

Joseph's Dreams Come True

Text: Genesis 41:53-42:38

Introduction:

1. In this section, the 7-year famine begins and Joseph's 10 older brothers come to Egypt to buy food.
2. At this juncture, it is helpful to remind ourselves of some of the key time markers in Joseph's life.
 - Joseph is 17 when he is sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:2).
 - Joseph is elevated to ruler of Egypt at the age of 30 (Gen. 41:16).
 - The seven years of plenty have ended and the seven years of drought have commenced (Gen. Gen. 41:53).
 - Joseph reconciles with his brothers during their second visit to Egypt which was at the end of the 2nd year of the 7-year period (Gen. 45:6).
 - Therefore, Joseph would have been approx. 38 when he first saw his brothers (21 years since he was sold) and 39 when reconciliation finally took place (22 years since he was sold).
3. Finally, after over 2 decades of waiting, the time had come for what God had revealed to Joseph through his dreams to be fulfilled. The wheels of Divine justice may turn slowly but they turn surely! In this section we will see God fulfilling His Word and using Joseph to stir his brothers' consciences.
4. We will divide the account before us into **five sections** for our expository study as we follow Joseph's brothers' journey into Egypt and the key events that take place.

I. THE CATALYST FOR THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 41:53-42:5)

The famine was Providentially used of God to set events in motion that would see His Word fulfilled in Joseph's life and ultimately, His chosen people preserved through Joseph in Egypt.

A. The Start of the Famine (Vs. 53-54a)

1. Joseph's prophecy was 100% accurate "according as Joseph had said" (Vs. 54). The seven years of plenty terminated right on time and the seven years of dearth commenced exactly on time. The world may try and guess the future but only the Word of God can predict it with 100% accuracy.
2. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Joseph predicted a seven-year period of tribulation that would come upon the world in his day. In like manner, Jesus Christ prophesied concerning the future, seven-year period of Great Tribulation that will come upon the whole world in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Luke 17; Mark 13).

B. The Scope of the Famine (Vs. 54, 56a, 57)

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1. The drought impacted Egypt specifically.
2. The drought impacted the world generally.
 - a. "and the dearth was in all lands" (Vs. 54)
 - b. "And the famine was over all the face of the earth" (Vs. 56)
 - c. "And all countries came into Egypt...to buy corn" (Vs. 57)

C. The Solution to the Famine (Vs. 54b-57)

1. The cry of the people for bread (Vs. 55)
 - a. The people were 'famished' because of the famine and cried to Pharaoh for bread.
 - b. Note the emphasis on "bread" in these verses.
 - i. "but in all the land of Egypt there was bread" (Vs. 54)
 - ii. "the people cried to Pharaoh for bread" (Vs. 55)
2. The counsel to the people for bread (Vs. 55b)
 - a. Pharaoh counsel to the famished, needy people was clear, "God unto Joseph".
 - b. They came and Joseph opened the storehouses and provided what the Egyptians needed. Not only was Joseph the dispenser of life giving, life sustaining grain to Egypt but also to the whole world (Vs. 57).
3. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Joseph was the only source of life-giving bread for the world at that time. The great need for a drought stricken, needy people was for bread to sustain physical life. They came to Joseph and he satisfied their hunger out of the vast storehouses of grain under his control. What a picture of Christ! Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life and He is the only source of life for sin sick, hungry souls. John 6:35 "And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.**" Again, in verse 48 Jesus states, "**I am that bread of life.**" And again, in verse 51, "**I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**"
4. Challenge: The solution for physical needs that day was "Go to Joseph". Our message to you today is "**Go to Jesus!**" Only the Lord Jesus can satisfy your hungering heart. Have you been to Christ who has the solution for all your needs, especially the needs of your eternal soul?

D. The Sending because of the Famine (Vs. 1-5)

1. The scene now switches from Joseph in Egypt to Joseph's family back in Canaan where they too are now feeling the effects of this widespread famine.
2. Jacob hears that corn is available in Egypt and exhorts his sons to go and purchase some for their survival. Jacob's question "Why do ye look one upon another" seems to indicate there was some

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reluctance on the part of his sons to go to Egypt. Could it be their guilt was stirred when they heard the name “Egypt” and they remembered what they had done to Joseph all those years ago?

