

# CONCERNING THE WAY

June 17, 2008



## LESSON 21: GENESIS: BIRTH OF A NATION

### Introduction - Joseph, Part 2

This week we'll continue the story of Joseph, and watch as God completes His plan for getting the family of Israel into Egypt, where they will grow, and remain a separated people. - *Dusty Rhodes*

### Genesis Chapter 42

Now notice that when God began to move, the Egyptians move off to one side in the story. Starting with Genesis 42 the emphasis of focus is on the Jewish family of Jacob again. And Joseph is key over both sides. He is the key judge of Egypt; he is the key savior of the Jew.

**Genesis 42:1** *When Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you looking at each other?" (2) He then said, "Look, I hear that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy grain for us so that we may live and not die."*

I love this, it's a very sarcastic thing in the original text. It says well, what are you standing there looking at each other for, go down and get me some grain. So, you can tell things haven't improved in the 13 years since Joseph left home; the sons are as big a spiritual clods as they ever were, they still can't make decisions. Here's a man who ought to be taken care of by his sons, after all these boys are now about 40 to 50. You would think sometime, somewhere in the development of this family somebody would assume some responsibility.

**Genesis 42:3-4** *So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. (4) But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "What if some accident happens to him?"*

Let's think about Jacob a little. Jacob knows that he has been given a plan by God, a plan that cannot fail. Jacob realizes from his stone staircase dream of Genesis 28 that God is going to work through his home. But notice, knowing that does not make Jacob a fatalist. He doesn't lie back and say well, whatever's going to come to pass is going to come to pass, and this is often what people do when they get onto the sovereignty of God. But Jacob knows he's going to die if he doesn't take action.

Jacob has good reason to be afraid that something would happen to Benjamin since something happened to Joseph. Jacob loved Rachel more than his other wives and the handmaids and so on, and all his other sons. Jacob emotionally feels closer to those two sons than he does any other of his sons because they are the last living remnants of the woman he so loved, therefore he cherishes those two sons over his other sons.

We've already seen him make the mistake of favoring Joseph, which encouraged jealousy in the home. We see now that he's still favoring the sons of Rachel and you'll see where this gets him as we go on through the story. God will deal with this.

**Genesis 42:5-6** *So Israel's sons came to buy grain among the other travelers, for the famine was severe in the land of Canaan. (6) Now Joseph was the ruler of the country, the one who sold grain to all the people of the country. Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the ground.*

Joseph is called “the ruler,” and this is a word that is used in the Hebrew text uniquely for Joseph; it comes from a broader verb and it means to have dominion or to have mastery over and I think it’s a compliment to Joseph’s sanctification. Joseph spends 13 years of his life getting sanctified so that he can take the pressure of prosperity, so he won’t lord it over his family, because that’s exactly where he was headed. God has put him a position of deliverer of his family. Now he is ready for it.

So now let’s watch Joseph work. He doesn’t walk up to Reuben, Simeon, and say you were bad boys. First of all, Reuben is the firstborn in this Hebrew family and there is still rank in the family. Joseph is going to figure out a way of producing repentance on the part of his brothers and his father without violating the family authority and he executes it beautifully. It takes him a couple of chapters to do this, but keep in mind through all the twists in this story, that Joseph is trying to bring his brothers to repentance.

**Genesis 42:7-13** *When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger to them and spoke to them harshly. He asked, "Where do you come from?" They answered, "From the land of Canaan, to buy grain for food." (8) Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. (9) Then Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see if our land is vulnerable!" (10) But they exclaimed, "No, my lord! Your servants have come to buy grain for food! (11) We are all the sons of one man; we are honest men! Your servants are not spies." (12) "No," he insisted, "but you have come to see if our land is vulnerable." (13) They replied, "Your servants are from a family of twelve brothers. We are the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is with our father at this time, and one is no longer alive."*

Joseph is master over the land; as master over the land when people come in from foreign countries he’s got to inspect them. Why? Because the only country in that area of the world, the only one with grain, is Egypt and Egypt isn’t going to allow, particularly in the very delicate area of the Nile, invaders from other countries to come in and steal the grain.

You can just see him standing there and he’s watched hundreds of people go by getting inspected, and all of a sudden he sees his brothers. He knows what they are because they haven’t changed that much; it’s been 13 years but the older boys haven’t changed that much, but he was only a boy, and he’s changed quite a bit. They don’t recognize him, especially decked out as an Egyptian lord, their eyes just aren’t looking for this. Notice in verse 9 he remembers the dream. He remembers that the entire family bowed down to him, but they’re not all here yet.

**Genesis 42:15-17** *You will be tested in this way: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not depart from this place unless your youngest brother comes here. (16) One of you must go and get your brother, while the rest of you remain in prison. In this way your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If not, then, as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" (17) He imprisoned them all for three days.*

Why does Joseph pick Benjamin? Because Joseph knew his father and he says I’ve got to get those

other three down here. I don't have to call Jacob down, I just have to call the bait down; if I get Benjamin down here dad will come down, too, because Jacob can't stand to be separated from Benjamin.

