

# Genesis 42-45

It is my hope tonight that we will be able to make our way through Genesis 45 where Jacob will hear the news that his son Joseph is alive. The events that lead to this remarkable family reunion are filled with practical lessons to help us in our walk with Christ.

What one calls the interruptions are precisely one's real life — the life God is sending one day by day." #CSLewis

## I. Chapter 42 – The Encounter

Chapter 41 told the story of Joseph being raised from the prison yard to become prime minister of Egypt. The scene now switches back to Canaan where we learn of the devastating condition the drought has brought upon the land.

Genesis 42 will divide into four scenes based upon location

- Scene 1 - Canaan
- Scene 2 - Egypt
- Scene 3 - the journey home
- Scene 4 - back in Canaan

### Scene 1 - Gen 42:1-5

#### **In Canaan**

1-2

The famine has become so severe in Canaan that Jacob realizes his family is facing the threat of death. Having heard of a stockpile of grain in Egypt, he sends his sons to purchase provisions for the family.

It seems logical to conclude that because of the distance between the two nations they would purchase enough to last through the season in hopes the drought would break and rainfall would begin the following year

3-5

Jacob sends his 10 oldest sons to join what has become a caravan of

Canaanites heading to Egypt in search of grain.

Jacob does not send Benjamin for fear that something may happen to him.

Jacob may have been over protective of his youngest since the loss of Joseph or he may have not fully believed the story of what happened to Joseph and did not fully trust his sons. Whatever the case 10 sons set out on the 200-mile journey to Egypt.

## Scene 2 - Gen 42:6-24

### In Egypt

Once they arrived in Egypt they were directed to the governor who was in charge of the distribution of the store houses of grain. As would be the custom when approaching a man of great authority, Jacob's sons "bowed down before him" **unwittingly fulfilling Joseph's prophetic dreams**

Genesis 37:5-8

Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

42:7 declares that Joseph immediately recognized his brothers although they did not recognize him.

Shepherds in Canaan looked very different than dignitaries in Egypt. Joseph would be dressed as a prince in the royal garb, perhaps have a shaved head and wore eye makeup. Since his brothers occupation has not changed their features would be as dominant as they had been twenty years earlier.

### Joseph's reaction is twofold

#### 1. He remembered his dreams.

Psalm 105:18-19

They hurt his feet with fetters,

He was laid in irons.  
Until the time that his word came to pass,  
The word of the Lord tested him.

In light of Psalm 105 this must have been an overwhelming experience. These dreams had tried Joseph for the past 20 years. He had a promise from God that seemed impossible to ever be fulfilled. Joseph had to learn to walk with God and trust that it would be God, not him that would bring the promise to fruition.

**What a contrast between Joseph and Jacob** - Jacob strived so hard to bring about the fulfillment of his promises. He manipulated people and events to get what only God could give.

Remember Joseph was of the youngest of the children and was raised by Jacob after his encounter with God. Perhaps he learned from a converted father to wait upon the Lord and trust in Him. It is never too late to turn to God and have positive impact on those around us.

2. He acted like a stranger, spoke roughly to his brothers and accused them of being spies.

As the story unfolds we learn that this was by design and Joseph was testing the character of his brothers

Genesis 42:15  
In this manner you shall be **tested**: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

42:10

In response to being accused of being spies, the brothers responded that they are honest men only looking to provide for their large family living in Canaan

Genesis 42:13  
And they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more."

Joseph's actions may have stemmed from concern for the well being of his brother Benjamin. He may have feared the treatment they were giving him

since the ten had so greatly abused Joseph as a young man

**This is where the scheme is birthed that will lead to the events recorded in chapters 42-45**

## The first step

Joseph casts his brothers in prison for 3 days and declares that they will not be permitted to leave unless they bring Benjamin to him. This would be proof that they were brothers and not spies. Initially 9 brothers will be held and 1 sent home. Later the plan is changed and one will be held captive while the remaining 9 will be released. This seems to be testing whether the brothers have repented at all from their selfish and envious ways

42:21-23 records their reaction to this frightful turn of events.

**First** they express the guilt that plagued them ever since they jumped Joseph

Genesis 42:21

Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

**Second** they began to play the blame game.

Genesis 42:22

And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us."

**Reuben** is the one who withstood his 9 brothers desire to kill Joseph. He suggested capturing him and throwing him in a pit. This would give him time to think of a way to free him.

Genesis 37:21-22

But **Reuben** heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

It was **Judah** who convinced the others to sell him and lie about his death

Genesis 37:26-27

So **Judah** said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened.

However, even Reuben went along with the cover up rather than leading a search and rescue party to release his brother. This was the example Abraham set when he risked it all to rescue Lot from his captures in Genesis 14

Genesis 37:29-31

Then **Reuben** returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?"  
So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.

Joseph stood in the distance listening in to their conversation. Because they spoke Hebrew they assumed he did not understand.

This is the first he heard of Reuben's attempt to free him.

