

From PRISON to Palace

A Study of the Life of Joseph

Class 8 • Joseph Returned • Genesis 50

A. Joseph returns with his brethren to Canaan to bury Jacob, vs. 1-13.

1. The mourning for Jacob, vs. 1-3.

a. With true manliness, Joseph weeps for his father in the flesh, who also was his spiritual father. But yet he has sweet consolation, v. 1.

(1) He has no cause for bitter regret on account of neglect of his brother, as is the case with some children.

(2) He can easily recall Jacob's recent, generous and tender blessing of him as, "the one distinguished among his brothers" NASB (49:26).

(3) But how full of regret were the other brethren, having grieved their father for so long. They were truly reconciled, yet nevertheless could not forget their sin which had continuing results in terms of Jacob's final blessings.

(4) How Joseph must now have clung for comfort to the Abrahamic Covenant that was confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, and taught to him as a lad (50:24).

His great hope was the final resurrection, which Abraham certainly believed in (Heb. 11:17-19).

(5) Thus Joseph closed the eyes of Jacob according to God's promise (46:4).

b. Both the embalming and mourning were elaborate though not essential to Jacob's wishes, vs. 2-3.

(1) The Egyptians, as masters of the art of embalming, took forty days to mummify Jacob. Joseph did this out of respect, though he did not attach any magical significance to it, such as prolonging the life, which the Egyptians believed this process obtained.

(2) In venerating Jacob for Joseph's sake, the Egyptians also took seventy days to mourn the Hebrew patriarch.

(3) Joseph gave visible honour to his father, but not like some children who care more for their parent's bodies when dead than when alive.

2. Pharaoh permits Joseph to bury Jacob in Canaan, vs. 4-6.

a. Why does Joseph use a mediator to go before Pharaoh and not speak direct? v. 4.

(1) Frequently eastern kings were averse to encountering that person who spoke of death or gloom.

(2) Probably Joseph's days of mourning were days of separation with his Hebrew people.

b. Joseph declares that Jacob had already dug his grave in Canaan, at least seventeen years ago, probably out of love for God's covenant promise given to Abraham and Isaac. Further, he advises that he had been appointed executor to his father's will, and thus he had sworn to bury him there. Thus Joseph requests leave of absence, v. 5.

c. Pharaoh unhesitatingly agrees to Joseph's request, for Joseph has promised that he will return, v. 6.

3. The funeral procession and burial at Canaan, vs. 7-13.
 - a. The great Egyptian delegation only confirms the esteem in which Joseph was held after being in office for over twenty years! vs. 7-9.
 - (1) His secular life was a testimony.
 - (2) His family life was a testimony.
 - (3) His spiritual life was a testimony.
 - b. The watching Canaanites were amazed to see the Egyptians so moved on account of the death of a foreigner, who surely must have been a great man. Probably Joseph replied that rather he was a man with a great God! vs. 10-11.
 - c. Thus Jacob was buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre. It is good to be buried on home ground. A magnificent tomb is of little consequence, but a certain hope in the God of Abraham is! (Rev. 14:13), vs. 12-13.
- B. Joseph returns with his brethren to Egypt, vs. 14-21.
 1. Guilt revives amongst the brethren, vs. 14-18.

APPLICATION:

• Guilt is a powerful force and can depress a believer. How does one battle guilt?

- a. Illustration. How often when we have been injured and scarred in our flesh due to our own fault, yet we later pick at these scars and make them fester again instead of letting the healing process be completed.
- b. Illustration. It is also a sad fact that men sometimes forgive temporarily or defer judgment after they have been offended, for any number of reasons other than that of pure mercy and grace.
- c. The brethren now appear to spend more time at this point on reflecting on their past sin than on the pardon of Joseph. Imagine the multiplication of guilt feelings that arise amongst the ten brethren when the devilish suggestion is put forth that Joseph's forgiveness may have been temporary! v. 15.
 - (1) Note how poor their memories are of grace, and acute regarding their guilt. But recall the moving scene (45:1-15).
 - (2) Application. How Satan loves to depress believers with a review of their sin, and then suggest, "Hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1) concerning their forgiveness.
- d. The brethren in fact impugn the word of Joseph when they attempt to gain "real" forgiveness on the ground of Jacob's request, vs. 16-17a.
 - (1) So cowardly are they and lacking in assurance that they send a message rather than face Joseph themselves. But they need to draw near, not away (Heb. 10:22).
 - (2) But how wretchedly blind our sinful hearts are to the facts of our forgiveness. Why Joseph had forgiven the brethren and lavished grace and kindness upon them before Jacob was brought into the picture!

APPLICATION:

• What does Hebrews 6:4-6 teach us about questioning our justification before God?

When the believer questions his justification before God, he is impugning the Word of God, and attempting to be “saved” again, though quite impossible (Heb. 6:4-6). But Christ Jesus has given us his memorial supper to remind us that God’s Word of forgiveness is final!

e. Joseph calls the brethren before him in tearful dismay, vs. 17b-18.

(1) His tears are tears of tender grief at the thought that his brethren are yet plagued by the guilt of their sin, v. 17b.