Now why does he put the brothers in jail? Not because he's vengeful but he knows that his brothers are very tough nuts to crack; you've seen this, he remembers the incident with Dinah and his own experience; he remembers the rebelliousness that exists in this home. That kind of rebelliousness is not going to be dealt with until spiritually something just really yanks the leash, hard. So he puts them in the cooler for three days so they'll think about the boy that they put in the hole. And this is going to give them time to think about what kind of a mess they're in.

**Genesis 42:18-20** *On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do as I say and you will live, for I fear God. (19) If you are honest men, leave one of your brothers confined here in prison while the rest of you go and take grain back for your hungry families. (20) But you must bring your youngest brother to me. Then your words will be verified and you will not die." They did as he said.*

Now Joseph witnesses to them. Understand that the word "fear" in this context means I am under the authority of Elohim. Now that is powerful stuff, here they are in a foreign land and this guy is Vice President, and he says I operate under the authority of Elohim and he uses the Jewish word for God. Well you'd think this would have made some bells ring; how does this guy know about Elohim; who is this guy? But it doesn't dawn on them yet.

So Joseph plays with them some more. Now look what he's done; now he's keeping one man in the prison, he's sending nine home to get the one to get the family back down there. What has he done? He's become progressively lenient. You see, Joseph isn't hostile, he isn't vengeful, he's just putting the heat on enough to set in motion the wheels of reconciliation. When he gets through, these guys are going to see their sins, and they're going to confess it.

**Genesis 42:21-24** *They said to one other, "Surely we're being punished because of our brother, because we saw how distressed he was when he cried to us for mercy, but we refused to listen. That is why this distress has come on us!" (22) Reuben said to them, "Didn't I say to you, 'Don't sin against the boy,' but you wouldn't listen? So now we must pay for shedding his blood!" (23) (Now they did not know that Joseph could understand them, for he was speaking through an interpreter.) (24) He turned away from them and wept. When he turned around and spoke to them again, he had Simeon taken from them and tied up before their eyes.*

The first step works, already there's beginning to be a repentance over the sin of hatred in that home and that's what's got to take place. Joseph, as a godly deliverer isn't going to physically deliver them, he's got to spiritually deliver them first.

These guys think that they are perfectly secure because they're speaking Hebrew and this guy's got an interpreter so he doesn't understand what they're talking about. Joseph is sitting there listening to it all; he knows Hebrew, he hasn't forgotten it in 13 years and he hears every word they're saying.

And the reaction in verse 24 is put in there so you can understand that this is not done out of vengeful tactics. One reason he weeps is because verse 22 is a revelation to Joseph, he didn't know that before; apparently he wasn't aware that Reuben tried to take steps when he was thrown in the cistern

Why did he choose Simeon to be the one who would stay in prison? He's the second oldest son. It could be he thought of Reuben first, but after he heard Reuben tried to save his life he decided to take Simeon instead.

**Genesis 42:25-28** *Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return each man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. His orders were carried out. (26) So they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. (27) When one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey at their resting place, he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. (28) He said to his brothers, "My money was returned! Here it is in my sack!" They were dismayed; they turned trembling one to another and said, "What in the world has God done to us?"*

But they've got another sin, it's the sin of theft, a disrespect of property, the idea they can do what they want where they want with whatever they want. So Joseph is going to teach them a little lesson to nudge their conscience about that.

**Genesis 42:29-35** *They returned to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan and told him all the things that had happened to them, saying, (30) "The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly to us and treated us as if we were spying on the land. (31) But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies! (32) We are from a family of twelve brothers; we are the sons of one father. One is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father at this time in the land of Canaan.' (33) "Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for your hungry households and go. (34) But bring your youngest brother back to me so I will know that you are honest men and not spies. Then I will give your brother back to you and you may move about freely in the land.' " (35) When they were emptying their sacks, there was each man's bag of money in his sack! When they and their father saw the bags of money, they were afraid.*

What are they afraid of? Being charged with theft. The first time they went down there they were charged with being spies. They know this guy kept records, he's going to say hey, how come our money disappeared after you guys left here last time? So they're going to be prime suspects for thievery and this is going to make them sensitive to respect for property.

**Genesis 42:36-38** *Their father Jacob said to them, "You are making me childless! Joseph is gone. Simeon is gone. And now you want to take Benjamin! Everything is against me." (37) Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my care and I will bring him back to you." (38) But Jacob replied, "My son will not go down there with you, for his brother is dead and he alone is left. If an accident happens to him on the journey you have to make, then you will bring down my gray hair in sorrow to the grave."*

The story in chapter 42 doesn't end with a happy ending. It ends with a sad ending because there's still an impediment to Joseph's plan here, his own father. Here is an attitude of an old man who has not responded biblically to the hurts of life. And this is often true of older people who can develop a very bitter spirit as a result of what they consider to be injustices done them.

Jacob doesn't understand that he's facing a little test from the Lord. What's the test? The most cherished thing this old man has left in life, who has had one heartache after another in life. Some of these heartaches have been due to his own foolishness. But he's already lost one last memory of his beloved Rachel and now he's about to lose the last one. So he does what most believers will do,

when God wants to get rid of something in our lives that we hold dear. We clutch, we hold on and so we have Jacob saying at the end of verse 36 “everything is against me.”

