will do what He says He will do

1. Gen. 50:25; 2Peter 3:9; Heb. 11:11; Rom. 4:19-21

III. LESSONS FROM JESUS' TOMB

A. We cannot teach any lessons from Jesus' bones, because His bones did not continue to lie in the earth - Psalm 16:10

B. Immortality - John 11:25-26, 5:28-29; 1Cor. 15:22; 2Tim. 1:10; Job 14:14

C. Jesus is indispensable to God's plan - Heb. 10:11-14; Acts 4:12

D. His death and resurrection is the basis of our hope

1. Rom. 6:5; 1Cor. 6:14; 2Cor. 4:14

E. God will do all He says He will do

1. Luke 24:44; Acts 13:27-30; John 15:6-7; Matt. 10:22; 2Thes. 1:7-9