

## MEDITATION ON BURIAL

Recent news broadcasts have reported the increasing death count as the United States fights this war in Iraq. The enemy is inflicting much carnage with their use of the IED (improvised explosive device). Our soldiers are being maimed for life or, in many cases, blown into bits. Behind the scenes, there is a gruesome task that must be accomplished; the gathering of the remains to be sent home for burial. In like manner, it has also been reported recently that human remains are still being recovered, more than five years later, from the site of the Twin Towers tragedy. Identification of these remains is a top priority as the clean-up continues and many families remain hopeful that DNA matching will confirm the death of their missing loved one. There is something about the act of burial, even when it is largely symbolic, that brings closure.

My Bible reading in the book of Exodus takes me to the land of ancient Egypt; a land seemingly preoccupied with death. The great pyramids were built by the powerful and influential ruling Pharaohs to provide themselves an eternal resting place of comfort and luxury. Indeed, their lives must have been consumed with the prospect of their deaths to have engineered those monumental burial sites. After death, extensive procedures on their corpses and elaborate artistic preparation of their burial cases produced the mummies that we find so curious today.

When God destroyed the ruling Pharaoh and the mighty armies of Egypt at the time of the Exodus, I find it interesting that He chose to do so by burying them completely in the Red Sea. He could have chosen other means, such as lightning, hail, earthquake, or even by the breath of His mouth, but that would have left their remains. Burial brings closure, and throughout Scripture, in the marvelous mechanism of typology, Egypt is portrayed as a type of the world. So, just as the nation Israel witnessed the burial of the pursuing armies of Egypt, bringing closure to their life of bondage, the believer is to put away (bury) the things of the world. He is to love not the world (1 Jn 2:15), and not be conformed to it (Ro 12:2). He is to be separate (2 Cor 6:17) and maintain that separation (2 Pet 2:20), not looking back (Lk 17:32). Peter reminds us that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world (2 Pet 1:4) and John reminds us that all that is in the world is not of the Father (1 Jn 2:16). Our spiritual burial in Christ makes us dead to the things of the world. But what about our bodies? Must our bodies remain in Egypt (the world) even after death?

God's Word is full of wonderful revelations and we can find an answer as we consider the last request of the patriarch, Joseph, reflecting his concern about his body being left in Egypt.

### **Genesis 50:25**

And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and *ye shall carry up my bones from hence.*

Approximately 144 years later, Moses complied:

### **Exodus 13:19**

And Moses *took the bones of Joseph* with him:

This little fact about Joseph's bones should bring us great comfort because not even one of our bones will remain in this polluted, sin-filled world. And, the best part is, we need not seek the pledge of another man, as did Joseph, but rather, rest on the faithful resurrection promises of the Word of God.