What do we do when we fight the will of God in our lives? We create our own little solutions to give us security. Jacob is going to persist in having his way; we’ll find out that God says to Jacob, I’m sorry, the famine is going to go on six more years and sometime in the future the grain is going to give out once again and you can say no all you want to, buddy, but you’re going to come down here and you’re going to give up your son and you’re going to trust Me with him. Now God isn’t going to take away his son; God hasn’t taken away his first son, has He? Jacob just thinks that. But because he hasn’t learned to be thankful he’s learned to be bitter and he’s learned to say the opposite, that everything is against me.

## Genesis Chapter 43

**Genesis 43:1-2** *Now the famine was severe in the land. (2) When they finished eating the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Return, buy us a little more food."*

God is using the famine to change Jacob now. Notice the word “little,” why a little, why not a lot? Because he really doesn’t want to confront the situation in Egypt and he hopes that if the boys go down there and just buy a little food at a roadside stand they won’t have to confront Joseph because then we have to bring Benjamin down. If we bring Benjamin down I have to confront my own unbelief and I don’t want to do that, that’s painful to my pride. And so not wanting to face my real problem I’ll try to scooch around the problem.

Now doesn’t that strike us all as very familiar? We hope that the pressure that God puts in our life, will just somehow end early enough so that we can scooch around with a kind of makeshift solution, get around it, and go on our merry way without ever having confronted what it was that God wanted us to confront.

**Genesis 43:3-5** *But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.' (4) If you send our brother with us, we'll go down and buy food for you. (5) But if you will not send him, we won't go down there because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.' "*

This shows another element in God’s pressure cooker. Not only does He bring an external condition but He brings authority in. You’ll notice these rebellious brothers at least recognize authority by the time of verses 3-5. They recognize authority so completely they are willing to disobey their own father because of their fear of the authority.

**Genesis 43:6** *Israel said, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had one more brother?"*

Notice Jacob’s name used here. As Jacob is progressively sanctified, as he grows spiritually you will notice the text does a subtle thing. You will notice as time goes on he’s being called Israel more and Jacob less. That’s not an accident in the choice of words; that is the Holy Spirit deliberately showing you change of character. He is becoming Israel, not quite yet, but he’s becoming. You can tell he’s not quite there yet, because he’s still resisting.

**Genesis 43:7-10** *They replied, "The man questioned us thoroughly about ourselves and our family,*

*saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' So we answered him in this way. How could we possibly know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" (8) Then Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the boy with me and we will go immediately. Then we will live and not die -- we and you and our little ones. (9) I myself pledge security for him; you may hold me liable. If I do not bring him back to you and place him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. (10) But if we had not delayed, we could have traveled there and back twice by now!"*

Each verse progressively shows this family getting their act together; here one of the sons assumes leadership.

Let's look at this family once again; the oldest son is Reuben, then Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Now let's just look at that list of names carefully for a moment. Reuben, the oldest. Who biblically ought to be the leader in the home among the children? The oldest and the first born, hence the firstborn got double inheritance rights. But Reuben has disqualified himself; he's been partially obedient, remember, he said well, let's not really kill Joseph, but then he kind of flaked out and disappeared and then later came back and wandered around trying to figure out what happened. Well, that's the trouble with Reuben, he can never figure out what's going on and therefore he's not a leader.

So in the course of events he's going to be a good man, go on and form a tribe, but basically he's disqualified as being *the* leader of the home. Next we get to Simeon and Levi, those two guys, their weaknesses as leaders was that they had a tremendous temper and when their sister got raped, you remember back a few chapters, they went in and got everybody circumcised and killed them. So Simeon and Levi tend to have a belligerency about them that makes them unstable; one of them is down in Egypt in jail, and the other one is just like him so he's eliminated.

Now we come to number four and guess who now begins to assume the responsibility in the home? Judah. This is doubly interesting because Judah is also the Messianic seed; he's the great-great-great... grandfather of the Lord Jesus Christ, "the lion of the tribe of Judah." So through the course of events God's unseen hand is shaping the home for the Messiah. By the way, Judah is immoral; he has a lot of things against him. He couldn't be in leadership in the average church, couldn't be elected to the board of deacons, but nevertheless, we have a man who God says is the messianic leader. Why?

First of all, in verse 8, one of his characteristics is that he recognizes what the issue is. Now you can't lead if you don't see where the issue is. The issue is they're going to die, never mind about losing Benjamin, you won't have to worry about Benjamin if we don't get grain because we're all going to die of famine. So he cuts all the excuses down to the basic issue and the issue is life or death. Another characteristic, verse 9, is he proposes a decisive move; he says I am going to assume responsibility and I'm going to act. He probably had four or five people saying hey, do you think it ought to be done that way? Oh, that's too dangerous, let's sit and pray about it for 8 weeks. He is going to act in a very decisive way to solve the problem. And verse 10 really is sarcasm; he's saying you know, if we'd stop goofing around we could have been down there and back twice by now.

