

The Fullness of Christ

A Sight of Jesus in Death, or, "Jacob Sees Joseph and Desires to Die"

By [Octavius Winslow](#)

Joseph prepared his chariot and traveled to Goshen to meet his father. As soon as Joseph arrived, he embraced his father and wept on his shoulder for a long time. Then Jacob said to Joseph, "Now let me die, for I have seen you with my own eyes and know you are still alive." Genesis 46:29-30

And still *our chief and entrancing theme is Christ and His people*. And as the twilight shades of this exquisite page of patriarchal history grow more attenuated and luminous, our portrait assumes more distinctness of outline, beauty of form, glow and warmth of tint. We reach in the present stage of the story its most heart-felt and suggestive chapter- the meeting of the aged patriarch and his long-lost but recovered son, with the emotion it awakened and the desire it inspired. Each of these points- the MEETING, the EMOTION, and the DESIRE will be found highly illustrative of one of the most interesting stages of the Christian's spiritual experience.

The MEETING is that of Joseph and his father's house. The chief figure of the group is the aged sire. They had been sundered widely and long. The victim of a cruel imposture, for years he had nursed his loss in lonely grief, and was now approaching that goal of a good man's life, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." But his sun shall not set enshrouded in gloom and sorrow. Happier scenes and brighter hours are in reserve. A resurrection as from the dead awaits him. Crushed and long-buried hopes are about to bloom into life again, scattering flowers of brightness and perfume on his few remaining steps to the tomb.

Pause at this stage of the narrative, and receive the comforting instruction the God of Jacob would send you. The world is full of the divine idea of a resurrection. Nothing entirely perishes- nothing is wholly annihilated. *Nature* teaches it, as the earth throws off her wintry robe, and arrays herself in the vernal life and beauty of spring. *Providence* teaches it, as it wins back to us blessings we had for a while lost- health restored, wealth recovered, friends found again. *Grace* teaches it in the comforting and sublime hope of the gospel, that "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Take the consolation of this truth. You are, perchance, mourning the fading of manly vigor, or the loss of earthly substance, or the removal of some object of deep love whom God has

taken from you either by the stroke of death, the estrangements of life, or the vicissitudes of time- some being of your heart in whom you had garnered up its best affections and fondest hopes.

Oh! deem not your blessing irrevocably lost- entombed never to rise again. Ah, no! bright angels watch that grave, celestial sentinels guard that treasure. And when God shall have taught you, and you shall have learned, the blessed and precious lessons He designed to convey by the discipline, He will utter His majestic, all-commanding, all life-giving voice, "Come forth!" and you shall clasp once more the long-lost, long-buried mercy. Oh! let not the words again escape our lips, "All these things are against me!" Precious Jesus! I would enjoy You in all my blessings, and merge all my blessings in You. If You are my Life, my Portion, my All, then my interests for time and for eternity are safe.

Let us, then, contemplate the spiritual instruction which the meeting with Joseph conveys. How illustrative is this of the first meeting between Christ and the believing soul, when He comes in the chariot of His converting grace! If, in the life of the believer, there is an epoch traced by its solemn momentousness- an event never fading from his memory- a picture upon which he will gaze with deeper wonder throughout eternity- it is that which marks his first espousals to Jesus, that period of his life when Christ met him by the mighty power of His effectual grace, drew him to His feet, and there revealed Himself to him as his Savior. I am now but faintly portraying one of the most entrancing periods of your history.

Can you look back to the time when the Savior brought you to Himself- when His effectual grace called you- when the Divine Spirit quickened you, convinced you of sin and the condemnation you were under by the law- when Christ met you, manifested Himself to you, revealed His great salvation, awoke your heart to joy, inspired hope, and gave you to know that your sins were pardoned, and that your person was accepted? I ask, can you review that period of your personal history, and feel no deep and hallowed emotion? Whatever, then, may be the shadows that have since intervened, whatever may have been the misgivings, doubts, and fears through which you have passed, I do earnestly beseech you to carry back your thoughts to that blessed hour when Christ took you just as you were to be His disciple, and you took Christ just as He is to be your Savior, entering into a covenant with Him, and in that solemn hour you became His. O blessed espousals, when the soul, in the joy of its first love, can exclaim, " I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine!"

This meeting illustrates, too, the interviews between Christ and His brethren- those gracious and especial manifestations known only by the Church. It is a distinctive feature of the Christian religion, that it involves the manifestation of the Divine presence. A religion that is lacking in this, as one of its distinctive elements, is at best a dubious religion. It is an essential attribute of the religion of a true believer, that he realizes gracious interviews with Jesus; that he knows what it is to walk in personal converse with God; that at times he basks in the

sunshine of God's countenance. His religion is a religion of fellowship with the Father, of communion with the Son. He knows from personal experience what it is for Christ, his Joseph, to ride in the chariot of His love, filling his heart with holy surprise, joy, and delight. Oh! you require no tongue or pen of man to portray to you the blessedness of those interviews, or to describe the happiness of those meetings, when, like Amminadab, your soul is borne by faith and hope heavenward.

