

## Genesis Chapter 44-45 – John Karmelich

1. These two chapters focus on the idea of growth and maturity in our relationship with God.
  - a) One of the key principals in Christianity is not, “You are saved, you may now die.” ☹
  - b) Christianity for believers is a growth process. It is about maturing us in our relationship to God. It is about God conforming us to do his will.
  - c) I’ve stated many times that Christians need to go around with big yellow signs saying, “Caution, under construction”. God is working through the events in our lives to make us better people. God controls the events of our lives and God allows circumstances, bad and good to occur in our lives in order for us to grow in our relationship with him.
2. The focus of these two chapters is not so much on Joseph, but on his brothers.
  - a) Joseph’ brothers were chosen by God. They, along with Joseph are the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel that form the Nation of Israel.
  - b) If God choose those brothers, then God wants to mature those brothers. God wants mature believers. Therefore, God works on their lives through Joseph.
3. A key character in this text is going to be Judah, who is one of the 12 brothers.
  - a) Judah, who is 4<sup>th</sup> in line, emerges as the leader in this chapter.
  - b) It is interesting to consider that of the 12 brothers, Judah and Joseph become the most dominant. Again, the descendants of the 12 brothers are the 12 tribes of Israel. When the 12 tribes actually settle in Israel, Judah and Joseph are also the two most dominant tribes.
    - i) Judah is the one through whom the Messiah comes. This was told to King David.
      - a) Many centuries later, when Israel splits into two kingdoms after King David, the Southern kingdom is called “Judah”. They understood that this is they key tribe through whom the Messiah comes.
    - ii) Joseph will have two sons. Both are adopted by Joseph’s father Jacob. It would be like your parents saying that your son is now theirs. Your son would be the equivalent of a sibling to you from your parents’ perspective. One of those two sons was Ephraim.
      - a) Which leads back to the time when Israel is split into two nations. The Northern Kingdom is often nicknamed “Ephraim” as this is the most dominant (largest population) of any of the tribes.
    - iii) My point is in Genesis 44-45, we see “Judah and Joseph” emerging as the two prominent figures that lead to the salvation of the Nation of Israel.
      - a) This is also prophetic of how the two key tribes of Israel come from these two guys. When you read of Judah and Joseph in these chapters, you can see word-pictures of “things to come” in the history of Israel.
      - b) Again remember that Messiah (Jesus) comes through Judah. As you see Judah’s leadership emerge in this chapter, one can see prophetic word-pictures in that Judah takes the responsibility of the sins committed by all the brothers. In a “sense” he “took those sins upon himself”.
  - c) With that said, let’s jump into Chapter 44.
4. Chapter 44, Verse 1: Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. <sup>2</sup> Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said.
  - a) OK, the first big question: Why did Joseph do this?
    - i) To recap from Chapter 43, Joseph is testing his brothers. One of the test in the last chapter was to give Benjamin much more food than his brothers at dinner, to see if any of them got jealous, just as they were jealous of Joseph many years ago.
    - ii) To summarize, they passed that test.

- iii) In this text, Joseph secretly placed his silver cup into Benjamin's sack. The plan was to frame Benjamin of the crime of stealing. Why do this?
  - iv) Again, we are testing the brothers. Remember that the brothers were willing to sell out Joseph so they could prosper. The brothers at that time knew their father was going to make Joseph a leader over them, and they sold him out. Joseph wanted to see if they would "sell out Benjamin" in order to save their own lives. Thus, Joseph set up this test.
- b) The next, and less important question, why a silver cup?
- i) This is a cultural thing. The Egyptian leaders used a silver cup for divination. It was an occultist practice to predict the future.
  - ii) I don't believe Joseph practiced this divination. But Joseph was aware the brothers were familiar with Egyptian occult practices and they would "get it" that stealing the silver cup is a big deal.
5. Verse 3: As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. <sup>4</sup> They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil?' <sup>5</sup> Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.' "
- a) This set of verses show that Joseph is "setting up the scene" for the false accusation.
  - b) These verses are another reminder that everything that happens to believers is "God-filtered". You may ask, "Why am I being accused of this false crime?" I had nothing to do with it." The point is there is some lesson to be learned by all the things that happen to us. God tests our faith, often in ways we least expect.
6. Verse 6: When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. <sup>7</sup> But they said to him, "Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! <sup>8</sup> We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? <sup>9</sup> If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." <sup>10</sup> "Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame."
