

GENESIS 42: JOSEPH MEETS HIS BROTHERS

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We all have had to repent many times in our lives
- B. Sometimes there is deep hidden sin that God needs to deal with in our lives
 - i. In those times, God will orchestrate circumstances to lead us to repentance
 - ii. Romans 2:4 ***Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?***
 - iii. This is what we will see God doing with Joseph's brothers

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Jacob found out there was food in Egypt
 - i. So he sent ten of his sons there to buy food
 - ii. Benjamin stayed in Canaan with his father
- B. Joseph's brothers came to him and bowed down before him
 - i. Joseph recognized them but they didn't recognize him
 - ii. He spoke roughly to them and accused them of being spies
 - iii. They denied being spies and insisted they were only there to buy food
- C. Joseph told his brothers he would only believe them if they brought their younger brother
 - i. Then he put them in prison
- D. After three days Joseph released all his brothers except Simeon
 - i. He told them to go back to their father and return with Benjamin
 - ii. He ordered his men to replace their money in their sacks
- E. On the journey home the men found the money in their sacks
 - i. They told their father everything that happened when they returned
 - ii. Reuben offered his two sons as collateral for Benjamin if anything would happen to him
 - iii. But Jacob refused to allow them to bring Benjamin to Egypt

III. WHEN JACOB LEARNED – V. 1

- A. Likely in the first year of the famine
 - i. Genesis 45:11 ***'There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.'***

IV. LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER – V. 1

- A. Same word as “learned” earlier in the verse
 - i. Same word as when Eve “saw” the fruit in Eden
 - a. Genesis 3:6 ***So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.***
 - ii. Essentially, Jacob “saw” there was food in Egypt
- B. Jacob’s sons probably knew there was food in Egypt as well
 - i. They clearly did not want to go there
 - a. It was a dangerous journey
 - b. They could end up being enslaved
 - c. It probably reminded them of what they did to Joseph

V. GO DOWN – V. 2

- A. First Judah went down from his brothers
- B. Then Joseph went down to Egypt
- C. Now ten of the brothers are going down to Egypt
 - i. This is not a good thing
 - a. They are leaving the land God had chosen for them
 - b. Even though God sent these events in motion for them to do exactly that
- D. Why is God removing them from the land?
 - i. Genesis 15:13-16 ***Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”***
 - a. Abraham’s family was to give a warning to the people of Canaan
 - i. God does not send judgment without a warning
 - b. Abraham’s family had become corrupted by the people of Canaan
 - i. They needed discipline before they could take possession of the land

VI. NOT DIE – V. 2

- A. Foreshadows the end of the story¹
- B. Reminiscent of the serpent in the garden
 - i. Jacob, the deceiver, saw the food and tells his sons they must eat in order to not die
 - ii. Eve saw the fruit and the serpent told her she would not die if she ate
 - a. Reveals how God even uses Satan's ill intent
- C. Follows theme of the Torah
 - i. Life and death
 - a. Deuteronomy 30:15-18 ***"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess."***

VII. TEN OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS – V. 3

- A. Judah had returned to the family at this point
- B. The confession of his sin resulted in his restoration to the family of God

VIII. IN EGYPT – V. 3

- A. Abraham fled to Egypt during a famine
 - i. Genesis 12:10 ***Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.***
 - ii. He shouldn't have done this
- B. Isaac wanted to go to Egypt during a famine
 - i. But God told him not to go so he didn't
 - ii. Genesis 26: 1-2, 6 ***Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you.... So Isaac settled in Gerar.***

¹ Sailhamer, J. H. (2017). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (T. Longman & D. E. Garland, Eds.). Zondervan.

- C. Now Jacob's sons are going to Egypt during a famine
 - i. But this is the God-ordained time for them to go

IX. HARM MIGHT HAPPEN – V. 4

- A. Benjamin was the only one of Rachel's sons left
- B. So Jacob was extremely protective of him
 - i. He didn't know God was already working in these events for years
 - ii. Partly because his sons deceived him

X. AMONG THE OTHERS – V. 5

- A. Because the whole earth is coming to buy grain
 - i. Genesis 41:57 **Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.**
- B. The image is of the brothers joining a flood of people from across the whole earth
 - i. All descending on Egypt
 - ii. Ties to the flood narrative show that this is of God

XI. GOVERNOR OVER THE LAND – V. 6

- A. Highly unlikely he would be present for most individual transactions with foreigners
 - i. But God is with Joseph to be present when his brothers arrived

XII. BOWED THEMSELVES BEFORE HIM – V. 6

- A. Just like in Joseph's dream many years earlier
 - i. Genesis 37:5-8 **Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.**
- B. His brothers had tried to prevent Joseph's dream from coming true
 - i. But they actually created the right circumstances for it to happen

XIII. LIKE STRANGERS – V. 7

- A. Same word as "recognized" earlier in the verse
- B. So Joseph recognized his brothers but treated them as if he didn't

