

## *God meant it for good...*

### **Genesis 49 and 50**

***David Watson, one of England's most successful preachers and university evangelists, died of cancer in 1984, aged 51. In his last year he wrote a book entitled 'Fear No Evil' (based on Psalm 23 v 4: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil"). He wrote:***

*What is the nature of death? There is much confusion about this, understandably, and the Bible significantly talks about 'the shadow of death'. We do not see clearly what it is, nor what lies ahead of us. Sometimes death is referred to as a horizon. A horizon marks the limit of what I can see now, but does not mark the limit of where I can go later. There is something beyond a horizon... For those who die in Christ the future will be unimaginably wonderful... We cannot know exactly what we shall be like after death. The apostle John put it like this: "It is not clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is" (1 John 3 v 2). That should be sufficient for us. Heaven is being 'with Christ' when we shall be 'like him'. There will be a wonderful sense of being fully in God's presence, in an unspoilt, unbroken atmosphere of love, joy and praise...*

***These last two chapters in Genesis record the deaths of Jacob and Joseph. Notice how each of them faces death...***

### ***Jacob blesses his sons; the death of Jacob***

- At the end of his life Jacob looks to the future, and blesses his sons by telling them what God would do. How does this demonstrate Jacob's faith? See Hebrews 11 v 21.
- Reuben was the eldest son – why did he forfeit his place as head of the family? Who took his place and why? As we approach Christmas, through whom was the promise of Genesis 49 v 10 fulfilled? Which son do you think received the greatest blessing?
- Jacob faced death without the New Testament hope of the Resurrection – why do you think he made such elaborate preparations for his burial?

### ***Joseph reassures his brothers***

- Why were the brothers so slow to believe that Joseph had forgiven them? What was Joseph's reaction? Do we similarly grieve God? How does Joseph reassure his brothers?
- "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good... the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50 v 20). How does this foreshadow the Crucifixion of Jesus?

### ***The death of Joseph***

- How much time elapsed between Jacob's coming to Egypt and Joseph's death? What took place during those years? What happened after Joseph's death – see Exodus 1 v 1 – 7.
- What did Joseph tell his brothers would happen in the future? What did he ask them to do, and how was the oath eventually fulfilled? See Exodus 13 v 19 and Hebrews 11 v 22.

*Prayer – Lord, as we look back over at the life of Joseph, help us to learn from his example of integrity, humility, practicality and service. Help us to be humble servants, loving you first and our neighbours second. Help us also to remember that people and families matter to you. Help us to care for others and always to want the best for them. In Jesus' name, Amen.*