Blessed are you who are favored with these gracious visitations and precious manifestations, and who, with the surprise and gratitude of the disciples of old, exclaim, "Lord, how is it that You manifest Yourself unto us?" Oh! be not satisfied with a Christless profession of Christianity! Be not content with holding up the empty lamp of religious profession. Seek to obtain from Christ especial manifestations of Himself to you. See that this is an essential element of your religion: that you have frequent interviews with your Lord, gracious discoveries of His beauty and love, so that you may know what it is for your true Joseph often to make ready His chariot, and come to meet you, and grant you to feel His warm and loving embrace.

And is there nothing in this meeting of Joseph and his house to remind you of your solemn end, that most gracious and halcyon hour of your life when Jesus will make ready His chariot and come to bear you home to be with Himself forever? Death is not death to you who believe in Jesus. It has lost its name with its character. It is not death to die to him who has a living Christ enshrined in his soul. The mode of our transit to eternity is by a chariot- the chariot of Jesus; for, when the hour of our departure comes, it is Christ who will come for you, and not death- Christ, and not the king of terrors. It will be the true Joseph, conducting hence His brethren and His Father's house.

Why, then, turn pale, and tremble, when you think of death? Why do you shrink from the final dissolution? Why are you all your life time in bondage to its fears? Oh! fear not. Beloved, when the hour of your departure comes, you will find Jesus in His chariot of love, waiting beside your dying bed, and in that chariot He will bear you to glory. He will give you in that solemn hour of departure such longings and partings to be gone, such views of the coming bliss as shall make you exclaim, "Why do the wheels of His chariot tarry? Why does He not come to take my soul to be with His blessed self?" I beseech you then, dishonor not Him who has conquered death for you; grieve not His loving heart who is your resurrection and your life, by dwelling so much on death, forgetting in these sad musings Him who is your life, and who has conquered and triumphed over death for you. Oh! what will be the bliss, the glory of that moment, when Christ's chariot stands at your door, waiting to waft you home to be with Him forever!

But there is in this simple and affecting interview between Joseph and his family a chapter in the final history of Christ's kinsmen after the flesh, to which I must for a moment direct the reader's attention. A spiritual and intelligent mind will not find

it difficult to trace a striking analogy here between the history of Joseph and his brethren, and the history of Christ and the Jewish nation. A very great glory is deepening for the Jew, a "life from the dead" awaits that ancient and extraordinary nation. It will be in striking harmony with the history of Joseph. They will be a people who had sold their Brother into bondage; who had scorned, despised, and rejected Him; who, in consequence of that act, had been brought into a condition of famine, a state of moral destitution, suffering, and need. but lo! the tidings reach those who their Messiah has actually come that He is appointed Ruler and Judge of the earth. What will be the astonishment of the whole house of Israel- the brethren of Christ after the flesh, when the astounding fact is announced, when surmise deepens into conviction, and conviction matures into certainty, that He whom their fathers slew, whom for centuries they had scorned and rejected, is really alive! Oh, what will be their wonder, grief, and joy!

Methinks I see the hoary-headed Israelite just on the verge of eternity receiving the information that his Messiah has actually come, and is alive; and when he beholds the "wagons and provisions" which Messiah has sent to bring home to Himself His scattered brethren- in the preaching of the gospel, in the multiplication of Christian missionaries, in the wondrous movement of His providence on the mind of his nation, and in the outpouring of the Spirit of grace and supplication- how will the conviction and glory of the fact fasten upon and overwhelm his mind?

What, too, will be the mingled emotions of the whole Jewish nation, the gladness and sorrow of the people of Israel, when they thus shall rush into the embrace of their long looked for Messiah- shall "look upon Him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn?" And mark, this feature will distinctly characterize the final restoration of the Jews: it will not be the Jew seeking the Messiah- it will be the Messiah first seeking the Jew, just as Joseph first recognized his brethren, and revealed himself to them. Famine, indeed, will have prepared them for Jesus. The pressure of spiritual need and destitution will impel them to the Savior; but when they are brought into that state to receive Christ, Christ will then manifest Himself to them as their Messiah.

And all this will illustrate the grace, mercy, and love of Jesus, who, notwithstanding all the wrong that He received from His brethren- their hands imbrued in His blood, sold into slavery, and at last crucified- yet notwithstanding these wrongs and injuries, all is fully, freely forgiven, and He condescends to uplift the veil and manifest Himself to them as their long-lost Messiah.