3. It is noted that ten of Joseph’s brothers go to Egypt. Jacob keeps Benjamin home with him fearing that something might happen to him if he accompanies his older brothers.
4. Little did the ten brothers know what God had in store for them as they journeyed to the land of Egypt.

II. THE CONFRONTATION IN THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 6-17)

Joseph’s brothers arrive in Egypt and make their way along with others to the place where grain is being sold to people from other countries. The brothers come face to face with their brother Joseph, the now Governor of Egypt, albeit, they do not recognize him. Observe what takes place in this confrontation:

A. The Dreams that were Fulfilled (Vs. 6-9a)

1. Joseph’s brothers come and bow down before him with their faces to the ground, not knowing that they were bowing before their brother Joseph and fulfilling what God had revealed through his dreams over 20 years earlier. They had mocked Joseph as “the Dreamer” but now the dreamers dreams were coming true. That’s because they were not dreams of his own making but were Divine, prophetic Revelation from God Almighty.
2. Why did Joseph’s brothers not recognize him? Joseph was only 17 when they sold him into slavery. He had now developed into a mature man of about 38 years. He was also clean shaven, dressed in the attire of a high ranking Egyptian official and spoke the Egyptian language.
3. Note: Joseph’s second dream specifically highlights that his 11 brothers would bow before him. This would be fulfilled during the second trip to Egypt when Benjamin accompanied his brothers.
4. Can you imagine what must have been going through Joseph’s heart and mind when he saw his ten estranged brothers bowed before him. The Bible gives us a window into what Joseph was thinking at this time – “And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them”.

B. The Dialogue that Followed (Vs. 9b-17)

1. Joseph was given wisdom from the Lord not to reveal his identity at this time and to react prudently in the situation. Some accuse Joseph of being revengeful in his actions but that is not correct. The testimony of Joseph’s life disproves such accusations. We do not get a hint of hatred, bitterness or desire for revenge in Joseph. He was possessed of a sweet, forgiving and humble spirit. If Joseph

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was truly revengeful, he could have had them slain with one command. Practically speaking, Joseph had absolute authority over the land of Egypt.

2. In reality, Joseph understood the connection between **repentance and reconciliation**. Joseph wanted to see a change of mind and heart in his brothers before revealed his identity. God was going to use this unique situation to do a work in Joseph's rough, tough brothers. We would do well to remember this principle in a day that advocates for a cheap form of reconciliation that sweeps serious sin under the rug with fake smiles all round! Absalom reconciliation doesn't work in the long term. The wrongs must be made right!
3. Henry Morris writes, "He (Joseph) wanted first of all to determine their true attitudes and then to set events in motion which would finally bring them to a true attitude of repentance and unity toward God and among themselves. Therefore, he acted harshly and as though he were very suspicious of their motives in coming into Egypt."
4. Joseph's actions also revealed **patience** on his part. He had already waited over 20 years and it would have been human to rush at this point but God enabled him to wait a bit longer. It is an old saying that "the longest way round is the shortest way home," and we have a striking example of this in Joseph's treatment of his brethren.
5. Note: Christ paid the price on the cross to make reconciliation between you and God Almighty possible but you must be willing to repent and receive it! Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
6. Joseph puts his brothers through a similar experience to what they had put him through. F.B. Meyer writes, "I believe he (Joseph) repeated exactly the scene at the pit's mouth; and indeed, we may perhaps see what really happened there, reflected in the mirror of this scene."
 - a. He accused them (Vs. 9-16).
 - i. "And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and **spake roughly unto them**" (Vs. 7)
 - ii. "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come" (Vs. 9, 12, 14, 16b).
 - iii. Very likely, Joseph's brothers had accused Joseph of coming to spy on them when he came to check on them at his father's bidding (Genesis 37). We know for a fact that they called him the "dreamer" (Gen. 37:19).
 - b. He imprisoned them (Vs. 17).

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- i. Joseph's brothers had thrown him into a pit; Joseph throws his brothers into prison for three days.
 - ii. Joseph's original proposal was that they all remain in prison and one be sent back to fetch the youngest brother (Benjamin). Like his brothers had done to him, he moved from a harsher to a lighter sentence.
7. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph put his brethren through a period of testing to bring them to repentance. In like manner, Christ will put Israel through the Great Tribulation to bring her to repentance.

III. THE CONVICTION IN THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 17-24)

God uses these events in the lives of Joseph's brothers to awaken their consciences.