(2) The brethren have regressed from faith to fear, and thus fall down in fear rather than confidence. But then they possibly wonder if revenge is ever evidenced by tears.

2. Joseph responds with gracious and wise reassurance, vs. 19-21.

a. Note that Joseph’s frame of mind is godward, for his resolution of the problem he faces is a right understanding of the sovereignty of God regarding justice and forgiveness, v. 19.

(1) In terms of the request for forgiveness, Joseph acknowledges that this is ultimately God’s work, and not his. Again Joseph’s forgiveness is understood and rest results.

(2) Illustration. Our Saviour submits to this same principle in I Peter 2:22-23. Paul likewise admonishes us to leave judgment to God and return good for evil in Romans 12:19-21. This manner of living Joseph certainly manifested.

b. However, Joseph also perceives God’s sovereignty as ordering for a good end those evil deeds of his brethren, v. 20.

(1) God was sovereign over the evil events in Joseph’s life, so much so that he confounds Satan’s wicked designs by making them to be instruments for his glory (I Peter 1:6-7). Thus God can cause the wrath of men to praise Him (Ps. 76:10).

(2) Just as the sin of Jacob’s sons ultimately led to the saving of many people alive in Egypt, so God can cause the unbelief of Israel to lead to the saving of many Gentiles (Rom. 11:25, 28).

(3) For the sake of “the called,” God does marvelous works even in the midst of the most sinful circumstances, and His plans cannot be thwarted (Rom. 8:28). It is a true saying that “man proposes, but God disposes.”

(4) This doctrine is most comforting for those who submit to God’s sovereignty, even in the most trying of circumstances, as Paul teaches in Romans 8:31-39.

c. Thus Joseph manifests words and deeds of kindness, v. 21.

(1) The whole intent of Joseph’s teaching on sovereignty was that it might draw his brothers’ attention from their guilt and direct their sight toward God’s good and wise ordering. He desires that fear should give way to peace and contentment.

(2) Thus Joseph comforted and spoke kindly to the brethren; again he kissed and wept over them (45:15; 50:17).

(3) He vindicated his words and emotions by deeds of kindness towards those who “despitefully used him” (Luke 6:27-28).

APPLICATION:

• **The issue is not whether you can “Forgive and Forget,” but whether you can forgive and still be kind. What have you learned about this from Joseph?**

The issue is not whether we can forgive and forget, but whether we can forgive and show practical kindness.

C. Joseph prepares for his final return, vs. 22-26.

1. Joseph's concluding days in Egypt, vs. 22-23.

a. Joseph continued to live in Egypt. But could he not have conspired to return to Canaan? Yes, he could have, but this would have been contrary to God's clearly revealed will, as declared by Jacob. Joseph was in fact to be Israel's overseer during its gestation period in the womb of Egypt.

b. Thus Joseph died at 110, not so much full of years for those days, but certainly overflowing with the fullness of God!

c. The fruit of the womb was also Joseph's reward as he watched his family grow in peace and prosperity, which is God's ultimate desire for those who are reconciled with Him.

2. Joseph's death and promised departure, vs. 25-26.

a. Like father like son, Joseph has the same desire at death as did Jacob, namely that his remains be placed in Canaan near those of his father (Ex. 13:19). This was a testimony to his final faith in God's promises, not pagan Egyptian deities (Heb. 11:22).

b. Thus Joseph was embalmed and placed in a coffin, but not a pyramid, waiting for over 400 years till Moses fulfilled his wish when the nation of Israel was given birth (Ex. 13:19).

c. Thus Joseph died, full of faith that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the agency of the Angel of Jehovah, the Son of God, would one day raise them to life in God's glorious, righteous kingdom (Luke 13:28-29).

(1) Joseph died, as must all men, but "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev. 13:14).

(2) Joseph's earlier life was not always apparently blessed, but again we see that what counts is not how we have earlier lived so much as how we live now and how we shall die. Joseph died full of faith in God's gracious redemption. But how shall we fare at that appointed, inevitable hour?

3. Dear reader, the only God of heaven and earth is the God of Joseph, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no other. This same God is in full control of the affairs of our lives, whether they be good or bad. You cannot possibly escape from His reign or dominion. You may resist, but finally it will be to no avail, as Joseph's brothers eventually discovered. Either God will judge you as you plead your own case, or He will save you as Jesus Christ pleads your case for you. Either you will stand guilty before His bar of justice, or you will be pardoned through bowing in humble submission to His merciful plan of redemption.

a. Submission means acknowledging that you are corrupt in all of your being. For this reason you acknowledge that if there is to be any hope for the saving of your soul, you know that such hope can only come about through the grace and saving work of the God of Joseph, from the start to finish.

b. Submission means bowing before the Saviour of Jacob (48:16), pleading, "Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Listen as the Word of God calls on you to submit to Jesus Christ, and believe on Him as your sovereign Lord and Saviour: "Do homage to the Son, lest He becomes angry, and you perish in the way. For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" NASB (Ps. 2:12; cf. John 3:14-16).

c. Submission means fleeing to Jesus Christ since He is,