

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Seven

Seven Days Mourning for Israel

When Israel died in Egypt, his descendants spent seven days mourning his death before he was buried: Gen. 50:8 "And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and 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 company. 10 And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. 11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan." Israel, whose name before had been Jacob, was the man who God chose to make into a great nation. He was the father to the nation known by his name. All his descendants could look to him as being their father and leader. God had greatly blessed Israel and subsequently many blessings had come upon his descendants because of God's blessing of Israel.

In the scriptures, mourning is often associated with death or a loss of something dear and precious to the mourner.

When God's children are born of the Spirit of God, they begin to mourn over their sinful condition and over their sins. They see themselves as ruined, hell-deserving sinners and unable to deliver themselves from their horrible condition. Isaiah related his experience as follows: Is. 6:5, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." The publican cried out for mercy because of his sins: Luke 18:13 "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

We would never rejoice over a savior until we mourn as a sinner. We are blessed to both mourn and to be comforted: Matt. 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Along with our mourning over the fact that we are sinners, we also mourn over what our sins caused our Redeemer to suffer. We read in Rev. 1:7 "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." This has reference to Zec. 12:10 "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. 11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." There had been a great king in Judah by the name of Josiah, who had clave unto the Lord his God and through him the land of Judah had great deliverance during the time of his reign had died while he fought to defend the border of Judah. There was a sore mourning for him by the Jews in the valley of Megiddon. He had been a great deliverer and defender of Jerusalem.

Similarly, but greater than Josiah, our Saviour, Jesus Christ has delivered us from our sins through his death. He suffered the awful wrath of God that our sins deserved for us on the cross of Calvary. His suffering could not be measured as he cried out, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" When someone dies to deliver you from the death that you deserved, you rejoice because of the effect of their actions, but you mourn because of what they had to suffer on your behalf. Therefore, it is with the children of God and their sins. We mourn over our sins, but we rejoice over the work of our Saviour who saved us from our sins. Then we mourn because of what he had to suffer in order to save us from our sins.

Just as the descendants of Israel mourned over the loss of their leader and the Father of their nation, so we as children of God mourn over the death of our saviour, leader, and creator and what he suffered for us in his death.