Nor must I fail to refer to the promised and expectant day when Christ shall make ready the chariot of His glory and come the second time to meet His Church. I think no intelligent, spiritual mind can study the signs of the times, the state of the world, and not feel an overwhelming conviction that Jesus is already preparing the chariot of His second advent. All the events in the present history of the world indicate that the coming of the Lord draws near, yes, that He is at hand, and that

to those who look for Him He will soon appear "without sin unto salvation." Those who are waiting for the redemption that shall be accomplished in the spiritual Jerusalem, who, with outstretched necks, are looking and longing for His appearing, shall be the foremost among the gladsome ones who will lift up their heads and say, "My redemption draws near."

I would ask the unconverted reader of this page- Where will you be when the Savior shall thus come in the chariot of His glory and receive the Church to Himself? Oh, remember, if He has not come to you riding in the chariot of "His converting saving grace, you will be found among multitude Who shall wail with inconceivable grief in that awful hour, and will cry to the rocks and to the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. "Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all people of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." God grant that when your eye beholds Him, your heart, like that of Joseph's brethren, may bound with gladness, transport, and hope!

The second point for consideration is the EMOTION expressed. Joseph wept on the bosom of his father. "And he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." We have had occasion, in the process of this story, to remark upon the deep sensibility of Joseph's nature. God evidently fitted him, both by nature and grace, for the high mission he was to discharge. He had passed through a much chequered history, yet no adversity, no vicissitude, no sorrow had annihilated, or even had impaired, the fine sensibilities of his nature. In this particular he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ. We doubt not that Joseph was the most loving, tender, and sympathizing of all his father's house; that his was a heart of deeper sensibility, and his nature one of more exquisite tenderness, love, sympathy, than all the rest combined. Thus God fitted him for the high and peculiar position he was to occupy in the history of his family.

Our Jesus, the Elder Brother, centers in Himself infinitely more than all the tender love and sympathy found in His whole Church. It was necessary that by every possible human sensibility He should be qualified to be the gracious, sympathizing Head of a suffering body; and no truth is brought out in the history of Joseph more luminously, or exquisitely touching and beautiful, as portraying the Lord Jesus Christ, than the deep sensibility of Joseph's nature.

But as we have touched upon this subject in previous parts of this volume, and have discussed it at length in a separate treatise, we content ourselves with this passing reference, and hasten to conduct the reader to a consideration of the DESIRE of the patriarch- "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are yet alive." What a touching part of our picture is this! Methinks I see the aged patriarch clasping his beloved Joseph to his bosom, and with uplifted eyes exclaiming, "I have now no more attraction to earth, nothing more to bind me here; my cup of bliss is full; let me die, for I have seen your face, and am satisfied."

Such is the influence of a believing sight of Jesus upon the soul. *The sight of Christ weans from the creature, detaches from earth, disarms the mind of its fearful apprehension of dissolution, and inspires it with ardent longings to depart.* It is not wrong to wish to die if that wish is prompted by weariness with sin, a panting for perfect holiness, and a longing desire to be with Jesus. This was the experience of Paul, "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Cherish this desire meekly, patiently, prayerfully, yet ardently, as a holy thing nestling in your bosom. It will tend to smooth the rugged way, to cheer the lonesome way, to illumine the darksome way- the desire and the expectation of soon seeing Jesus. It will render you prayerful and watchful- will preserve your heart from settling down in creature comforts, building its nest below God and heaven- and will keep it in expectation of the blissful moment when Jesus shall beckon the spirit home.

What a spiritually instructive picture this! Death had no terror for Jacob. Not a fear disturbed his serenity; not a cloud dimmed his hope; not a vapor veiled his prospect. Such will be the experience of the departing Christian. When the hour actually comes- when heart and flesh are failing- when the damp sweat of death is upon the brow, and the glazed eye is fixing, and the pulse is sinking, and eternity is opening to the soul- the utterance faintly breathed from those pale lips will be, "Let me go, for the day breaks. Let me die, for I have Christ in my arms, the hope of glory."

Thus was it with good old Simeon, as he clasped the infant Savior in his arms "Now, Lord, let You Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." And thus, too, was it with the proto-martyr, Stephen. What was it that gave to his death a fascination so great? What imparted to him such tranquillity and composure amid the storm of stones, the shouts of his infuriated murderers, and the agonies of his mangled body? We read, "he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God!" And with this vision of Jesus streaming in glory around his departing spirit, he laid his bleeding brow on the bosom of his Lord, and gently fell asleep. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

"Jesus, the vision of Your face
Has overpowering charms;
Scarce shall I feel deaths cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms."

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