After weeping Joseph returned, took **Simeon** and released the other 9

It is not clear why **Simeon** was selected. He is the second oldest son of Jacob and a full brother of Reuben, Levi and Judah all of which came through Leah

Simeon and Levi were the ones who slaughtered the inhabitants of Shechem

He was remembered for his outbursts of anger

Genesis 49:7

Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;  
And their wrath, for it is cruel!  
I will divide them in Jacob  
And scatter them in Israel.

## Scene 3 - 25-28

Joseph had the sacks of each of the brothers filled with grain, secretly placed their money back in the bags and sent them on their way.

Joseph seems to be testing again the honesty of his brothers

At a rest stop along the way they stumble across the money that had been returned to them. Their reaction tells the story of their lives:

Genesis 42:28

So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

- Their hearts failed
- They were afraid
- They said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

I find it interesting that they are the ones who in a jealous and murderous rage kidnapped their own brother, sold him into slavery, lied to their father, and went on with life as though unaffected by their actions. Yet God is to blame when things begin to go badly for them.

I wonder what part of this could really be attributed to an unfair God?

## Scene 4 - Genesis 42:29-

Upon arriving home, the men recount the events to their father. To which Jacob responds

Genesis 42:36

And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

Having the benefit of being able to read the whole story we see that Jacob is clearly misreading the signs.

However it is often true that perspective is reality. How we see things will determine how we act. Jacob had experienced a series of very difficult trials, he lost his sons Joseph and Simeon and now he was in danger of losing his youngest son Benjamin. As these things built up around him he cried out in despair, "All these things are against me." What Jacob failed to realize is that the things that seemed to be working against him were the very things that God was using to work out the salvation of his family. All he could see was loss but God was at work behind the scenes preparing a work much greater than he could ever imagine.

Life is like that. We see things through the lens of our limited experience and knowledge. When something goes against what we perceive as "the plan" we become discouraged, upset, heartbroken or even angry. Sometimes, like Jacob we will forget God's promises and raise our voice to accuse Him of wrong-doing. If only Jacob could look beyond the walls of his limited vantage point and see what God was actually accomplishing then instead of despair his voice would be filled with praise. God has a different way, He wants us to look not beyond our experiences and into His promises. He wants us to believe Him when He said that "ALL things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

Regardless of what difficulties you are facing today, keep in mind that you cannot see the whole story. You are somewhere in the middle of what God is doing and He promises not to leave you but to work things out for His ultimate purposes.

Reuben once again attempts to rescue an imprisoned brother. Here he offers his most valuable possession as collateral

Genesis 42:37

Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

It seems highly unlikely that this is more than a figure of speech. Reuben is declaring that he will do everything possible to ensure the safe return of Simeon

## II. Chapter 43 – 2<sup>nd</sup> time is a Charm

Genesis 43 continues the story that began in chapter 42. The sons of Jacob having returned to Canaan with grain but without Simeon have failed to convince Jacob to allow them to return with Benjamin to rescue their brother.

It is likely that an entire season has passed because the driving force behind the events of chapter 43 is that the grain has once again run out and the famine has worsened.

### **This chapter has two scenes**

- Genesis 43:1-14 - In Canaan
- Genesis 43:15-34 - In Egypt

## **Scene 1 - Genesis 43:1-14 - In Canaan**

The season of rainfall came and went, the supplies purchased from Egypt have run out and the famine remained.

**Severe** - heavy, great, burdensome or oppressive

This compelled Jacob to once again send his sons to Egypt in search of grain

The bulk of this section is a dialogue between Jacob and Judah. Judah explains that they cannot return without Benjamin and Jacob expresses his anger at his sons for telling the Egyptian about his youngest son

In verse 10 Judah declares

Genesis 43:10

"For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

This statement is filled with theological and practical importance.

Essentially Judah is saying that if the difficult decision was made earlier the trip would now be a memory and the family would already be reunited. Instead all the work remained in front of them.

I wonder if this statement could be made regarding our spiritual condition? It seems that there are things in each of us that God has been desiring to do but we have been fighting against. We see the task as too big and don't think we will ever be able to accomplish it. Procrastination will never make a decision or a task easier. Waiting will only make things more

difficult. If you have been neglecting to put off sin or put on righteousness keep in mind that had you done it when God first asked the work would be finished and you would be already be tasting the sweet fruit of victory.

Don't wait another minute to get busy with what God has called you to.

Jacob was finally convinced to send his sons back to Egypt a second time. But he will not send them unprepared. Three things are sent along with them

**First**, Jacob had them bring the money that was returned plus twice the original amount.

**Second**, they gathered dried fruits, nuts and spices that were unique to Canaan as a gift for the prime minister

**Third**, and most importantly Jacob sent them out covered in prayer

Genesis 43:14

And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

## Scene 2 - Genesis 43:15-34

### Back in Egypt

Upon arriving in Egypt the brothers are immediately taken to Joseph, who unbeknownst to them has been eagerly awaiting their arrival

Joseph invites them to his home where a grand feast is prepared for them.