XIV. SPOKE ROUGHLY – V. 7

- A. Or, hard

- B. Picture a hard, gruff, intimidating man speaking to Jacob's sons

XV. JOSEPH RECOGNIZED HIS BROTHERS – V. 8

- A. Repeated from verse 6
 - i. Doubling indicates this is God's plan

XVI. THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM – V. 8

- A. Joseph was a teenager when they sold him into slavery
 - i. His voice had probably changed
 - ii. He was clean shaven
 - iii. He spoke through an interpreter

XVII. JOSEPH REMEMBERED THE DREAMS – V. 9

- A. Could indicate Joseph's motives for what he is about to do
 - i. He isn't looking for revenge²

XVIII. YOU ARE SPIES – V. 9

- A. Joseph accuses them of being spies three times – v. 9, 14, 16
 - i. Joseph was tested three times through betrayal
 - ii. Now his brothers will be tested three times through accusation
 - a. Will reveal the repentance in their hearts

XIX. WE ARE HONEST MEN – V. 11

- A. They were not
- B. The next thing they said was a lie about their brother

XX. ONE IS NO MORE – V. 13

- A. They may have thought Joseph was dead
 - i. Or they may have been lying knowing he was enslaved
- B. Spoken last as if an afterthought
 - i. Provides a possible reason for Joseph's accusations
 - ii. He may have seen they were still unrepentant

XXI. SEND ONE OF YOU – V. 16

- A. This is the first of two plans set forth by Joseph
 - i. The number two reveals God's hand working in the story

² Sailhamer

- a. Genesis 41:32 ***And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.***
- B. Both plans require one who would save the rest
 - i. Connects to the theme of “one” in this chapter
 - a. Joseph is the one who would save the whole land – v. 6
 - b. Then he is the one who was no more
 - c. Now the one who would save but is no more will appoint another one to save the rest
 - d. Later, Jacob’s shortsightedness is shown when he says Benjamin is the only one left

XXII. IN CUSTODY – V. 17

- A. Similar to what they put Joseph through
- B. God will visit our unrepented sins back on us to produce repentance³

XXIII. I FEAR GOD – V. 18

- A. Joseph changed his mind because of his fear of the Lord
 - i. Just because he had authority didn’t mean he wanted to be overbearing
 - ii. Leviticus 25:39-43 ***“If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: he shall be with you as a hired worker and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God.”***
- B. He wanted his brothers to trust him

XXIV. LET THE REST GO – V. 19

- A. Joseph knew it was safer for them to go together than for one man to travel alone⁴
- B. They would have to return eventually to get more food
- C. Joseph wasn’t trying to be cruel or kill them
 - i. He just needed to find out if they were sincere and repentant

³ Armstrong, S. (2013, March 17). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 42A*. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_42a

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic: Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World: OT Commentary, Genesis 25-50*. David C. Cook.

XXV. YOU SHALL NOT DIE – V. 20

- A. Earlier Jacob told them they would live and not die if they go to Egypt
- B. Now if they leave one in prison they will live and not die

XXVI. WE ARE GUILTY – V. 21

- A. The three days in custody accomplished its purpose⁵
 - i. They were starting to recognize what they had done to Joseph
 - ii. The association came so quickly they probably thought of what they did to him often
- B. No direct connection between their sin and being in custody
 - i. This is the result of a guilty conscience⁶

XXVII. DISTRESS – V. 21

- A. They recognized God's discipline for what they had done
 - i. It seems unrelated to the current situation
 - ii. But they had gone down to Egypt and been put in prison like Joseph

XXVIII. DID I NOT TELL YOU – V. 22

- A. He didn't really tell them
- B. He said they shouldn't kill Joseph but just throw him in a pit
 - i. With the intention of rescuing him later

XXIX. A RECKONING FOR HIS BLOOD – V. 22

- A. Spilt blood must be paid for
 - i. This theme is common in the book of Genesis
- B. They must have assumed Joseph died in slavery
- C. This proves that Joseph's motive is not for revenge
 - i. He will bring good back on his brothers for their guilt
 - ii. Rather than the bad they deserve⁷

XXX. HE TURNED AWAY FROM THEM – V. 24

- A. Joseph saw it his brothers were beginning to see the gravity of their sin

XXXI. HE RETURNED TO THEM – V. 24

- A. We see Joseph's attitude change toward his brothers
 - i. After hearing Reuben's confession

⁵ Wiersbe

⁶ Guzik, D. (2018). *Genesis 42 - Joseph Meets His Brothers in Egypt*. Enduring Word. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-42/>

⁷ Sailhamer

- ii. He is no longer accusing them but he will now be generous toward them
 - a. He repented

XXXII. HE TOOK SIMEON – V. 24

- A. Joseph heard Reuben's confession and it caused him to weep
 - i. So he took Simeon instead of Reuben, the firstborn

XXXIII. JOSEPH'S THREEFOLD ORDER – V. 25

- A. Fill their bags with grain
- B. Replace every man's money in his sack
- C. Give them provisions for the journey
- D. Indicates the brothers will now be tested to see what they do with Joseph's generosity

