

Genesis 42-45

April 10, 2011

Introduction:

Joseph was sold as a slave at the age of 17. He became Prime Minister of Egypt at the age of 30. There have been seven years of plenty in Egypt in which Joseph has been storing food for the seven years of drought to come. We are now into the drought, maybe a year or so. It has been over 20 years since Joseph last saw his brothers and was sold into slavery.

42:1-17: What takes place in chapter 42 verses 1 to 17?

- The land of Canaan is experiencing the drought. Jacob sends 10 of his sons to Egypt to purchase grain. They bow before Joseph; he recognizes them but they do not recognize him (the Jews wore beards but the Egyptians shaved their faces). Joseph accuses them of being spies. They tell him that they are honest men, all sons of one man. They also tell Joseph that they have a younger brother at home and one who has died. He plans to hold nine of the brothers in jail there and have one return to Canaan and come back to Joseph with the younger brother. He puts them in jail for three days.

Why was Joseph particularly interested in the younger brother?

- Benjamin was Joseph's "full" brother; both of them had Rachel as their mother.

42:18-28: What takes place in verses 18 to 28?

- Joseph decides to keep one brother in jail and to send the nine back to return with the youngest brother (Benjamin). The brothers argue among themselves about God doing this to them because of what they did to Joseph. Joseph has been speaking to them through an interpreter, but he understands what they are saying among themselves in Hebrew. Joseph weeps but hides his sorrow from them. Simeon is kept and the others return to Canaan. Joseph has each of his brother's money put in the bags of grain that they had purchased.

42:21-22: Are bad things that happen to us connected to previous sins that we have committed?

- They can be; we do reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). God does discipline his children (Hebrews 12:6-11). But present problems may have nothing to do with previous sins or mistakes. See Luke 13:1-3. ¹About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. ²“Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?” Jesus asked. “Is that why they suffered?” ³Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. NLT The people here assumed that tragedy was a result of the people's sin; it was not.

42:29-38: What happens in verses 29 to 38?

- The brothers return to Jacob and tell him what took place in Egypt. Simeon is being held there and all of their money was returned to them in their bags of grain. Jacob is unwilling to lose Benjamin, his youngest son. Reuben tries to convince Jacob to allow them to take Benjamin but Jacob refuses.

43:1-15: What takes place in chapter 43 in verses 1 to 15?

- The famine becomes more severe. Jacob is forced to send his sons back to Egypt. They refuse to go without Benjamin fearing Joseph's wrath if they arrive without him. Judah tells Jacob they will all die if you do not get grain from Joseph. Jacob sends them back with gifts from Canaan and double the money they took on the first trip.

Why did Jacob send them back with double the money and the gifts?

- Not knowing how the money got back into their sacks on the first trip, they realized that they could have been accused of theft. The gifts would also hopefully cause Egypt's Prime Minister (Joseph) to show them favor.

43:16-34: What happens in verses 16 to 34?

- The brothers are invited to have a meal with Joseph. They explain to Joseph's house steward that their money was in their bags when they left Egypt and they were returning that money and had more money to purchase more grain. The steward tells them that God must have put the money in their bags. They plan a presentation to give Joseph the gifts that their father sent with them. Joseph asks about their father and then leaves the room to weep when he sees Benjamin. At the meal Joseph has his steward set the brothers in order from oldest to youngest. He also gives to Benjamin five times the amount of food that the others received.

44:1-13: What takes place in chapter 44 in verses 1 to 13?

- Joseph tells his steward to fill put the money back into the sacks of his brothers and to put his special silver cup into Benjamin's sack. Before the brothers were out of Egypt, Joseph's steward caught up with them and accused them of stealing Joseph's silver cup. They denied the theft, say that whoever has the cup will die, and the other brothers will become Egyptian slaves. The steward searched the bags from the oldest to the youngest. When the cup was found in Benjamin's bag, the brothers were devastated and they all returned to appear before Joseph.

