

When Joseph was taken into Egypt, he eventually rose to become a great and powerful man, as we read in the Scriptures. Yet what set him apart from his brothers in God's eyes was not his earthly greatness or the high position he attained. It was the orientation of his heart. Though he lived many years in Egypt—from his youth until his death—his heart remained firmly fixed on the land of promise given to his forefathers.

That is why, when he was about to die, he made the children of Israel swear an oath: when God would bring them up out of Egypt, they were not to leave his bones there but to carry them into the land of Canaan (Exodus 13:19). Joseph's burial request was a testimony of faith, looking beyond the temporary comforts of Egypt toward the eternal promises of God.

By contrast, his eleven brothers, though only visitors in Egypt, settled there as if it were their true home. They did not express the same longing to return to Canaan. The beauty and prosperity of Egypt had captured their hearts, so they did not yearn for the inheritance of their fathers.

Joseph inherited this faith from his father Jacob, who, even after a brief stay in Egypt, commanded his sons to bury him not there but with his fathers in Canaan (Genesis 49:29-31). He too viewed Egypt as a temporary dwelling, not his true home.

This same mindset distinguished Jacob from Esau. The heirs of God's promises never set their hope on earthly things; they look forward. They live as pilgrims and strangers (Hebrews 11:13-16), unaffected by wealth, positions, or the hardships of life. None of these can erase their anticipation of their eternal home.

Daniel, though exalted in Babylon to one of the highest offices, never ceased to pray three times a day with his windows open toward Jerusalem (Daniel 6:10). Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king of Persia, constantly inquired about Jerusalem's condition. When he heard of its ruined walls, he wept, fasted, and prayed for days (Nehemiah 1:4). For them, living in exile was an accident of history; their true identity remained tied to God's city.

These examples testify of a people who, though they died without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises, "saw them and welcomed them from afar, confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

What about us?

We too claim to be pilgrims, awaiting the coming of Christ and the redemption of our bodies. But do we truly meditate on our heavenly inheritance, the New Jerusalem? Or have the cares of this world dulled our longing?

We cannot claim to be busier than Joseph, who as Egypt's prime minister managed the food supply for the entire known world, yet still looked forward to the land of promise. Nor can we say we are more occupied than Daniel and Nehemiah, both top officials in foreign empires, yet they wept and prayed for Jerusalem, longing for the city of God.

Beloved, we await a city far greater than theirs—the heavenly Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2). Scripture tells us that “nothing impure will ever enter it” (Revelation 21:27). Only those who actively anticipate and prepare for that city will dwell there. It is not enough to say, “I am saved”; entrance into that eternal city is reserved for those whose lives demonstrate a longing for it (Luke 12:36).

Let us then live as those awaiting their Master's return. The time

is short. Soon the trumpet will sound, and we will be gathered to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). After that comes Christ's millennial reign, and ultimately the unveiling of the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).

May we never lose sight of that glorious hope. Let us be willing to lose all else, but not to miss that which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The Lord bless you richly

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