- a) Here comes the actual accusation. The brothers are busy stating their innocence and yelling out the evidence they have for their innocence
  - b) The key to reading this paragraph is to look at Verse 10. The latter part says, "Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame."
  - c) The purpose of this test is to see if the brothers would support one another.
    - i) One of the issues that Joseph remembered about his brothers is that they were willing to "sell him out" so he wouldn't rule over them.
    - ii) Joseph wanted to see if they still had the same attitude. Joseph wanted to see if they saw Benjamin guilty of a crime, would they support him, or let him rot in jail.
    - iii) The problem is the brothers had no idea this was the plan. They haven't read all of Genesis yet. ☺ The point is we don't know why God puts us through trials and tests until later in life.
    - iv) Again, a great prayer during these times is for discernment. Pray to God to help you understand the purpose for whatever tough situation you are going through. Understanding that purpose and changing your lifestyle thereafter may prevent another bad situation from happening again. I have seen many Christians go through the same negative trials over and over again because they refuse to learn from what they are going through.

7. Verse 11: Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. <sup>12</sup> Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. <sup>13</sup> At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.
- a) You may not realize it, but Verse 13 is a great victory.
    - i) In Verse 10, the steward says, "Whoever is innocent may go free."
    - ii) In Verse 13, "They all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city."
    - iii) What does that mean? It means they stuck together and supported each other.
  - b) Here is a fundamental principal of Christianity (and Judaism for that matter!)
    - i) Christianity is never meant to be a solo act. God never wants any of us to be a "church of one". The Christian church is compared to a human body being made up of parts that work together. (Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 12 on this issue.) If one part of the body is hurting, then we all suffer.
    - ii) That is what Jesus meant by the "new commandment" to love one another. (Ref.: John 13:34). That does not mean to go around hugging strangers (although I have nothing against a good hug. ☺) This commandment is about giving of our self to others and working with others. It is about putting others needs before our own.
    - iii) Getting back to Genesis, Benjamin was hurting. Benjamin was accused of a false crime. This test was not so much for Benjamin, but for the other 10 brothers. Were they going to abandon him in his hour of need or support him?
      - a) This leads us back to the idea of God's trials and tests. Sometimes God allows us to go through trials not to see what we will do, but to see what others will do. It is Benjamin who gets accused of the crime, but this test is primarily to see what the other brothers will do.
8. Verse 14: Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. <sup>15</sup> Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?"
- a) Here is the accusation of Joseph himself. Joseph mentions the "divination" part so the brothers would focus on "Joseph the Egyptian".
  - b) Other than a brief comment by Joseph, the remainder of the chapter is a response to this accusation.
  - c) Notice the text says, "Judah and his brothers".
    - i) Again, Judah is not the oldest, he just steps up as the leader.
    - ii) From Verses 18 to the end of the chapter, is one speech by Judah speaking in defense of all of his brothers.
9. Verse 16: "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves--we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup."
- a) Verse 16 is my favorite verse in the chapter. Let me explain further.
    - i) Before Judah gives a 17-verse response (Verses 18-34) stating their innocence, he first states their guilt. Judah says, "God has uncovered your servants' guilt."
    - ii) This is a fundamental principal of Christianity as well as Judaism.
    - iii) Human beings are inherently bad people. We have to control that bad behavior in order to be good people. This is because we have "sin nature" inside of us.
    - iv) Jewish Rabbi's will tell you that if you go through the first five books of the bible, God gives 613 commandments for us to follow. (The "10 commandments" are a good summary of all 613 commandments.) My point here is that if people were inherently good, God would not have to give us 613 commandments to control our behavior!

- v) Which leads us back to Judah's comment. They were guilty before God.
  - a) Judah recalls the sin of selling Joseph. He is acknowledging that he is a sinful man.
  - b) Remember that Judah is speaking on behalf of all eleven brothers. He is stating that the youngest Benjamin is guilty too. Benjamin was not around when they sold Joseph into slavery.
- vi) In Christianity, in order to ask Jesus to pay the price for our sins, the first step is to acknowledge we are sinful people! You can't have the forgiveness of God unless you first comprehend the fact that you are a sinner in the first place.
  - a) Have you ever broken one of the 10 commandments ever? Congratulations, you are now a sinner like Judah. ☺
  - b) We as Christians have been made perfect in God's eyes because a perfect sacrifice has been made on our behalf, and that's it.