A. The Confinement that Prompted Conviction (Vs. 17-20)

1. Joseph's brothers had three days confinement to think and reflect on things. Sometimes we bury the promptings of conscience with the busyness of life and God has to put us in a quiet, solitary place to do a deeper work in us. This is why extended seasons in God's Word and prayer are so beneficial (e.g., camps, conferences, all nights of prayer). As we are still, the Spirit of God convicts us about areas in our lives we are brushing aside or ignoring that require repentance.
2. The significance of what was happening was not lost on these brothers. Here they were in Egypt, the very place to which they had sold Joseph as a slave, and all these things were happening to them. For over 20 years they had maintained the lie about Joseph and tried to push it to the back of their minds but God would not allow them to get away with it any longer.
3. The word 'conscience' literally means "joint-knowledge; to know together". It has to do with the consciousness of the distinction between right and wrong with approval or disapproval.
 - a. Romans 2:14-15 says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience also bearing witness**, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"
 - b. We get a sense for the meaning of the Word from its first occurrence in the Bible where Jesus challenged the Pharisees in relation to the woman taken in adultery, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7) Verse 9 says, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even

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unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

- c. Conscience is a function of the spirit of man and is one of the key things that makes us different from the animal kingdom. When a lion tears apart an innocent lamb and devours it, it has no remorse or guilt. However, when a human being commits sin, he will usually have feelings of guilt, at least initially.
- d. “Conscience is the “knowing” part of us, that which “knows together” with God, and agrees with the revelation of right which comes from Him.” (W.H. Griffith Thomas)
- e. Note: Remember, the conscience is not an infallible guide as it can be “seared” (1 Tim. 4:2) and “defiled” (Titus 1:15). To follow the popular saying “Let conscience be your guide” is dangerous. Let the Word of God guide your conscience! The conscience functions best when it is shaped, molded and informed by the Word of God. The Word of God (particularly the law) can awaken the conscience (Rom. 3:19, Heb. 4:12). Proverbs 20:27 “The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

B. The Confession that Revealed Conviction (Vs. 21-24)

This conversation amongst the brothers is one of the most striking examples in the Scriptures of the power of conscience. It reveals that their consciences were being awaked by the events in their lives at this time that had been orchestrated by the Providence of God.

1. The conversation of their confession (Vs. 21-22)
 - a. They admitted their guilt over their mistreatment of Joseph – “We are verily guilty concerning our brother”. The word ‘verily’ means ‘truly’. This was a sincere admission of guilt.
 - b. They acknowledged they were reaping what they had sown – “therefore is this distress come upon us”.
 - c. Note: In order to be saved we must come to the place where we are willing to sincerely and humbly admit our guilt before God – “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (Lk. 15:18, 21). 1 John 1:9 “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God will justify the man who comes to him in the spirit of the repentant publican – “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, **God be merciful to me a sinner**. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...” (Lk. 8:13-14). You cannot come to God with a “not guilty” plea (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12). Salvation from sin and eternal life in heaven is only for repentant sinners.
2. The reaction to their confession (Vs. 23-24)

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- a. These verses reveal an important detail. Joseph was communicating to them through an interpreter to conceal his identity. If he was to speak to them in Hebrew, it would give him away. Joseph's brothers are conversing in their native tongue, not knowing that Joseph quietly was understanding every word.
- b. Joseph, overcome with emotion at hearing their confession of guilt, leaves the room and cries his eyes out. This is the first of six times when Joseph weeps. He also wept when he saw his brother Benjamin (43:29-30), when he revealed himself to his brothers (45:2), when he met his father in Egypt (46:29), when his father died (50:1) and when he assured his brothers they were truly forgiven (50:17). Joseph's life was a tear-stained life but a life mightily used of God.
- c. Joseph's tears reveal more of his heart. They revealed the depth of the pain he had been through as well as his heart of love for the ones who had wronged him so greatly.
- d. Note: It is not un-Christian or unmanly to cry at times. Ecc. 7:3 "Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."
- e. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph wept over his estranged, guilty brothers. Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem and his brethren according to the flesh, the Jewish people. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Lk. 19:41). Christ wept in the garden of Gethsemane as he was faced with the shadow of the cross and being made sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus Christ wept for you, me and the world that night and in love went to the cross to pay the price for our redemption (Compare Heb. 5:7 & Lk. 22:44).
- f. Question: Why was Simeon selected to remain in prison? Simeon is noted in Scripture for his cruelty (Gen. 34:25, 49:5). It is quite possible that he had been the main one calling for Joseph's murder in Dothan.

