



Lesson 27

Joseph Revealed to his Brothers

In our last lesson we saw how Joseph tested his brothers. He wanted to know if they were still behaving as they had done when they sold him into slavery. Through everything he did to them he learned that they were changed men; they were concerned for their father and youngest brother, Benjamin, and deeply troubled by what they had done to Joseph long ago.



I am Joseph!

Imagine the scene that now follows. Joseph sends all his Egyptian servants out and tells his brothers who he is. This powerful Governor of Egypt who seemed to be opposed to them is none other than their long lost brother, Joseph! It seems that he spoke to them in their own Hebrew language for the first time (previously he had spoken through an interpreter, see Chapter 42:23). They were terrified!

“And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.” Genesis 45:3

A joyful reunion then took place and Joseph showed his understanding of why these things had happened to him, *‘God sent me before you to preserve life’*. What a change we see in him, previously when he married an Egyptian, he called his first son ‘Manasseh’ which means ‘forgetting’ because he thought God had caused him to forget all his family. Now he realises how much he loved them and has missed them. He learns a great lesson about himself, that love and forgiveness can be more powerful than hatred and anger.

Joseph and Jesus

We have not yet looked at the life of Joseph as one which pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ, but there are many similarities between the two.

Like Joseph Jesus was:

- His Father’s beloved son.
- Born to rule over his people.
- Hated by his people.
- Put to death by them (the brothers thought that Joseph was dead).
- A man who prayed for his people and forgave them for what they did to him.
- Chosen by God to be their saviour.
- Finally acknowledged joyfully by his brothers.

Jacob hears the Good News

Joseph sent his brothers back to Canaan to tell their father the good news and to invite him to return with them to settle in Egypt. The famine had another five years to go and life in Canaan must have been very hard. They went with wagons laden with food and many presents. It cannot have been easy for them to speak to their father. They must have been filled with shame as they told him about the way they had sold





Joseph into slavery many years before. Yet he was not angry with them, he longed to go to Egypt to see his long lost son.

The family settles in Egypt

As Jacob set off, it is clear that he had his doubts. He really wanted to see Joseph but it meant leaving the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and himself. He stopped at Beer-sheba, where his grandfather and father had both lived, and took the problem to God in prayer and sacrifice. God told him:

“Jacob, Jacob. And he said, "Here am I."

Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.

I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.”
Genesis 46:2-4

Why did God instruct Jacob and his whole family to resettle in Egypt? It seems to be completely against everything that we have learned about God's promises so far in Genesis. There are a number of clues that tell us the answer.

1. Dinah, Jacob's daughter had a sexual relationship with a Canaanite prince and was tempted to marry him.
2. One of the brothers, Judah, had married a Canaanite woman and had sons by her.
3. Another son, Simeon, had married a Canaanite woman and had a son by her.

Abraham had been told to leave his extended family and his father's house. He, his wife and children were to be completely separate from other nations, especially nations like those who lived in Canaan. All the people who lived around the family were worshippers of false gods and there was a serious risk that, if they intermarried with them, then they would be tempted to leave the worship of the one true God and become idolatrous. Jacob's family was in danger of forgetting this and becoming linked with the idolatrous people of the land. So God took them out of Canaan and into Egypt.

Joseph knew of this risk to his brothers because he arranged for them to live in a part of Egypt called Goshen which was isolated from the rest of the country and from the worship of Egyptian gods.

Jacob sent Judah ahead to ensure that all the arrangements were in order. He has now become the son whom Jacob trusted more than any of the others because of the way he behaved when sent to Egypt previously.

So the Lord God took the children of Israel out of Canaan with all its temptations and put them in an isolated part of Egypt so that they could flourish and become a great and separate nation.

The family, which now numbered seventy men, travelled in distinct groups. Each son looked after his wife and children. In this pattern we see the beginning of the twelve tribes of Israel that descended from the twelve sons.

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned:

- Sometimes we can be deeply hurt when someone we love very much betrays us. We need to learn that forgiveness and love are the best solution.
- God tests His children in their lives to see what is really in their hearts.
- Joseph was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He helps us to see Jesus more clearly when we turn to the New Testament.
- Disciples of the Lord Jesus should keep themselves separate from the world.