  - c) This is what Judah is confessing here. It is not about the specific crime of stealing the cup. It is about the fact that Judah and all of his brothers are sinners before God.
- b) Let me repeat Judah's statement of guilt: "God has uncovered your servants' guilt"
  - i) To paraphrase, "God does not let you or me get away with anything".
  - ii) If we are God's witnesses to the world, then God holds us to a higher standard than he does nonbelievers. Nonbelievers may "get away" with things that a Christian will not get away with.
    - a) "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23 NIV)
- c) The last part of this verse says, "We are now my lord's slaves--we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup."
  - i) Translation: We all bear responsibility. This goes back to the idea that all Christians work as a body. If one part suffers, we all suffer. If one is guilty of a sin, then we all suffer.
    - a) The concept is when a believer commits a sin, we are not to say, "Well, too bad for you." We are to help.
  - ii) Paul's letter to the Galatians talks about this principal. There are two verses that appear to be contradictory, but they work as a unit:
    - a) The 1st is: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ". (Galatians 6:2, NKJV)
    - b) The 2nd is: "For each one shall bear his own load." (Galatians 6:5 NKJV)
    - c) Galatians 6:2 says we should bear each other's burdens, but Galatians 6:5 states we should carry our own load. Isn't that a contradiction?
      - (1) These two verses teach us the balance of the Christian life.
      - (2) God holds each of us accountable individually. In that sense, we are to bear our own load. At the same time, God wants believers to work as a team. That is the "bear one another's burdens" verse.
- 10. Verse 17: But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace."
  - a) Joseph is saying that the one guilty person must stay and the others can go home.
  - b) Joseph is practically "baiting" them in this verse. He wants to see if they are willing to sell out Benjamin to save their own skin.
  - c) The remainder of the chapter is Judah's response.

11. Verse 18: Then Judah went up to him and said: "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. <sup>19</sup> My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' <sup>20</sup> And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.'
- a) There is a quote by Jon Curson I always liked. It says, "People are like teabags. You never know what flavor they are until you get them into hot water."
    - i) Judah's "flavor" is a leader. He steps up as a spokesman. He has boldness in front of the most powerful man in Egypt.
  - b) As to the speech itself, commentators are mixed. I've read comments that range from calling it brilliant and to calling it pathetic. It has a few half-truths. I believe the main point is that it shows the brothers were not willing to sell out their younger brother.
  - c) Notice in Verse 20 that Judah says, "His brother is dead".
    - i) In their minds, Joseph is dead. They sold Joseph into slavery. I'm speculating it makes them feel less guilty if they think Joseph is dead as opposed to living.
12. Verse 21: "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.' <sup>22</sup> And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' <sup>23</sup> But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' <sup>24</sup> When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. <sup>25</sup> "Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.' <sup>26</sup> But we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'
- a) From Verses 21 to Verse 33, we have a repeat of things we already know. We don't pick up any new information from this text.
  - b) The question becomes, why repeat the story? Why doesn't Genesis just say, "And Judah explained their innocence before Joseph"? Why bother to repeat this whole text?
    - i) First of all, it emphasizes Judah's boldness to stand up and support his brothers.
    - ii) There is a trend throughout Genesis of repeating key text twice. I believe in this situation, we are watching the brother confess their innocence, but at the same time they want to state their loyalty to their father and their brothers. It shows their maturity as believers in God. Their behavior has changed.
13. Judah continues, Verse 27: "Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. <sup>28</sup> One of them went away from me, and I said, 'He has surely been torn to pieces.' And I have not seen him since. <sup>29</sup> If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.'
- a) Near the beginning of Chapter 43, Judah took the responsibility of bringing Benjamin back home safely. He is repeating that promise here to Joseph.
  - b) Remember that Joseph was unaware of that promise. That confession shows Joseph how much they have changed.
14. Verse 30: "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, <sup>31</sup> sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. <sup>32</sup> Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'
- a) Judah is saying to Joseph that he took responsibility for Benjamin to his father and therefore if Benjamin is guilty, then Judah must bear that guilt.

- b) Let me paraphrase what Judah was thinking: "I have had enough of guilt in my life. I sold Joseph into slavery and I committed harlotry with my daughter-in-law. I know I am a sinful person. I want to change. I want to do what is right. I took responsibility to bring Benjamin home safely and I mean it. I cannot go back to dad empty handed. I need to confess the guilt of my life even though I am innocent of stealing the silver cup. I took the responsibility and I must bear the responsibility despite the consequences."