**Genesis 43:11-14** *Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and take a gift down to the man -- a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachios and almonds. (12) Take double the money with you; you must take back the money that was returned in the mouths of your sacks -- perhaps it was an*

*oversight. (13) Take your brother too, and go right away to the man. (14) May the sovereign God grant you mercy before the man so that he may release your other brother and Benjamin! As for me, if I lose my children I lose them."*

Now the old man finally repents. It must have been hard for him to do this, in his last days, to give up the last precious son of his beloved wife, Rachel. Jacob finally gives Benjamin to God and trusts Him.

**Genesis 43:15-22** *So the men took these gifts, and they took double the money with them, along with Benjamin. Then they hurried down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. (16) When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the servant who was over his household, "Bring the men to the house. Slaughter an animal and prepare it, for the men will eat with me at noon." (17) The man did just as Joseph said; he brought the men into Joseph's house. (18) But the men were afraid when they were brought to Joseph's house. They said, "We are being brought in because of the money that was returned in our sacks last time. He wants to capture us, make us slaves, and take our donkeys!" (19) So they approached the man who was in charge of Joseph's household and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. (20) They said, "My lord, we did indeed come down the first time to buy food. (21) But when we came to the place where we spent the night, we opened our sacks and each of us found his money — the full amount — in the mouth of his sack. So we have returned it. (22) We have brought additional money with us to buy food. We do not know who put the money in our sacks!"*

Watch the humor of God; God is going to give them three clear indicators that He's about to bless them and you watch these guys. They walk right smack dab by all three of them and never open their closed eyes.

**Genesis 43:23** *"Everything is fine," the man in charge of Joseph's household told them. "Don't be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.*

Who put the money in their sacks on the first trip? Apparently it was this man because he says "I had your money". If he tells them that God did it, what does that tell you? Joseph's witness must have made a big impression on this Egyptian, because he recognizes the authority of God. Do the brothers notice this? No, it goes right over their heads.

**Genesis 43:24-26** *The servant in charge brought the men into Joseph's house. He gave them water, and they washed their feet. Then he gave food to their donkeys. (25) They got their gifts ready for Joseph's arrival at noon, for they had heard that they were to have a meal there. (26) When Joseph came home, they presented him with the gifts they had brought inside, and they bowed down to the ground before him.*

Remember the dream in chapter 37? In verse 9, "and the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me." How many men are bowing down to Joseph at this time? Eleven, because Simeon has been brought out from jail; the eleven stars are bowing down. The author of Genesis and the Holy Spirit want us to see it's the fulfillment of God's promise. He promised Joseph that everyone would bow down and that's what they're doing.

**Genesis 43:27-29** *He asked them how they were doing. Then he said, "Is your aging father well, the one you spoke about? Is he still alive?" (28) "Your servant our father is well," they replied. "He is still alive." They bowed down in humility. (29) When Joseph looked up and saw his brother*

*Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, "Is this your youngest brother, whom you told me about?" Then he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son."*

Notice how Benjamin is described - "his mother's son". Joseph feels closest to Benjamin, naturally, because they have the same mother.

Now if the brothers missed the cue in verse 23, they surely ought not to have missed this cue in verse 29. Remember this is a three way conversation going on. Joseph is talking through an interpreter and he'll say something in Egyptian, and then the interpreter will turn around and say it in Semitic to his brothers, and his brothers say something in Semitic and the interpreter comes back and speaks in Egyptian and Joseph is sitting there silent. It seems from the text that he suddenly turns and speaks directly to Benjamin and says, "May God be gracious to you, my son." We would infer that he must have spoken in Hebrew. You would think that these eleven doofuses sitting there would now get a clue to who Joseph was. But God's sanctification hasn't done its work enough yet in their life to open their eyes.

**Genesis 43:30-32** *Joseph hurried out, for he was overcome by affection for his brother and was at the point of tears. So he went to his room and wept there. (31) Then he washed his face and came out. With composure he said, "Set out the food." (32) They set a place for him, a separate place for his brothers, and another for the Egyptians who were eating with him. (The Egyptians are not able to eat with Hebrews, for the Egyptians think it is disgusting to do so.)*

You can see that it has hurt Joseph to have to put his own family through this wringer but he's going to anyway because God wants him to do it. Verse 32 is put in there to show you the dining situation. What you've got is a segregationist society and in the dining room that day, here's Joseph, his wife, and his sons at the head table. On one side is a big long table with all the Egyptians, servants, handmaids and so on of the house and some of the entourage of the official bureaucracy that hang around with Joseph. On the other side you have the Hebrews, sitting at a separate table. And as they sit there Joseph is going to do a little test. Verse 32 reminds you that Egypt was a segregated society at that time and God sent his own people down there because of that. Having the family in Canaan caused integration with other societies and that hasn't worked out so well, integrating with the paganism of the people around them. This is one of those rare places in the Bible where you have segregation mentioned.