IV. THE COMPASSION IN THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 25-28)

A. The Provisions of Joseph's Compassion (Vs. 25-26)

1. While Joseph was actively working towards his brother's repentance, he also showed mercy and grace towards them.
2. We see evidence of this in Joseph's actions of love:
 - a. Joseph allowed 9 of the 10 brothers to return in order to feed the hungry families waiting back in Canaan – "go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses" (Vs. 19).
 - b. Joseph provided corn for his brothers – "Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn" (Vs. 25a).

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- c. Joseph restored their money – “and to restore every man’s money into his sack” (Vs. 25b)
- d. Joseph gave them provisions for the journey – “and to give them provision for the way” (Vs. 25c).
- e. “Joseph’s command to restore every man’s money into his sack and to give them provision for the way is another indication of his true feelings towards them. There is nothing more striking in the character of Joseph than the utter absence of revengeful feeling...At each step of his journey he shows the true forgiving spirit of the man to whom God is a supreme and blessed reality. There are some people who never seem to get over slight and injustice. They brood over them and take almost every opportunity of pouring out their wrongs and indulging a revengeful spirit. To such people, “Revenge is sweet,” and they take a pleasure in repaying people in their own coin. Not so with Joseph. To revenge may be human, but to forgive is Divine.”
(Thomas)

3. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph’s brothers were totally undeserving of Joseph’s compassion and love but that is the definition of grace. Grace is showing kindness and favour to one who does not deserve it. We are totally undeserving of God’s love and salvation. That is why salvation is by grace alone through faith alone to the glory of God alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

B. The Proving from Joseph’s Compassion (Vs. 27-28)

1. Joseph’s action in returning the money was not only an act of compassion. It was calculated to be another test. He is being used of God to both chasten and care for his wayward brothers. What a picture of our God who both chastens us and compassionately cares for us at the same time.
2. One of the brothers opened a sack of grain at the inn on the way home to feed his ass and discovered the money. The brothers again recognize the hand of God is upon them – “What is this that God hath done unto us?” Their consciences are getting increasingly softer through these difficult experiences.

V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 29-38)

These verses record the aftermath of the Egypt trip upon the brother’s arrival back home to Jacob and Benjamin. Note the responses:

A. The Family – A Fearful Response (Vs. 29-35)

1. The report upon their return (Vs. 29-34)
 - a. The brothers recount their experiences in Egypt to their father Jacob.

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- b. Notice that they repeat the line that Joseph was dead. By this stage they probably believed that Joseph had probably died as a slave in Egypt given the historical treatment of slaves at that time.
2. The discovery upon their return (Vs. 35)
 - a. As the they open the remaining sacks of grain, they discover that the money had been returned to each sack, not just the one that had been opened back at the inn on their journey home (Vs. 27-28).
 - b. It was particularly the discovery of the returned money that made both Jacob and his sons to be afraid. In the context of how the problems they had encountered with Egypt's governor, they no doubt feared that they could be accused of stealing and punished severely if they returned.

B. The Father – A Faithless Response (Vs. 36-38)

1. Jacob was seeing the situation from the human standpoint alone at this point when he exclaims, “all these things are against me.” In reality, God was actually for Jacob and was working all things together for his good. Jacob could not see how God's hand was at work in these circumstances. His perspective was that of sight, not faith.
2. We so often repeat the same mistake as Jacob. We feel at times like everything is against us when in reality God is working all things together for our ultimate good and His own glory.
3. Romans 8:28 “And we know that **all things work together for good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

C. The Firstborn – A Foolish Response (Vs. 37)

Reuben's instability again highlighted in his rash suggestion. His suggestion was both foolish and unjust:

1. Foolish in that it is inconceivable that a man like Jacob would derive any satisfaction from losing two of his grandsons in the event of losing his youngest son.
2. Unjust in that it would be totally wrong to punish two innocent boys for something that had nothing to do with them.
3. Despite Reuben's instability, we do discern an honourable heart motive beneath it all. He obviously cared deeply about his father's distress and was trying to impress upon his father how seriously he would take the responsibility of caring for Benjamin.

Conclusion: Have you been reconciled to God? Will you repent and receive God's gift of salvation? How are you viewing your trials (for you or against you)?