Their backslidden state and guilty conscience makes them extremely pessimistic. Instead of seeing he glass as 1/2 empty they see it as broken and shards of glass cutting into their skin, they say

Genesis 43:18

Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, "It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."

As soon as they had Joseph's steward alone they attempted to return the money and offer the gift basket. In a particularly revealing statement the Seward responds

Genesis 43:23

But he said, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

From this statement we gather that not only did Joseph remain faithful to God in his personal life, he also made a point to pass his faith on to others.

Clearly his servant knows the God of Abraham. This is striking in a culture that was known for its sea of idols

Joseph is a good case study in personal evangelism in the workplace. He was hard working, faithful and honest and used every opportunity he had to tell others about the Lord. We see this:

- In prison with the Butler and Baker

Genesis 40:8

"Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them* to me, please."

- In his first encounter with Pharaoh

Genesis 41:16

So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "*It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*"

- Here with the steward that worked for him

Genesis 43:23

But he said, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks

When Joseph finally arrives on the scene we see his prophetic dream being fulfilled once again

Genesis 43:26-27

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which

was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. Then he asked them about their well-being, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

When Joseph sees Benjamin for the first time his reaction is twofold

**First** he blesses his brother

Vs 31 - God (Elohim) be gracious to you

This should have struck the ears of his brothers, how an Egyptian prince would know the true and living God

**Second** he left the room to weep

Joseph sets an example for us of how to keep our emotions in check. We will read on 2 occasions of him leaving the room to weep, gathering himself and returning to the scene. There is no question Joseph would be dealing with a wide spectrum of emotions ranging from joy to anger and even perhaps feelings of bitter revenge.

We often face circumstances where our emotions are crying out for us to behave in an ungodly fashion. It is critical that we keep our emotions in check, after all living after the flesh and its drives is what we crucified when we chose to follow Christ. A lifestyle driven by emotion was laid to rest in the waters of baptism

The remarkable thing about men and women of God is not that they lack the same struggles we face, but that they choose to go through them in obedience to God and His word.

When Joseph enter the room the servants have set two tables are for the meal.

One table for the 11 brothers

One table for the Egyptians

The reason is explained in

Genesis 43:32

So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians

could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.

So often the Christian tries to fit into the world, we need to remember the world is not trying to fit into our worldview

Paul wrote

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In this verse there is an interesting play on words.

The words **conformed** and **transformed** are set against one another.

Conformed means to make outward changes while transformed speaks of a metamorphosis within.

The Christian is exhorted not to change his behavior to fit into the world but allow the word of God to transform his life

The chapter closes as Joseph sets the 11 brothers at the table according to birth order and places the largest helping in front of the youngest son and the all celebrated together

### III. Chapter 44 – 45 - Revelation

The party having ended, Joseph ordered the men's sacks to be filled with grain and released them to head back to their father and their homes. Unbeknownst to them, Joseph had also ordered one of his silver goblets to be put in Benjamin's bag. This was done as part of the testing process that began on their first journey to Egypt.

A company of soldiers led by Joseph's steward soon overtook Jacob's 11 sons. He immediately accused them of theft, an accusation they immediately denied and declared whoever's bag it was found in would become the slave off Egypt.

Genesis 44:12-13

So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and **the cup was found in Benjamin's sack**. Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

The remainder of her chapter explains how they were brought before Joseph and Judah explained the events that transpired in Canaan. Declaring the love Jacob had for Benjamin and the responsibility Judah took for his care he declared

Genesis 44:32-33

For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.' Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

## Chapter 45

It seems that the reaction of Judah to the threat on Benjamin's life was enough to prove to Joseph that his brothers had changed and thus passed the intricate test he put them through.

Joseph sent his Egyptian colleagues from the room and revealed his true identity to his brothers

Genesis 45:3

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.

Joseph then expresses the ultimate reason for all that had transpired in the past 20 years

Genesis 45:5

But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Genesis 45:7

And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

One of the most important themes from the life of Joseph is the importance of salvation.

We value things like personal pleasure, comfort and family above all else.

God values human life and salvation of souls above all else

He saw the experiences of Joseph, not as the hardships of life but as necessary to provide salvation for the family of Jacob and ultimately for the salvation of mankind.

Other ways we see the high value God places upon salvation include

- The counsels of heaven
- Sending his son
- Commissioning his servants
- Giving us his word
- Changing the lives and desires of his people to care for and reach out to those who don't know Christ

We can measure God's love for us by the fact that he has brought us into a setting where we can hear the message of Christ

Too often we go through life with the wrong perspective. We see hardship only as it affects us and our comforts and fail to see it as a small piece of a much larger puzzle. God is looking down at a world that he loves and wants to save and He sees each of us as playing a role in this great deliverance. Instead of complaining at the difficult hand we have been dealt we should be looking at life from the perspective of preservation and deliverance. How does God want to use our current situation to bring others to Christ?

Joseph was able to see all he went through as part of God's plan of salvation. Do you see your life that way? Are you using your current sphere of influence for preservation and deliverance?