15. Verse 33: "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. <sup>34</sup> How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father."
- a) Here is the important point of this confession speech by Judah: It worked. ☺
- b) In the first few verses of the next chapter, Joseph reveals who he is to his brothers.
- c) Judah and his brothers passed the test. They were willing to give their lives for the sake of their brothers and their personal commitment to their father.
- d) The great lesson of this section of scripture is that when we are willing to fully give our lives to God, God then reveals himself to us and gives us a better life.
- i) Judah says they were willing to go into slavery as punishment, even though they are innocent of the particular crime.
- ii) The term "slave" is a great word-picture. In the New Testament, several of the writers (Paul, James, Peter and Jude) refer to themselves as "bondservants" (NKJV-term) to Jesus Christ. The idea is that they have fully committed their lives to serving Jesus. In a word-picture, they have agreed to be Christ's "slave".
- iii) The brothers, through their spokesman Judah, agreed to submit their lives for a higher purpose. They submitted their lives because their reputation before God was at stake, and that means more than their freedom.
- iv) Once they are willing to fully turn their lives over, they become 100% forgiven of all of their crimes. That is a great word picture of God's forgiveness.
- e) Which leads us to the big moment, in Chapter 45:
16. Chapter 45, Verse 1: Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.
- a) The first thing to notice is that the purpose of Joseph sending everyone away is so that he could make himself known to his brothers.
- b) The moment was so overwhelming, emotionally, that Joseph couldn't control himself.
- i) Personally, I see Joseph as a strong leader. Remember that Joseph had to eat separately from the Egyptians due to bigotry by Egyptians toward non-Egyptians. Yet here was Joseph in charge. To be in charge in that type of situation, one has to be positive and forceful. That is probably why it was a shock to see Joseph cry.
- ii) Living in that situation it must have been all that more difficult for Joseph to restrain himself from revealing who he is to his brothers. Joseph needed them and wanted them to pass a series of tests before he could bond with them as a family. That is the same way God wants us to grow and mature before God can spend eternity with us.
- c) So why does the text mention that Joseph cried so loud everyone knew it? Obviously this was an emotional moment for Joseph. But why mention the fact that Joseph wept so loudly it became public knowledge?
- i) I suspect Joseph's story was well known to the Egyptians around him. At the least they must have known he was taken out of jail to be in charge. They may have heard about how he was sold as a slave as well. I believe God wanted the world around Joseph to know about the big family reunion.

- a) Joseph's rise to power ended up being a witness for the true God that Joseph worshipped to those around him.
  - ii) Remember the "big-purpose" was to get Joseph's brothers settled in Egypt in order to form the nation for the Exodus. Having "Pharaoh's household" hear of all of this help set everything in motion.
  - iii) I also believe there is a word-picture for us here. The revelation of Joseph to his brothers is a word-picture of God revealing himself to us. The brothers had "passed the test". You can see that as a word-picture of being accepted into the family of God, or getting into heaven. The cry is that of joy and happiness. It became a public witness to those in earshot.
- 17. Verse 3: Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.
  - a) And now, the big moment. ☺ I don't know why Hollywood never made a big time movie on Joseph. This is great drama and here is the big moment of the revelation of Joseph.
  - b) Before I get into a discussion of the "I am Joseph" phrase, notice the next phrase. Joseph asks, "Is my father still living?"
    - i) Remember near the end of chapter 43, Joseph asked if his father was still alive and the brothers said yes. Further, Judah just gave a long speech telling how his father agreed to send Benjamin with him.
    - ii) Despite all of that, Joseph still asks, "Is my father still living?"
      - a) Maybe Joseph missed his father, and simply needed more reassurance.
      - b) Maybe Joseph meant it in the sense of was his father mentally sharp.
      - c) I suspect the emotion of the moment is what made Joseph make this statement. This is reunion time, and he wanted to make sure everyone was ok, including his father.
  - c) Let's get into the "why" question: Why did Joseph wait until now to reveal himself?
    - i) I've already beaten to death my argument about maturity as a believer. ☺
    - ii) I don't think this is a word-picture so much about first getting saved, as it is a word-picture of one's eternal reward. There is an important New Testament verse that applies here:
      - a) "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6-7, NIV)
      - b) That verse in Ephesians talks about the purpose of saving people: So God can spend eternity pouring his grace out on us. God is perfect. That means He is perfect in love. God needs someone to pour that love upon, and He is looking for people willing to commit their lives freely to him so he can spend eternity pouring His love upon us.