**Genesis 43:33-34** *They sat before him, arranged by order of birth, beginning with the firstborn and ending with the youngest. The men looked at each other in astonishment. (34) He gave them portions of the food set before him, but the portion for Benjamin was five times greater than the portions for any of the others. They drank with Joseph until they all became drunk.*

So they have everybody seated around the table and they get to looking at each other and say hey, wait a minute, look at this, we're sitting in the order of our age. How did he know this? They must not have thought too much about it, though, they still didn't guess who Joseph was.

Joseph is testing the brothers here, I think, with Benjamin. He is showing favoritism to Benjamin like his father used to show favoritism to him, because he wants to see if the brothers get all bent out of shape over it still. They all drank with Joseph, so they passed the test; they didn't get bent out of shape, they didn't say hey, how come he got a cake five times bigger than me. No reaction, everybody was relaxed. So Joseph sees that maybe his brothers have changed, maybe they have learned not to envy.

## Genesis Chapter 44

Now in chapter 44 Joseph has one more little test for them. He has his silver cup put in Benjamin's sack, and when they leave, Joseph's men go after them, find the cup in Benjamin's sack, and bring all the brothers back. Benjamin is accused of stealing the cup.

**Genesis 44:16-18** *Judah replied, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? How can we clear ourselves? God has exposed the sin of your servants! We are now my lord's slaves, we and the one in whose possession the cup was found." (17) But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do this! The man in whose hand the cup was found will become my slave, but the rest of you may go back to your father in peace." (18) Then Judah approached him and said, "My lord, please allow your servant to speak a word with you. Please do not get angry with your servant, for you are just like Pharaoh.*

Notice who is acting as the family spokesman? The Messianic seed, Judah. So now we have the leadership in the family restored to the proper person. So Judah make his appeal to Joseph. Let's jump to the end of his speech:

**Genesis 44:30-34** *"So now, when I return to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us — his very life is bound up in his son's life. (31) When he sees the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father in sorrow to the grave. (32) Indeed, your servant pledged security for the boy with my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame before my father all my life.' (33) "So now, please let your servant remain as my lord's slave instead of the boy. As for the boy, let him go back with his brothers. (34) For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn't bear to see my father's pain."*

He offers to take Benjamin's place as a hostage. What is the point of doing something like that? It tells the person that you're appealing to that you really mean business. The only thing he can do to get credibility with Joseph is to place himself under Joseph's authority. And, in verse 30, he has even placed Jacob under Joseph's authority. Now, at this point the whole family is under the authority of Joseph.

You see, Joseph couldn't put all the cards down on the table until this had been accomplished, until the family finally got under his divinely promised authority. Remember the dream? All the sheaves will bow down to me, the sun, the moon and the stars will bow down to me. It was a prophecy that the whole family had to come under his authority.

## Genesis Chapter 45

Let's look at a practical application of this story. God maps out a destiny for every believer. If you are one who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ it means that God has a destiny for you to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, because after all, we are going to live in His presence for all eternity. So how do I get there, because I have "no good thing in me."? It's precisely the recognition of that truth that leads to Christian growth. On the one hand you have God's standards; on the other hand you have your absolute inability to meet those standards.

And so the resolution of that tension comes by becoming oriented to God's grace, that, we look to God to be oriented to His grace. God is going to supply out of His grace the means to go from our standards to His standards. Getting there cannot come from our own being because no matter how

we dress ourselves up, no matter how we congratulate ourselves on what we have done, there still is nothing that is not tainted with sin. That is the biblical message; and anything that is tainted with sin is unacceptable with God, therefore everything we do is unacceptable to God.

This would leave us in a bad situation, were it not for God's initiative; that is, He intervenes graciously into our lives, He interrupts our lives, He interferes. And the story of that interference is the story of Joseph. This is what all these stories have been about. A family left to itself has total inability to fulfill its destiny before God. It does what you do, what I would do, what any family would do. Left to ourselves we are the Judah's and the Simeon's, and the Levi's, that's us because of our sin. That's what depravity is all about.

Now this kind of shaking of the foundation is necessary in order to realize where we place our faith. If you were to take a growth curve and diagram your life's journey spiritually you'd hopefully get an upward curve. But if you were to take a magnifying glass and look at that growth curve it would be filled with rises and then falls and then rises and falls and then rises and falls, because constantly you would go through the blessings of life, then the adversities and you'd go down into the canyon and realize once again, I've run out of gas, I don't have it, I can't live this way, every time I set myself against God's standards I come out on the short end of the stick (Romans 7). And you wonder why it is year after year after year after year as a Christian you go through this experience time after time, and the answer is that it is a trigger for the next rise. We can't rise unless we're oriented to God's grace and we're not going to be oriented to God's grace if we're not first assured that we, apart from Him, will fail.

In Genesis 45 we see the end result of God working on one family to make it grace oriented. The simple definition of the orientation of grace is anticipating God meeting my needs as a sinner. Notice I did not say it is the anticipation of God meeting my wants as a sinner. Needs and wants are very radically different.

**Genesis 45:1-4** *Joseph was no longer able to control himself before all his attendants, so he cried out, "Make everyone go out from my presence!" No one remained with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. (2) He wept loudly; the Egyptians heard it and Pharaoh's household heard about it. (3) Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" His brothers could not answer him because they were dumbfounded before him. (4) Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me," so they came near. Then he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.*

Joseph finally reveals himself. What a powerful, wonderful moment! A grand reunion!

