

JANUARY 22

Genesis 44-45

Genesis 44

Vs. 1-13 As you see this adventure unfold, you can guess what is coming. The important thing to figure out in all of Joseph's actions since meeting his brothers is what he wanted to "test" or find out. Making his brothers suffer was not his intent. He had to see what was in them. Their sign of grief in v. 13 is important. They could have all gone home without Ben. This shows a change in them. At one time they turned their backs on Joseph. Now, they were willing to go back to Egypt and face possible imprisonment for the sake of Benjamin. This is hypothetical because it never happened, but I'll bet if the brothers had still had their former murderous attitudes, this would not be a story of forgiveness and reconciliation. This is what Joseph had to know before he could reveal himself to his brothers and before there could be complete forgiveness and reconciliation. Their actions and attitudes were as good as saying, "We're sorry."

Vs. 14-17 Notice how this portion begins and who becomes the representative of Israel, *Judah and his brothers*. Verse 16 seems to be a confession of sorts. Again, they are offered the opportunity to turn their backs on Benjamin and go home.

Vs. 18-34 This is the offer of Judah to take the place of Benjamin. Except in the case of Eliezer, Abraham's servant, it is hard to think of a longer block of dialogue from any one person. Judah is showing his heart here.

Vs. 27-28 Jacob's heart still held Rachel as his main wife. God had a different view. Jacob's favor of Joe and Ben was not a balanced part of his family, but that was Jacob.

Vs. 32-33 In essence, this is what Jesus, the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah," has done for us.

Forgiveness is one thing, and the process of restoring trust in a relationship is another. I have known Christians who demand forgiveness to get the monkey of guilt off their backs (not to correct the wrong they did), and then demand the relationship should be instantly renewed. Then they point to this story. Without the process of confession of wrong and repentance, even God does not forgive. Repentance can begin the process of restoration, rebuilding and proving trust, but rebuilding trust is also a process. When we as Christians explain forgiveness as "just forgive and forget," people think we're crazy. If we point to the story of Joseph and say "forgive and forget like Joseph did," we confirm that we are crazy and we haven't read or understood the story. If Joseph's brothers had been arrogant or dishonest here, with no real sense of guilt or repentance, it would have been a much different story. Joseph and God made them prove themselves.

Genesis 45

Vs. 1-3 They had been in such awe of Joseph as the Egyptian tyrant, you can imagine their utter shock and dismay, especially if his eye makeup started running. (Egyptians in the movies always wear a lot of eye makeup.)

Vs. 4-15 When Joseph calls them near, some people suggest that he showed his brothers he was a Hebrew. An Egyptian wouldn't have been circumcised.

V. 5 This has to be one of the greatest verses in the OT. It is in this sense that Joseph is a type or illustration of Christ. In the same way that the brothers sold Joe, mankind "sold" Jesus. Yet in both of these situations, in spite of the sin of the perpetrators, God used what they did to bring salvation.

I don't think Joseph always understood why the Lord had sent him to Egypt. I'll bet it wasn't until he saw his brothers bow down, and he remembered the dream, that the process began. But, the

process began in a heart that was fully humbled and yielded to God. I don't think Joseph had any super power of spiritual insight. His heart was close to the Lord, and therefore, he was very teachable. If "close to the Lord and teachable" is a superpower, you can have that one too. Being in the Word daily helps you get there, just like you're doing.

V. 6 Notice the time marker here. Joseph was sold when he was 17 and came to power when he was 30. After those 13 years of servitude came the seven years of plenty and now two years of famine had gone by. Joseph was now 39 and hadn't seen his family for 22 years.

V. 15 I'd love to know what the brothers said to Joseph. Hopefully they apologized and asked for forgiveness.

Vs. 16-20 God just kept pouring on blessing. The Pharaoh himself invites Israel to live in Egypt and to possess the best land. Joseph didn't even have to ask.

Vs. 21-28 I always smile when I read v. 24. I'm sure Joseph expected them to look back and blame one another for the idea to kill or sell Joseph. I could imagine Reuben saying, "Didn't I tell you?" And then someone else saying, "I was planning on sneaking back and letting him go too. Hey, whose idea was it to sell him anyway?" It was all lost now in forgiveness and God's saving purpose.

V. 27 I wonder what was going through Jacob's mind when he saw this vast caravan, with moving trucks, pulling up to his tent.