      - c) In a word-picture, the brothers have reached that moment. They have showed they care about each other and they fear God. In a sense, this is the end of their story.
  - d) There is another important "why" question, and that has to do with prophecy.
    - i) One has to remember that bible predictions, a.k.a. prophecy is not just direct statements by biblical characters, but word-pictures.
    - ii) Often, the stories the Old Testament are word-pictures that tie to events of the New Testament.
    - iii) Stephen, in the New Testament, backs me up on this theory:
      - a) "On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family." (Acts 7:13 NIV)

- b) When you read through Stephen's sermon in Acts, Chapter 7, Stephen shows this pattern of "rejected the first time, accepted the second time." It is about how the great leaders of the Old Testament were rejected the first time they presented themselves to the Israelites.
  - c) Moses was rejected the 1st time he tried to lead the Israelites. (Exodus 2:14)
  - d) Joshua was rejected the first time. He was one of two "good" witnesses who spied out the Promised Land before the Israelites actually entered the land. (Ref: Numbers 14) The Israelites believed the reports of the ten "bad" witnesses" and rejected Joshua. Joshua later went on to be the next leader after Moses.
  - e) David was anointed by Samuel to be king (1st Samuel 16:13). He was rejected by the people as King Saul tried to hunt him down and kill him. It wasn't until after Saul died that the people accepted David as king.
  - f) Joseph was rejected and sold into slavery. Now he is the leader over them.
  - g) My point is the pattern of "rejected once, accepted the second time" applies to Jesus himself.
- e) I believe when Jesus comes the second time, he will reveal who he is to the Jewish people.
- i) Joseph's brothers were shocked at the revelation to his brothers.
  - ii) The Israelites will also be shocked when Jesus reveals himself.
  - iii) There is an interesting verse in the New Testament that applies here:
    - a) "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved". (Romans 11:25b-11:26a NIV).
    - b) Romans 10:12 says there is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile (non-Jew). The only distinction of this age is between believers vs. nonbelievers.
    - c) Yet, one chapter later, Paul makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles. This is not a contradiction.
      - (1) Romans Chapter 10 takes about the present time era, between the time the church was born and the events of Jesus' Second Coming.
      - (2) Romans Chapter 11 takes about a future time era, during the events of the tribulation, when Jesus reveals himself to his Jewish brethren.
      - (3) That revelation is shown in a word-picture by Joseph.
  - iv) Joseph revealed himself to his Jewish brethren and forgave his brethren.
  - v) Jesus will reveal himself to his Jewish brethren and will forgive his brethren.
  - vi) There is another verse in Zechariah that also supports this:
    - a) "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. (Zechariah 12:10 NIV)
  - vii) Does this mean a Jewish person can get into heaven without accepting Jesus?
    - a) Well, technically no. But notice Zechariah 12:10 above mentions the phrase "spirit of grace". To me that is the Holy Spirit working on the Jewish people in those days. In summary, they see Jesus, realize they made a big error, and accept him as payment for their sins.
  - viii) Which leads us back to Joseph. The last time I checked, we are doing a study of Joseph in Genesis. ☺ My point is Joseph revealing himself to his brothers and at the same time forgiving his brothers of their sins is a word-picture tying to Jesus revealing himself to his Jewish brethren at his Second Coming.
  - ix) This is why I'm excited about the fact that Israel is a country again after close to 2,000 years. It tells me we are relatively close to Jesus' Second Coming.



18. Verse 4: Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.
- a) I want you to notice the balance in Joseph statement:
    - i) He mentioned the fact his brothers sold Joseph into slavery in Verse 4.
    - ii) He also mentions that they are forgiven because it was part of God's plan that Joseph be sent into Egypt years ahead of them.
  - b) This gets into the classic debate of "predestiny and free will".
    - i) God by definition is perfect. If God is perfect, he knows all things and cannot learn. Therefore, God knows all of history in advance. Therefore it was part of God's plan to have Joseph sold into slavery, become the leader of Egypt, and prepare a home for his brothers and his fathers, and start the ball rolling to form the Nation of Israel.
    - ii) At the same time, God still holds the 10 brothers accountable for their sin. Yes God knew in advance all of this was going to happen, but from our perspective, we don't know the future. God holds us accountable for our actions. We can't say to God, "You knew this was going to happen to me, why am I guilty of this sin?"