It was not unusual for "magicians" and "wisemen" to use things to discern the future and wisdom. Joseph may or may not have actually used the cup for "divining"; he may have just acted as though he used the cup to appear to keep Egyptian traditions.

44:14-34: What happens in verses 14 to 34?

- The brothers all present themselves to be slaves of Joseph. Joseph says that only the one who had the cup (Benjamin) will become his slave. Judah then pleads for mercy. He explains to Joseph that Jacob is still heart-broken over the loss of his favorite son (Joseph) and will "die" if he loses Benjamin, the other son of Rachel. Judah offers himself as a slave and begs Joseph to send Benjamin and his other brothers back to Jacob.

44:30: What do you think when you read in verse 30 that Jacob's "life is bound up in the lad's life"?

- Our lives should only be "bound up" in the Lord. HE should be "our life" (**Colossians 3:4**), not parents, mates, children, or anybody else. Our lives should not be dependent upon anyone else. To say that we can't live without someone is to reveal that that person is our "god".

Why is it wise to make Christ our "life"?

- Christ is the only one who is incapable of disappointing or being unfaithful to us. See **2 Timothy 2:13 & Hebrews 13:5**. He is the only thing that we cannot lose. See **Matthew 28:20**. If we build our lives upon anything else besides Him, then we build it on something we can lose (people, things, health, etc.).

45:1-15: What takes place in chapter 45 verses 1 to 15?

- Joseph loses control of his emotions, weeping loudly as he thinks about his father Jacob. He sends all of the Egyptians out of the room and reveals his identity to his brothers. His brothers were in shock and then in fear as they remembered selling Joseph as a slave 22 years earlier (45:6). Joseph tells them that God sent him here years ago so that he could save his family during this drought. He tells them to go and to bring his father and their families to Egypt so that He can take care of them during the next five years of drought.

45:5,7-8: What do you think about what Joseph said in verses 5, 7, and 8?

- Joseph now saw his life from God's perspective. Joseph realized that life wasn't about him and his comfort; it was about God and God's purpose. He realized that God can use even the evil acts of men to accomplish His purposes. See Genesis 50:20. 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. NLT

Do most people see life from their own point of view or from God's perspective? Explain your answer.

- Most people live as though "life" (theirs and the lives of others) is about them. They live as though the primary goal in life is to experience pleasure, ease, and comfort and to avoid pain. They measure their lives, not by how God uses them, but by how much God *does* for them. They fail to see that God uses difficulty in our lives to accomplish His purpose in our lives. See Romans 8:28-29. 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. 29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. NLT

How much are you willing to suffer for God to use you or for others to be blessed?

- See 2 Corinthians 8:9; you know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. Matthew 5:10-12; 10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 11 "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way. & Acts 5:40-41. 40 The others accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go. 41 The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. NLT

45:16-23: What happens in verses 16 to 23?

- Pharaoh hears about Joseph's family and tells him to send for them and to give them the best of the land of Egypt. The brothers are given clothing and Benjamin is given clothing and money. They also send 20 donkeys loaded with food from Egypt.

What do you find to be amazing about what Joseph says about himself and what Pharaoh tells him to do?

- See verse 8. Joseph, the slave and inmate, is now a "father" to Pharaoh, lord over all of Pharaoh's household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh gives gifts to Joseph's family (donkeys, food, wagons) and he gives them the very best land in Egypt.

45:24-28: What takes place in verses 24 to 28?

- Joseph's brothers return to their father and report to him that Joseph is alive and is ruling Egypt. Jacob could not believe them until he saw the Egyptian wagons sent to carry he and his family back to Egypt. Jacob is now an old man and wants to see Joseph before he dies.

45:24: Why do you think that Joseph tells his brothers not to quarrel on the journey?

- It is amazing our ability to be petty and find things to be unhappy about in the midst of great blessings. These brothers had the joy of telling their father that his favorite son was alive; their families now would be well cared for in Egypt instead of possibly starving to death in Canaan.

45:27: What did Jacob's spirit "revive" from in verse 27?

- Jacob had grieved the loss of Joseph for 22 years (Genesis 37:34-35).