Notice also that Jacob's spirit comes alive again. It is evident that Jacob had been heartsick for 22 years. That is a long time to suffer like this with a dead heart. I'm not saying anyone deserves this, but God really did not cut Jacob much "slack" in dealing with Jacob's own sins against Esau. And we've still never heard Jacob say he was sorry for anything he did to Esau. God is not mocked. As a man sows, so shall he reap. That is true even if you are a child of God. For us as disciples, we cannot think that because we love the Lord and work in the harvest, He will let us get away with what He knows is wrong. We can persist and disobey, but look what it did for Jacob.

Matthew 14:13-36

Vs. 13-21 The Lord has ways of teaching many things at one time. In what Jesus did here, He was showing the masses that He was the Messiah. The full impact of this event is seen in John 6 where Jesus calls Himself *the bread of life*. But more than that, you can look at this entire event as a training lesson for the Twelve.

Jesus will refer to this feeding again to show the disciples they didn't need to be anxious about their lives. But one not so obvious lesson here is that Jesus showed the disciples what to do with 5000 people. You wonder how the disciples were prepared for the 3000 people who came to Christ on Pentecost in Acts 2. Here is how they learned. You break them into groups of 50 or 100 like Jesus did.

Vs. 22-23 The Twelve also learned to expect problems after success. Or maybe they learned not to trust "success" at all, but rather God. The reason I'm saying this, unknown to us here, but revealed in John 6, is that after the feeding of the 5000 Jesus' popularity began to disintegrate; in fact, many disciples left him. Jesus sent the disciples away because the crowds were going to come and make Him king by force. In another couple of days, that same crowd will reject Jesus' claim that He was the bread that came down from heaven. Many of his disciples would never follow Him again.

Vs. 24-33 This was a very important event. Jesus wasn't showing off. In fact, Jesus wasn't planning on the Twelve even seeing Him at all; but when they saw Him and cried out, Jesus knew the Father had other plans and He went with it. Seeing Jesus (and Peter) walking on water would come in handy in John 6 as the crowds and disciples were leaving. At that point Jesus asks

the Twelve if they too will leave, and Peter spontaneously blurts out, *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.* (John 6:68-69) It is interesting that Peter didn't say, "Who else can walk on water?" They learned something in the boat and they worshiped Him. God used that crisis on the sea to strengthen the faith of their hearts for the crisis of faith in John 6. Just as with God's working in Joseph and his brothers, there are no accidents in God's planning and preparation.

Vs. 34-36 After they landed at Gennesaret, Jesus walked to Capernaum with the boys. He was instantly recognized, and everywhere He went, they brought sick people on pallets and laid them in the market places so they could touch the fringe of His robes. It is after this that the people who just ate the loaves on the other side of the sea would find him in Capernaum for the showdown in John 6.

Psalm 18:37-50

Vs. 37-43 We haven't yet read the entire life of David, but you will read this psalm again after we've seen what David went through. This psalm is a summary of his hardship. These verses recount the victory and glory that God brought to David after those long years.

Vs. 44-45 Even the troops that came against David from Syria and as far as Assyria were defeated by David.

Vs. 46-48 David not only realized that God had done this to fulfill the promise God had made to him...

V. 49 ...but I think David also understood that the promise of redemption from Adam through Abraham was operating here. Paul quotes this verse in Romans 15:9 having to do with the plan of God to save the Gentiles.

V. 50 This is a reference to the promise God made to David that one of his offspring would reign over Israel forever. That would be Jesus.

Proverbs 4:11-13

These words are true. If there is really any qualification here, it has to do with what our goal in life is. If our goal is to walk or run on our own way, pursuing what we want, or pursuing what we think God should want, we may stumble. But if our goal is to follow in the harvest, waiting on the Lord, knowing that God is sovereign, then there is no way to fail or fall. In some respect, what we are reading in the OT proves this. Men messed stuff up, but God's plan and purpose was still accomplished. God could have done the same things without Jacob's trickery and without the brothers having to sell Joseph. Their plans caused the stumbling. Following the Lord in His way is easier than it looks. Our expectations and desires and plans are what hamper us. The Lord trains us to follow Him, to abide, to hold to His Word, to wait. The world can be chaotic, but we can still have peace and security following Christ, reaching the lost and making disciples, because we are keeping hold of Him. Or in our case, we are being held by Him.