XXXIV. REPLACE EVERY MAN'S MONEY – V. 25

- A. Joseph had forgiven his brothers
 - i. So their money was no good to him

XXXV. GIVE THEM PROVISIONS – V. 25

- A. Joseph showed generosity even though his brothers hadn't repented yet

XXXVI. HE SAW HIS MONEY – V. 27

- A. This forces the question of what to do with the money
 - i. It is a test that is going to reveal the repentance in their hearts or not
- B. We can ask the same thing of ourselves

XXXVII. GOD HAS DONE TO US – V. 28

- A. We know it was Joseph who put the money in their sacks
 - i. But the brothers' perspective reveals God's hand in these events
 - ii. God is working through Joseph to bring the brothers to repentance

XXXVIII. THEY TOLD HIM ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED – V. 29

- A. Continues the theme of doubling
- B. Last time they told their father what happened they lied
 - i. This time they tell him everything

XXXIX. WE ARE HONEST MEN – V. 31

- A. They were at that moment
- B. But they were still lying about what happened to Joseph

XL. ONE IS NO MORE – V. 32

- A. Previously, the brothers told Joseph about their family in verse 13

- i. They mentioned that “one is no more” at the end
- ii. After mentioning the youngest
 - a. Like an afterthought
- B. Now, they re-tell the story to their father
 - i. This time they mention Joseph before Benjamin
 - ii. Could be indication they are starting to recognize their wrong⁸

XLII. YOU SHALL TRADE IN THE LAND – V. 34

- A. Joseph never said this
 - i. He actually said, “you shall not die”
 - ii. Though the ability to trade is implied
- B. Minimizes the danger they were actually in by going to Egypt

XLIII. THEY WERE AFRAID – V. 35

- A. Because now they could be accused of theft
- B. Earlier Joseph expressed that he fears God
 - i. Now his brothers are learning to fear God

XLIV. YOU HAVE BEREAVED ME OF MY CHILDREN – V. 36

- A. An indication Jacob believed his sons were responsible for Joseph’s “death”
 - i. They returned from Dothan without Joseph but with more money than they left with
 - a. 20 shekels of silver from selling Joseph to slave traders
 - ii. Now they returned from Egypt without Simeon and more money than they left with

XLV. JOSEPH IS NO MORE – V. 36

- A. Jacob believed a lie
- B. The grief caused by that lie resulted in strange actions by Jacob
 - i. He would not allow his sons to return with Benjamin to Egypt

XLVI. SIMEON IS NO MORE – V. 36

- A. Compared to Joseph being no more
- B. Simeon was as good as dead because Jacob would not allow his sons to return

XLVII. ALL THIS HAS COME AGAINST ME – V. 36

- A. Jacob’s complaint is compared to Joseph
 - i. He encountered far worse circumstances but never complained

⁸ Sailhamer

- B. Romans 8:28 ***And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.***

XLVII. KILL MY TWO SONS – V. 37

- A. Reuben was obviously trying to convey confidence they would return with Benjamin
- B. But this is not helpful

XLVIII. SHALL NOT GO DOWN WITH YOU – V. 38

- A. Jacob clearly preferred Benjamin over Simeon
 - i. The possibility of Benjamin's death was worse than the certainty of Simeon in jail forever

XLIX. HE IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT – V. 38

- A. Benjamin was the only one of Rachel's sons left
 - i. Jacob always showed favoritism to Rachel's sons
 - ii. Now he is preferring Benjamin over Simeon
- B. Unclear how old Benjamin is at this point
 - i. Likely a teenager or young man
- C. Jacob is refusing his family more food by refusing to send Benjamin to Egypt

L. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Jesus's resurrection is foreshadowed
 - i. One man is given as a ransom for his brothers
 - ii. The brothers are set free on the third day
 - a. They are given life – v. 18
- B. There will be a seven year period of testing for Israel to bring them into repentance
 - i. Daniel 9:24-27 ***“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half***

of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

- ii. The Messiah will return after the final seven year period

LI. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. Have you ever avoided doing something because it reminded you of something from your past? How did you deal with that situation?

- B. Why is it important for us to confront our past sins and failures?

- C. Have you ever had to unexpectedly face someone who had harmed you in the past? How were you able to see God work in that situation?

- D. What are some ways in which the fear of God can drive you to be more just and fair in the authority that you hold?

- E. Why do you think God waited so long to discipline Joseph’s brothers for what they did to him? Do you think it was fair for God to wait this long? Why or why not?

LII. FURTHER STUDY

- A. What do you think the connection is between Genesis 42:7-9 and Genesis 9:22-27?

- B. Why did Reuben believe they were facing the consequences for murdering their brother?
See Genesis 9:5-6.

- C. Why did Jesus charge his generation with the blood of all the prophets in Luke 11:45-52?
What parallels to Genesis 42 do you notice that give you clues?

- D. Why does God give wicked people time to repent? See 2 Peter 3:8-10.

- E. What does Joseph's repentance in verse 24 demonstrate about God's nature? What should this produce in us? See Romans 11:19-22.

F. Who is Reuben being contrasted with in verse 37? Why do you think this contrast is here?