    - iii) My point of all of this is that Joseph mentions the "sold into slavery" part, as to show their sin, and at the same time forgive them and explain it was all part of God's redemptive plan for their live.
  - c) It might be important here to understand what is "confession" and "forgiveness".
    - i) The word for confession implies "agreement". It is to agree with God what you did was wrong and not make any excuses for it. To confess a sin is to agree with God that what you did is wrong.
    - ii) Again, God by definition is perfect. A perfect God can forgive perfectly.
      - a) If someone hurt you, and that person apologies, it is up to you whether or not you want to forgive them. The "victim" gets to decide whether or not to forgive. When we disobey God, in a sense, he is the "victim" of whom we must ask forgiveness. If we freely choose to follow God, we must do so on His terms and not ours. If we break one of His rules, we must "agree we did wrong" and that is confession. That Perfect God then chooses to forgive us perfectly. (I could go on to teach how a perfect sacrifice was made for our sins...but you get the idea...)
  - d) Which, surprisingly, leads us back to these verses: Joseph tells his brothers, "do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here".
    - i) Most people can accept the idea of God forgiving them.
    - ii) What we have a tough time doing is forgiving ourselves.
    - iii) It is really an egotistical thing to not forgive yourself. You are telling yourself, "I am a better person than this. I should not have done that".
    - iv) When you make that type of statement, you are elevating yourself better than what you are.
      - a) Look what Paul says: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18 NIV)
      - b) Paul's' point is to realize that we are not as good as we think we are.
      - c) If God is willing to forgive us of our sins, why are we not able to forgive ourselves? The answer often has to do with our own pride, thinking that we are better people than we really are.

- d) Notice what Paul said near the end of his life: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (1 Tim 1:15 NKJV)
- (1) Paul thought of himself as the “worse of all sinners”. That is a good thing for us to remember about ourselves. It does not mean for us to have a pity-party. It means for us to remember that the good we do comes from God and not ourselves.
- e) Meanwhile, back in Egypt, Verse 6: ☺
19. Verse 6: For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping.<sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.
- a) We now have a time frame of where we are. Remember Joseph told the Pharaoh there would be seven “good years” and seven “bad years”. We are now near the end of year two of the bad year.
- b) We also know how old Joseph was at this time. Joseph was 30 years old when he told the dreams to Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46). Adding seven “good years” and two “bad years” would now make Joseph 39.
- c) The number “39” in the bible is associated with mercy.
- i) This is because the number “40” is associated with judgment.
- a) Noah got rained on for 40 days and 40 nights. (Genesis 7:4)
- b) The Israelites were punished for 40 years (Numbers 14:33-34).
- ii) Since 39 is one less than 40, it is associated with “mercy”
- iii) Here is a word picture of a 39-year old Joseph showing mercy to his brothers.
- d) In Verse 7, notice the phrase “save your lives by a great deliverance.”
- i) It makes you wonder if Joseph knew about the great Exodus to come.
- ii) Joseph could have been just talking about the fact that he was saving the brothers from the famine, but it is also a hint of the bigger Exodus to come.
- iii) Remember the Israelites were to live in Egypt for 400 years before Moses was to lead them out. This information was first told to Joseph’s great grandfather Abraham. (Reference Genesis 15:13-14). I wonder if that knowledge was past on to Joseph and he understood the big picture.
20. Verse 8: "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.
- a) First, let’s not miss the big picture, the reason Joseph could forgive the brothers in the first place is because he saw life from God’s perspective and not ours.
- i) That is a great thing to remember during the difficult times in life. Instead of complaining and having a pity party, Joseph knew that God had a plan for his life and the pain was part of that plan.
- ii) I should add it does not mean we should lie there and accept pain and just say, “It is God’s will”. We may do that mentally, but since we don’t know what is God’s plan for us, we should also do what is reasonable to deal with that pain. For example, if we are sitting there with a toothache, we don’t ignore the dentist and just say, “I guess it’s God’s will for me to deal with this bad tooth!” ☺
- b) Notice the phrase “He (God) made me (Joseph) father to Pharaoh.
- i) Remember Joseph was the #2 man in Egypt, under Pharaoh.
- ii) Why would Joseph now say he is a father to Pharaoh?
- iii) History actually answered that question. Sometime during the last 7 good-year and 2 bad-years-so-far time span, a new Pharaoh came into power. Joseph is now like a “senior advisor” over the new young Pharaoh. Thus the cliché, “a father to Pharaoh”.
