

Lesson 49**Joseph: Man of Wisdom and of God**

Genesis 44:1-45:28

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The life of Joseph needs to be studied so that the true believer can see how God providentially deals in the lives of His own. Every believer has the promise of God's providential care (Rom. 8:20).

B. The life of Joseph needs to be studied so true believers can pattern their lives after Joseph, who knew how to trust God in crisis and prosperity. All Old Testament history was written for the edification of the Christian (Rom. 15:4).

II. JOSEPH: MAN OF WISDOM 44:1-34

A. Joseph Conceals His Identity (44:1-4). Joseph's brothers had come the second time to Egypt to buy food, bringing Benjamin with them. Joseph orders that their sacks be filled with provisions but that in Benjamin's sack he purposely had his special silver-drinking cup hidden. Joseph's plan is to falsely accuse them to test their reactions.

B. Joseph Has His Brothers Arrested and They Plead Innocent (44:5-9). The brothers pleaded with the servant and said that they had stolen no cup. They were confident that none had done this thing and believed that, if any of them were guilty, the thief should die and the rest made slaves. NOTE. It says that Joseph had the power of divination (44:5) and he claims this power (44:15). This was a form of pagan witchcraft and sorcery, whereby a person could prognosticate or foretell the future. Joseph had the reputation as one who could tell the future, but he received his power from God, not demons. Joseph's Egyptian name meant "revealer of secrets" and most likely the Egyptians were of the opinion that Joseph was a fortune teller like their pagan wise men, but Joseph's ability to prognosticate came from God alone.

C. Joseph's Cup Found in Benjamin's Sack (44:10-15). Upon discovering the cup in Benjamin's sack, all the brothers rent their clothes out of grief and righteous indignation. NOTE. Joseph's plan was to test his brothers to see if they would display distrust and turn away from Benjamin as they did Joseph in his early years. Would they sacrifice Benjamin for their own safety?

D. Judah's Plea to Joseph (44:16-34). Judah was the spokesman for the whole group (44:16). He made an eloquent defense in Benjamin's behalf and offered himself in place of Benjamin as Joseph's slave (44:33). Judah, who just a few years before, was unconcerned about the feelings of his father, was now concerned and knew that Jacob would die if anything should happen to Benjamin (44:29-31, 34). NOTE. Grace and time had changed the characters of Judah and his brothers. They were now willing to pull together and they stood together in Benjamin's behalf. They were learning about love (John 13:34-35).

III. JOSEPH: MAN OF GOD 45:1-28

A. Joseph Reveals His Identity to His Brothers (45:1-4). The eloquent plea of Judah, which apparently was the expression of all the brothers, moved Joseph to tears and he was overwhelmed with emotion. The brothers being fully tested, Joseph had no reason to conceal his identity any longer.

1. Joseph was a man of compassion and knew how to weep. He wept in the privacy of his family and did not make it an outward display. While all Egyptians were removed from the room, they heard Joseph weeping (45:2).
2. Joseph's first words to them were, "Doth my father yet live?" He was always concerned about others and had deep love for his father who loved him. NOTE. Real love is something people never forget.
3. The brothers were terrified. They were confused with grief in the emotion of the situation, and simply speechless (44:3). Joseph in a tactful way reminds them that he was the one they sold into Egypt, but he was in no way bitter against them (cf. Rom. 12:19-21).

B. Joseph Gives the Glory to God (45:5-8)

1. Joseph told his brothers not to operate under a guilt complex for what they had done to him, for God had sent him to Egypt (45:5). What they had meant for evil God had meant for good (50:20). God had permitted all these happenings for purpose. NOTE. Notice how Joseph gives the glory to God: God sent me (45:4, 7-8); God made me lord of all Egypt (45:9); God did this to preserve you (45:5, 7). NOTE. Joseph was a man of God and God was in all of his thoughts (cf. 39:9; 41:16; 50:20). Joseph had learned that all that he was and had was due to the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10).

2. The words "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth" (45:7) are significant, for it shows Joseph's belief in the Abrahamic Covenant. Joseph predicted that God would bring Jacob's family back to the Promised Land (50:24-25). He showed his personal faith that there would be a future in that land by asking that his bones be carried back to the land and the children of Israel never forgot that request (Exo. 13:19; Josh. 24:32).

C. Joseph Tells His Brothers to Return With Their Father to Egypt (45:9-15): The brothers were to return to Canaan and tell Jacob of all of Joseph's glory in Egypt (45:13) and then return to Egypt with Jacob to avoid the yet five years of famine. NOTE. Joseph, a powerful and famous man, was not ashamed of his father, who at that time practically had nothing. However, Joseph knew that in God's eyes Jacob was greater than he because Jacob was Israel, God's chosen to carry out the making of the Hebrew nation.

D. Pharaoh Extends an Invitation to Jacob and His Family (45:16-20). Pharaoh received the news that Joseph had found his brothers and father, and invites them to make their home in Egypt. They were not to "regard their stuff" (45:20); that is, they were not to have any anxiety about the property they were leaving behind, since everything in Egypt would be at their disposal.

E. Joseph's Brothers Bring the Good News to Jacob (45:21-28). Joseph gave the brothers many wagons and provisions and they went on the way. The brothers came to Canaan and told their father that Joseph was alive. At first, Jacob did not believe it. Jacob had to hear the whole story, and when he saw the wagons he believed it. Jacob was never very good at believing without seeing; therefore, God impressed him with the wagons. Jacob's spirit was revived. He received a new lease on life. Jacob covenanted to see his son before he died. NOTE. Just a few months before Jacob was so depressed he was ready to die (42:36) but now that he comprehends the plan of God he is exuberantly happy with a new will to live. When things seem very black it is usually just a short while and the sun will come shining in. We must believe that God is in control of all things, even in the time of crisis. NOTE. Jacob thought that he would return to Canaan after he saw Joseph. Little did he know that the children of Israel would stay in Egypt for 400 years? God was preserving the nation of Israel but Jacob did not understand it as such, for no human being knows the future. God alone knows it, for His plan is perfect. How significant it is that our actions are left perfectly free, and yet all the while we may be unconsciously accomplishing the great and far-reaching purposes of Divine providence.