This picture of Joseph making himself known to his brothers has elements that, if you look very, very carefully will turn out to be elements of something else in history. Let's list these elements and see if you can guess. There is one member of the family of Israel who acts as a Savior. He has been saving them without their knowledge to this point. Remember what they said, the last couple of chapters we've read; every time they go down to Egypt they report "The Man," *ha ish* in the Hebrew, The Man is down there, The Man says this, The Man says that, but they don't know who The Man is. But somehow this mysterious "The Man" seems to be maneuvering them into this position and so unknown to them this savior who is related to them sets up the conditions for their salvation.

And he works on them and he works on them until this chapter. In this chapter repentance has taken place and now he reveals himself to them. I don't need to list all the elements; you can see very clearly that **this is a most remarkable portrayal of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.** Jesus Christ is blood related to the Jews. He, by virtue of His background is an Israelite and He has been working to bring that nation to repentance. For 1900 years, Israel hasn't noticed it but that's The Man that's doing the work, Jesus behind the scenes, working here, working there, to regather His people.

Let's look at some passages that show this grand theme, then we'll come back to this chapter and

see it as a simple family reunion. Before we can appreciate this simple family, however, we have to see the historic implications of this. This is a little microcosm of the entire plan of God between the Savior Christ and the nation Israel; let's watch.

**Isaiah 6:10** *Make the hearts of these people calloused; make their ears deaf and their eyes blind! Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, their hearts might understand and they might repent and be healed."*

Here God speaks to the prophet Isaiah and you would think that He would give Isaiah encouragement; you would think that He's telling Isaiah, go, preach to My people, feed them, nourish them, be a good shepherd, be a good pastor. That's what you'd think God would say, but in verse 10 that's not what God says. It seems that God makes it impossible for this people to repent. God says to Isaiah, I want you to teach the Word in such a way that you turn these people off. And I want you to do it again and again because I don't want them to repent until it's My time in history for them to repent. And in the preaching of Isaiah we begin to have the blindness of Israel. **Why is Israel being blinded? Because they heard the Word, over and over again, it didn't make any difference to them.** So God says all right, let's blind them. Now that blindness continued on and on until the time the Lord Jesus Christ walked the face of this earth.

**Romans 11:25** *For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (26) And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob. (27) And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

The blindness is still there. Here the blindness is used by the apostle Paul to explain why the Jewish nation rejected Jesus Christ. You'll have to understand that the early Gentile Christians faced an awesome problem. They believed in a Jewish Messiah that most of the Jewish people didn't believe in. So the Christians had to explain this. Paul is explaining that the reason was this blindness begun in Isaiah's time, extended now into the apostolic era.

Now Paul obviously in the first century is looking forward in time to a place when a Jewish deliverer will come. Now where did Joseph come out of? Out of the family of Jacob and what is Joseph? The deliverer. "...and he shall remove ungodliness from Jacob," and who was it that in the family of Joseph during these stories have we seen remove ungodliness from the brothers? Who was it that manipulated the fear of the law in his own brothers? Who was it that put the goblet in their sacks and their money in the sacks just to embarrass them and to create a sense of sin so they repent of it? It was Joseph.

Now what are we going to see in this family reunion? Something analogous to verse 27, "when I take away their sins." In the future here's what's going to happen. The Lord Jesus Christ, who has been largely to the Jew as a nation, unknown, but yet who has worked behind the scenes as Joseph worked behind the scenes, will bring and regather the Jews from all the lands of the earth to one place. Already you've seen it, 1948 was a significant year because that was the year that the Jews gained legal existence in the land of Palestine. **And so the stage is already set**, Jews are flowing back to Israel; they're coming from all over the world and they're going to Israel. And so as the Jews gather, slowly you are seeing the unseen hand of God right today in your front page newspaper. The next step will be that Christ will gather them in the land and then they're going to

start thinking back on their history and then someday they're going to recite a particular psalm. But first look at Zechariah 12:

**Zechariah 12:10** *"I will pour out on the kingship of David and the population of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look to me, the one they have pierced. They will lament for him as one laments for an only son, and there will be a bitter cry for him like the bitter cry for a firstborn.*

Here's the prophecy of the future destiny of the nation Israel. It doesn't say the inhabitants of Washington DC, it doesn't say the inhabitants of Paris or Berlin, or London, it says "the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And *"they will look to me, the one they have pierced"* Now just hold it right there." In Old Testament terms how could the Jews pierce God? He wasn't there in a material way, was He? He only showed up on Mount Sinai, He's invisible. In the Old Testament there's no way you could pierce God.

That's a striking prophecy; from what we know of the Old Testament that can't be fulfilled because you can't pierce an immaterial God. Or can you? Suppose the immaterial God incarnates Himself in a human body and walks the face of the earth, and then suppose He gets crucified and He gets pierced. And so the prophecy of verse 10 is saying **there will come a day when the Jew will recognize, at long last, after centuries of time, who this mysterious carpenter from Nazareth really was.** And when they do that there's already a song that they're going to sing that has been written in the Scriptures.