- a) If that is true, this is another act-of-faith on Joseph’s part.

- b) The new Pharaoh may not have kept Joseph in charge the way the old Pharaoh did. By Joseph saying "God has made me a father to Pharaoh" is giving glory to God that the new Pharaoh also left Joseph in charge.
21. Verse 9: Now hurry back to my father and say to him, "This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay."<sup>10</sup> You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me--you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.<sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'
- a) I love the fact that Joseph says, "hurry back to my father.... and this is what your son..."
- i) Despite all the years, Joseph still wants his father to know he has not abandoned him and desires that father and son relationship.
- b) You read this paragraph and you wonder whether or not Joseph "got it" about the Exodus. This paragraph implies that it was absolutely necessary for the whole family to live in Egypt. Let's face it Joseph was in charge. He could have told his father to stay put and every few months Joseph would make a grain shipment to keep them alive. The fact that he was insisting they live in Egypt makes you wonder if Joseph was told by God about the Exodus plan to get the whole family into Egypt.
- i) A related idea is that Joseph knew of the prophecy given to his great grandfather Abraham. As I mentioned awhile back Abraham was told of the 400 year Exodus (Genesis 15:13-14). Joseph knew this was the start of that period.
22. Verse 12: "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you."<sup>13</sup> Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."
- a) The brothers are still dealing with the shock that this is Joseph. There is a Jewish tradition that Joseph had to show he was circumcised to prove who he was to his brothers.
- b) Joseph is focused on getting his father down here and urges his brothers to describe the details. It is almost as if Joseph's faith is greater than his father. Joseph understood the big picture, and was now trying to be witness to his father about what is happening.
23. Verse 14: Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping.<sup>15</sup> And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.
- a) The emotion of the moment caught up with Joseph. Remember Benjamin was his only full-brother, while the others were half-brothers.
- b) The amazing part for me is the forgiveness on Joseph's part.
- i) He didn't hold any grudges and was willing to fully forgive them.
- ii) Forgiving someone for hurting you is a difficult thing to do. Grant it, when you are now the #2 man in Egypt with all sorts of stuff, it's a little easier to forgive than say, if Joseph was still a slave or in jail. ☺ Still, the lesson for us is when we see things from God's perspective, it is easier to forgive.
- iii) Sometimes we forget that part of the Lord's Prayer is "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12 NIV)
- a) When you go line by line through that prayer, every prayer request are things we want God to do for us. For example, "Give us this day our daily bread" is a request of God for us. The only line in that prayer for us to do is to forgive others. In fact, when Jesus finishes that prayer, the only follow up commentary is on that concept of forgiving others. (Ref.: Matthew 6:14). The point is we rely upon God's strength to forgive others, not our own self-discipline.
- iv) Which leads us back to Joseph. He saw life from God's perspective and God gave him the ability to forgive his brothers.

24. Verse 16: When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. <sup>17</sup> Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, <sup>18</sup> and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.'
- a) Notice what Pharaoh did not say. "Oh, you meet your family. We'll that's nice. Now get back to work." He did not say, "Oh, your family is here. Well, sell them food like everyone else and send them on their merry way." ☺
  - b) The point is God worked on the heart of Pharaoh to have Joseph's family move down to Egypt. My point is not everything God does comes from blunt instructions. An angel did not appear to Pharaoh telling them to let the family stay. God can, and does work in the hearts of nonbelievers to accomplish his will!
25. Verse 19: "You are also directed to tell them, 'Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. <sup>20</sup> Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.' "
- a) First of all, notice it is Pharaoh talking in Verse 19, not Joseph. He is the one telling Joseph to tell his brothers to go get the wives and kids and bring them to Egypt.
  - b) Let's get back to their father Jacob. Remember there are no phones. From Jacob's perspective he is home worrying. He is wondering which of his brothers, if any would come back alive. When he sees them, they will be traveling with some top quality Egyptian-chariot U-Hauls® full of stuff. ☺ The Pharaoh tells the brothers to leave their own stuff here in Egypt because the "best of all Egypt will be yours".
    - i) The point from Jacob's perspective is that when you are willing to "let go" of what you treasure" in order to trust God, He usually turns around and gives you far greater than what you originally let go of in the first place!
26. Verse 21: So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. <sup>22</sup> To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. <sup>23</sup> And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. <sup>24</sup> Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!"
