

## Genesis Chapters 42-43 Summary - John Karmelich

I'm tempted to use the same title that several other commentators use for these chapters, "Guess who is coming to dinner"! If you don't know the story, it's about a man named Joseph. About 20 years earlier he was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. He ended up in prison for a crime he did not commit. He got released when he correctly interpreted the Pharaoh's dream, and he became the #2 man in Egypt! His job now was to distribute food in a drought! Then his brothers show up as they need food. All that led to an unplanned family reunion with ten of his 11 brothers. Joseph didn't reveal who he was despite clues given in these two chapters. I will discuss those clues as we go through this story!

OK after a paragraph going over the basics of the chapter, let me share what God put on my heart over what to do with these two chapters! One of the toughest things for a Christian to do, is to trust in God especially when things are difficult! One of my favorite Bible verses is Psalm 37:5, where it says, "I've never seen the righteous (anyone trusting in Jesus for salvation) or their children begging for bread". It is a reminder that God will never leave us or forsake us! All of us have troubles at times. I will always argue the only thing we can control is our attitude! That thought leads back to this text. Joseph's father Jacob was scared because there was no food as the famine which did occur in Egypt was also occurring in Israel. It's amazing to consider that God organized all that so that Jacob and his family would end up in Egypt (in effect to begin the 400+ years, before the great Exodus which is the next bible book!) This story is about dealing with trials. God protects His own through trials which reminds us to trust in Him to guide us when it feels like everything is falling apart around us!

With that said, time for details: I should state for the newcomers there were no chapter breaks when the Bible was written. They were added around the time of the printing press. Roughly, the last 10 chapters of this book focus on the story of Joseph. The last chapter told the story of how Joseph got from prison to be second in command in Egypt and told of a famine that would last seven years. During that time, it was Joseph who was personally in charge of selling "government surplus" that Egypt collected over the previous seven years. The famine was also in Israel roughly 250 miles north of where Joseph was. The famine problem is where the story opens in Chapter 42. Joseph's father learned that there was grain for the making of bread in Egypt. He told his sons in effect, "Why are you standing there feeling sorry for yourself about a lack of bread when they're selling it in Egypt?" (That's a good reminder that when we see a logical solution to a problem, "go for it"! ) Of Jacob's 11 remaining sons, Benjamin, the youngest remained with his father while the others made the journey!

Keep in mind Joseph has not seen his brothers in 20 years. The last they saw of him was when they all agreed to sell him to slave traders going to Egypt. Makes one wonder if the brothers thought about that as they were heading to Egypt. When they got to the place where grain was sold, Joseph himself was at that place and recognized his brothers. They didn't recognize him because he's now clean shaven and is well, dressed like an Egyptian! However, Joseph's Hebrew came back to him as he recognized them as they approached! They explained through a translator that they were there to buy food! Joseph did not trust them and accused them of being spies! He said to test them, "If what you say is true, one of you is to return to get your other brother (the 10 stated there was another brother and also stated that Joseph is dead (not stating his name)!" After putting all of them in prison for three days, Joseph stated he feared God which should have been a clue to them right there. He kept one of his brothers in prison (one who probably instigated selling Joseph to slave traders) and told the others to fetch the last brother!

Joseph's next clue was he (through his servants) filled his brothers' bags with grain and put their money back in their bags before they left! Remember that Jacob, their father was nervous. He held all of them responsible for Joseph's death (the brothers lied and said he was killed)! Joseph learned his full brother (Benjamin) was still alive. The other brothers were from different women! Joseph required them to go get Benjamin (for more food) and that will get Simon out of prison! The last thing stated in the chapter was the oldest son offered his two sons as hostages to Jacob if they failed to bring Benjamin back! He's not going for a deal where he loses two of his grandsons in exchange for his youngest son!

To start Chapter 43, the famine is still going on and the grain was used up they got from the first trip! I have to admit I laughed at how little the father cared about Simon as he'd rather him "rot in jail" than to risk losing his youngest son Benjamin. It shows how fear can lead us to make bad decisions. Since the situation is now desperate, he's arguing with his sons about why they mentioned the younger brother. It comes down to the brother named Judah (part of the line leading to Jesus) offering himself, if anything happens to Benjamin. We even get the statement of, "If we didn't spend so much time arguing we'd be there and back twice by now!"

Bottom line is they return with Benjamin, all the money that Joseph let them keep, plus more for all the second trip plus a few gifts for Joseph to overlook the situation. It shows the same old "dad" trying his best to bribe his way out of the problem, like he did when he encountered his brother after many years!

Keep in mind Joseph's learning details about what happened when he was thrown in a pit and then sold into slavery as he could understand what the brothers were saying to each other about their trip! When they'd arrived the second time, Joseph saw his full brother Benjamin after 20 years. Benjamin was just a baby when he was sold as a slave! Joseph asked the brothers about their father and said he was alive. Joseph realized, this was the "hand of God" working and went off to cry privately!

Then the brothers were served a meal by themselves (without Joseph, as he was a top official). At that meal Benjamin got five times as much food as the rest (the number five's associated with grace through the bible). The brothers were also seated in birth order which amazed them. Simon was released as part of the seating. The chapter ends there.

OK back to us. The brothers got a few clues God is working in the background. Joseph stated that he's in fear of God but that didn't sink in. Joseph excused himself after hearing about dad should have clued them in and finally seated in birth order! As most of us know the big Joseph revelation scene occurs in the next chapter! While this is interesting bit of history and obviously God was working to get all them to Egypt, the important point for us is to realize "clues or not" God is always working in our lives as to lead us down the path He desires. As I like to joke, do we need to pray to brush our teeth, no, but we'd be better off in life if we pray for His guidance daily, then do what's logical to make good decisions for God to guide our lives for His glory. There's no guarantee in life that it'll turn out well. What the Bible does promise is He will guide our life for His (not our) glory!

Therefore, the next time you're having a bad day, week or whatever, remember He's still in charge and He's still guiding our lives for His glory. The only thing we can control is our attitude as we deal with whatever situation is in front of us!

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John