**Isaiah 53:3-8** *He was despised and rejected by people, one who experienced pain and was acquainted with illness; people hid their faces from him; he was despised, and we considered him insignificant. (4) But he lifted up our illnesses, he carried our pain; even though we thought he was being punished, attacked by God, and afflicted for something he had done. (5) He was wounded because of our rebellious deeds, crushed because of our sins; he endured punishment that made us well; because of his wounds we have been healed. (6) All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path, but the LORD caused the sin of all of us to attack him. (7) He was treated harshly and afflicted, but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth. (8) He was led away after an unjust trial — but who even cared? Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the rebellion of his own people he was wounded.*

Look at these verses and envision in your mind a future day when all of the Jews have regathered in the land of Israel and out of this regathering a majority, at least, now believes that Jesus Christ, the Jewish carpenter from Nazareth, was Jehovah incarnate Himself, and when they do this, this is their meditation.

This is a recitation of the Jewish historical position; they're going to say yes, He did lift up our illnesses, He did carry our pain, and what did we do? Stupid blind people we are, we "thought he was being punished, attacked by God".

That's the hymn or the psalm of repentance and it seems likely that it will take place on a day we know; we don't know the year it will take place because the Bible doesn't set dates. If you look at Israel they have a spring and they have a fall calendar. There are three holidays in the Jewish spring; Passover, Firstfruits, and Pentecost. Now look at the fulfillment; when was Christ crucified? Exactly the day—Passover! When did Jesus rise from the dead? Exactly the day of Firstfruits! And when did the Holy Spirit come from heaven? Exactly the day of Pentecost! So **the spring cycle of Israel's calendar was fulfilled literally to the day; only one problem. Israel has a second half of her calendar and that's gone unfulfilled.** There's nothing in history that corresponds to the three great events in the fall calendar of Israel, and that is

the Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and the Feast of Tabernacles. **Some year in the future the whole nation will collectively recite Isaiah 53 and suddenly Jesus will make Himself known to His brethren.** It would make sense that this might happen on Yom Kippur, which means the Day of Atonement. We'll talk about the prophetic nature of the fall festivals in detail in a future lesson.

Now let's go back to Genesis 45 and watch this family reunion and watch the intriguing things that happen on that day, things which now you know to look for the deeper picture, the bigger picture. Observe the emotions of Joseph in verse 1. Did you ever think of God as having emotions? If we are serious and we say we believe in the true humanity of Christ He's got to have emotions. If we are serious when we say man is made in God's image then God has emotions, or do you think of God as sort of a Greek god that sits like a stone statue on His throne, sort of impermeable to the ebb and the flow of history. Wrong! The God of the Scripture gets angry and He gets happy. Did you ever think of God laughing? Psalm 2 tells you He does. God laughs and he cries, and the emotions displayed in Genesis 45:1 picture, in a very tiny way, the emotions of God toward His own people, Israel.

And it's going to come at some time at some year in the future, that Israel will have been regathered and suddenly, just like the brothers in Jacob's family, begin to repent, maybe a rabbi here and a rabbi there, and the Jewish leader here and a politician there, and a businessman over there, suddenly they begin to say we'd better read this New Testament more carefully; maybe that *Yeshua*, maybe that Jesus really is what His name says He is, because that's what His name means in the Hebrew, Deliverer. Maybe He was our Deliverer. Oh, if He was our Deliverer what did we do to Him? We killed Him. And then there's going to be this spirit of sorrow work its way into the nation, just like in Genesis 44, the brothers have been sorrowful over what they've done, and finally Joseph can stand it no longer, just as finally in history Jesus can stand it no longer; He's put His people through the wringer. If you don't think so, think of what it must be to look down from heaven and see a lot of Jews that concluded the God of the Old Testament died in 1944. He doesn't exist any longer, says the atheist Jew; if God existed He would have got us out, but He didn't. He sat in heaven and He watched them fry by the thousands, by the millions, and sat there and did nothing about it. The only theology we have to meet that objection is that somehow in some way strange to us this is working out the repentance in history, just as the repentance was worked out by putting the screws on Jacob and his sons; **finally he can stand it no longer and Christ comes back to the earth and He makes Himself known to his brothers, just as here Joseph can stand it no longer.**

And now the process of revelation begins. You imagine the scene; here for two years they played games; for two years this guy's put them on and they've been fearful of what this man would do. And suddenly they look a little closer; I would imagine Joseph probably took his headgear off, so they could really see what he looked like. And I would imagine Joseph suddenly started talking in the Hebrew tongue, without his interpreter, and said I am Joseph.