- a) The text emphasizes that Joseph gave more stuff to Benjamin than all the other brothers.
  - b) Remember that Joseph put the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Benjamin was not part of the plan to sell Joseph into slavery and was innocent of his brother's crime.
    - i) This is probably Joseph "making up" to Benjamin for that incident.
    - ii) This is a good reminder that God allows bad things to happen to us even when it was "not our fault". Joseph used Benjamin to test his brothers. The purpose of Benjamin suffering had nothing to do with the innocence or guilt of Benjamin.
    - iii) The point for us to remember is when we go through some sort of trial, it may be for someone else's benefit and not our own.
    - iv) Joseph "made it up" to Benjamin, as God does to us.
  - c) The last part of Verse 24 says, "Don't quarrel on the way!".
    - i) Joseph was remembering their old human nature. Maybe Joseph was concerned because Benjamin got more stuff and worried about that on the journey.
    - ii) Further, I think Joseph wanted the brothers to be a good witness to their father. Quarrelling among yourselves does not make you a good witness to outsiders.
    - iii) Joseph probably understood that even though He has forgiven his brothers, they probably haven't forgiven themselves yet. That anger may cause them to quarrel.
      - a) Joseph like God forgave them of their sin, but their sin nature was still there. This is why the phrase, "sin no more" is common in the bible in one form or another. It is the reminder that once we are forgiven, we still have to battle our old sinful nature and stay close to God in order to do so.

27. Verse 25: So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. <sup>26</sup> They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. <sup>27</sup> But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. <sup>28</sup> And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."
- a) The one fact most commentators pick up on is:
    - i) When the brothers told Jacob that Joseph was dead, Jacob believed them. (Reference: Genesis 37:33).
    - ii) When Jacob was told that Joseph was alive again Verse 26, Jacob did not believe them.
    - iii) It wasn't until Jacob saw all the "stuff" that Jacob believed Joseph was alive.
  - b) What's the lesson of that little story? I'm so glad you asked! ☺
    - i) This is about being a witness for God. Sometimes just telling people about God is not enough. They need to see "evidence". The best evidence is a changed life. People can argue all day about God. They can't argue with a personal testimony of how your life has changed. If people see you change for the better than evidence, combined with stating the truth about God is the best witness.
  - c) The great lesson again, is to see this from Jacob's perspective.
    - i) Jacob had lost his favorite son many years ago.
    - ii) Jacob wanted Joseph to lead his brothers, and gave him the "long sleeved coat".
    - iii) Jacob knew that Joseph predicted he would be leader over his brothers with the dream. Jacob "gave up" on that prediction when he thought Joseph was dead.
      - a) Think of all the times Jesus promised the disciples he would come back to life but the disciples didn't believe Jesus!
    - iv) When Joseph became alive again, he didn't believe it until he saw evidence.
    - v) When Joseph became alive again, the whole family was "forgiven and saved".
    - vi) Despite the famine, Jacob's family was preserved through that famine.
    - vii) For those of you familiar with the book of Revelation, you can have a field day comparing Jacob and his family to the Nation of Israel.
      - a) One of the great lessons of the bible is that God is not through with the Nation of Israel. God promised that land belonged to that nation. That promise was not conditional upon accepting Jesus.
      - b) Therefore, it is not about "how good" the modern Jewish people are, but about God keeping his promises. If we as Christians cannot trust God's unconditional promise to the Nation of Israel, how can we ever trust God's promises to us through Jesus?
      - c) Therefore, the Nation of Israel is persevered through the tribulation period.
      - d) In Genesis, we have a prophetic word-picture of Jacob and his family, who form the nation of Israel, being preserved and forgiven by a "resurrected" Joseph, "one of their own" who forgave them of their sins!
        - (1) (That gives me shivers when I think about this! ☺)
  - d) Over and above the prophetic word-pictures, the great lesson to us is about "Letting go and letting God".
    - i) God has a wonderful plan for our lives as well as Jacob's family. That plan requires trust. Often that plan requires suffering in getting God's will done. Mostly, that plan requires trust on our part.
28. Let's pray: Father, the most difficult thing you ask us to do is to trust you with our lives. If is difficult to "let go" as we want to accomplish our wills and not yours. Help us to remember that you have plans for our lives. Help us to comprehend there is more to the picture than what we comprehend at that moment. Last, help us to remember there is a resurrected Jesus who has paid the price for us and we are loved and forgiven of our sins. Amen.