

JANUARY 20

Genesis 41:17-42:17

Genesis 41:17-57

Vs. 17-33 Knowing that the dream came from God makes it a very interesting dream. What stands out to me is the length. Fourteen years is a long time.

Vs. 34-36 Joseph was a "full-service" dream revealer. I'm sure this was part of God's working too.

Vs. 37-45 Talk about "rags to riches!" This deal included power, authority and a wife. Isn't it interesting that God had this planned all the time and never told Joseph? God was making Joseph a certain kind of man that He could trust with this kind of power and responsibility. Joseph never knew what was coming and he could have given up; but then, God kept just enough favor and blessing coming, to keep Joseph encouraged through his trials. And He can do this with us. His wisdom and working are beyond our comprehension, or as Paul said in Romans 11:33-36, *O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

Vs. 46-57 In this summary of the fulfilling of the dreams and the success of Joseph's work, there is some very interesting information.

V. 46 Notice how old Joseph was when he entered into service. He was sold when he was 17 and now he is 30. He was a slave for 13 years. The years with Potiphar and in the prison taught Jacob skills. He learned the language, the customs, the business of buying and selling, and he learned the laws. But he was still a slave and still suffered under the injustice of what his brothers had done to him. And then, there was the injustice of what Potiphar's wife did to him. I'll bet that was a long 13 years.

Vs. 50-52 What does the naming of his children tell you? We make Joseph out to be a superhero, and he was, sort of. Still, I'm not getting the idea that he knew yet what God was up to. The names show that Joe was still grieving and healing, and this, many years later. The year before the famine means that Joe was now 36 and hadn't seen his family for 19 years, over half of his life.

V. 57 All the "world" in that area of the world knew there was grain in Egypt. Egypt would have been a hopping place.

Genesis 42:1-17

Time has passed. To see how many years it was now since Joseph had seen his brothers, peek ahead at Genesis 45:6.

Vs. 1-5 After all these years, we finally hear something about Jacob and the family. Actually, the adventures of Judah (chapter 38) have taken exactly as long. What does v. 4 suggest to you? In Jacob's thinking, Benjamin was the only remaining son of the Rachel side of the family. By now all of the other men had their own wives, families, tents, servants and herds.

Vs. 6-17 This is Joseph meeting his brothers.

V. 9 What is the importance of this verse? What does this tell you about Joseph and his thinking the past ___ years? It does not seem to me that Joseph anticipated seeing his brothers or had given the significance of his past dreams any thought until now.

Why do you think Joseph is treating them so roughly? I don't think it has anything to do with revenge. The last time Joe saw them, they were murderous, merciless men.

We'll put more of this together tomorrow. It is enough to say that, as disciples, God doesn't do everything in our lives at once. We often look back and say that we should have known or understood something at a certain time in our lives, or we wish we had. The Father is a good teacher. His plan is vast and He teaches us in His time. He opens our eyes according to His timing and plan. In the meantime, even in our struggles, we trust Him and follow in the harvest.

Matthew 13:24-46

It would be a good exercise to think of how all of these parables fit together. The parable of the sower comes first, then the wheat and the weeds, then the mustard seed, then the ditty on parables, then the explanation of the wheat and weeds, then the hidden treasure and finally the pearl of great price. I think I have it figured out, but your exercise will benefit you more than my ideas, and don't try to Google and find someone else's explanation. Do it yourself.

Vs. 24-30 The wheat and the weeds. Jesus gives the parable here and then the explanation later. This parable is similar to the parable of the net and the fish later, but this story has the twist of there being an enemy. So, what do you think the role of the enemy is here? The weeds don't keep the wheat from being harvested, but they do make the growth of the wheat more difficult and it makes the harvest more work. Ultimately all the wheat will get into the barn and all the weeds will be burnt. It seems like the impact of weeds is the difficulty during the present time regarding the growth of the wheat and the kingdom.

Vs. 31-32 In Jesus saying that the mustard seed is *the smallest of all seeds*, I don't believe He is trying to make a scientific statement. In the experience of the people listening, the mustard seed was a very small seed, probably the smallest they had to deal with. What do you think Jesus is teaching about the kingdom in this parable? It seems like the point is that of a small beginning being contrasted with the huge result. I've heard some people suggest that the birds are evil, but I don't see that. In other places a king's sovereignty and power is expressed in his ability to provide shelter to the birds and animals.

V. 33 Again, this is a positive expression of the kingdom being small in its beginning and size, but permeating everything though unseen.

Vs. 35-36 As Matthew has done before, he is showing that Jesus was fulfilling the words of the OT prophets. It is interesting to see who this prophet was. Look at Psalm 78:2.

Vs. 36-43 This is pretty straightforward, dealing with the end of the Tribulation and the second coming of Christ. Still, notice that the time of the impact of the parable is now and the difficulty the weeds present to the growing wheat and the growing kingdom. The angels won't break into a sweat doing their part. Notice in v. 43 what happens to the children of the kingdom once the weeds are removed. I think that helps show the point of the parable.

V. 44 This is pretty easy to understand. Is knowing Christ worth everything? Paul thought so in Philippians 3:8.

Vs. 45-46 Ditto. Isn't it interesting that the dream to Pharaoh was repeated twice using different figures? Here we are given something similar. That it is said twice means that it is certain and true, *fixed by God*. (Genesis 41:32)

Given the importance of understanding what Jesus is saying, as disciples we can ask ourselves if we are giving enough of ourselves to growing in Jesus and serving Him in the harvest. Is knowing Christ the most important thing in our lives, visible in all we say and do and spend our time on? The hidden treasure and the pearl are an invitation to a willing heart. I've been following for 35 years, and although I agree with the "give everything" teaching, I still catch myself holding back from really giving everything. These parables are a constant invitation and

exhortation to give everything and follow our Lord in the harvest. That's what disciples do. Or as someone has said, "To give all that you are for all that He is; this is the gospel according to Jesus."

Psalm 18:1-15

Vs. 1-6 As with most of the psalms so far, the first six verses are great encouragement and will resonate with those who have been in the press and have desperately needed the Lord to rescue them.

Vs. 7-15 These images are of God coming to David's rescue. What do you see in the images that follow, that is interesting to you? To me this was figurative of how God vindicated and brought David to the throne, but it looks literal with regard to the events in Revelation before the Son comes to His throne.

Proverbs 4:1-6

These verses seem autobiographical. Solomon is recounting David sitting down with him and talking.

It seems to me that Solomon wrote this during a period when he was close to the Lord, but he drifted later in life. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, did not heed this advice. The inspiration of the Spirit and the truth of God's words remain, even though the messenger didn't heed his own message. Here's what Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16, *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.* (RSV "and your teaching") *Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

It makes sense, doesn't it, and it really applies to us as disciples making disciples.

The other thing that hits me and applies to us as disciples is v. 6, *love her, and she will guard you.* Apparently in Solomon's later years, he loved something else.

For us as disciples, for our entire lives following Christ, there is no more secure place on the planet than abiding in and loving our Lord, staying in His Word, working in His harvest. Life situations change. Our ages change. Our Savior, His love and His salvation remain the same. It is our love for Him and our hope in Him that keeps us.