I expect that when Jesus Christ comes back and He addresses Israel He will do it in the Hebrew language. Is there any other reason why the Hebrew language has been resurrected? Do you realize that since 1920 the only ancient language that has ever been resurrected from its death is the Hebrew language? Do you realize that a little kid on a kibbutz in Israel could converse with Moses? You show me that parallel anywhere else in history, where I can take somebody out of the 20th century and somebody out of the 20th century before Christ and I can have those two people, separated by 4,000 years, sit them down in a chair by each other and have them carry on a conversation in the same language. Show me that in another example. It won't work in Chinese, it won't work in any western language, it won't work with Sanskrit, it won't work with Latin, it won't work with Greek. It's unique in history, the resurrection of the Hebrew language, and when Christ comes back He won't talk in English to them; I believe He's going to talk in their own language to them.

Verses 5-8 give us another principle, a great principle for the Christian life. How do you cope with injustices done to you without getting bitter? How do you cope with the slams of life without walking away vindictive? Joseph did, and in these verses we're going to read how he did it, a very practical thing that all of us who is a Christian can walk out and begin to apply immediately.

**Genesis 45:5-8** *Now, do not be upset and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me ahead of you to preserve life! (6) For these past two years there has been famine in the land and for five more years there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. (7) God sent me ahead of you to preserve you on the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) So now, it is not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me an adviser to Pharaoh, lord over all*

*his household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.*

What happened to Joseph that made him able to take injustice graciously? He didn't go to therapy. He did not go into self hypnosis saying it didn't really happen to me, and psych himself up. He didn't go to TM and contemplate his navel. He didn't try all the other thousand and one gimmicks that are being offered the American public for big bucks. The solution goes back to God Himself in orienting to grace. Notice he does not forget the injustice, it is part of history.

You know, you hear the expression "forgive and forget." If somebody's mean to you and somebody's crossed you, you're not going to forget it and the Bible says you're not going to forget it. But yet there's a way you can handle it, that will make it as though you forgot it. What does Joseph do? **How can he be merciful and yet not forget what the brothers did to him? Here's the secret.** At the end of verse 5 he announces something that he has learned. In verse 7 he repeats it and in verse 8 he repeats it for the third time. So something is repeated three times that is the key to absorbing persecution in your life.

Visualize this in your life so this will be real. Take something that's happened to you, some real humongous thing that just doesn't ever set right with you and you're thinking of somebody that stepped all over you, humiliated you or did something to you.

Now God says you can't erase that, I built you with a memory, so don't try to cope with it by trying to forget it. Do what Joseph did. He surrounds the little picture with a bigger picture. You see, he doesn't blot anything out, he just overloads the picture with other data, and where does he get the other data? From the Scripture. And what is the other data? It's God and His plan for Joseph's life. And Joseph says you know, for 13 years I sat down in that prison and I thought about what you guys did to me, and for 7 years we've had prosperity in this land and I've had power, and I've thought boy, wait till they come down but, the more I thought about it the more I began to connect it until suddenly it all made sense. Why did you guys throw me in that cistern? **Because it was the way God had of getting me away from my father, who favored me, who would never let me out of his sight, get me out of that home, down here where I could be a pioneer and a vanguard for you, get everything set up so that I can save you now physically, I can be your savior. It was all God's hand, and not only did God save me and help me and work with me but God is now putting meaning in my life because I'm saving you.**

So out of this picture he got meaning and purpose as a result of the persecution. Now that's what God tells you to do with persecution like this. When you begin to see the good things that come out of that you're too absorbed with the good things to worry about the bad things and sometimes you can even laugh at it all. That kind of a relaxed attitude toward injustices is the kind of thing Joseph had and it's the kind of thing any believer can have using exactly the same principles.

**Genesis 45:9-13** *Now go up to my father quickly and tell him, "This is what your son Joseph says: "God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay! (10) You will live in the land of Goshen, and you will be near me — you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and everything you have. (11) I will provide you with food there because there will be five more years of famine. Otherwise you would become poor — you, your household, and everyone who belongs to you." ' (12) You and my brother Benjamin can certainly see with your own eyes that I really am the one who speaks to you. (13) So tell my father about all my honor in Egypt and about everything you have seen. But bring my father down here quickly!"*

Joseph puts his family down in Goshen which is in the Nile delta area, the richest farmland of all.

**Genesis 45:17-18** *Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and go to the land of Canaan! (18) Get your father and your households and come to me! Then I will give you the best land in Egypt and you will eat the best of the land.'*

Notice that Pharaoh is very supportive of Joseph and his family, he adds his approval to Joseph's plan.

**Genesis 45:22** *He gave sets of clothes to each one of them, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of clothes.*

Joseph is still showing favoritism to Benjamin, but the brothers don't mind because they're repentant now, they're not jealous, not full of envy, and the last verses of the chapter close with the old man.

**Genesis 45:25-28** *So they went up from Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. (26) They told him, "Joseph is still alive and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt!" Jacob was stunned, for he did not believe them. (27) But when they related to him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, their father Jacob's spirit revived. (28) Then Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still alive! I will go and see him before I die."*

Did you notice the name shift from verse 27 to verse 28? Why the shift? Because now in verse 28 he shows you his faith and so it's that name that is to be the label for the nation that comes from him. The strife now ends, but notice how it ends. It ends after there's been a changed heart by the people involved.

## Genesis Chapter 46

**Genesis 46:1-4** *So Israel began his journey, taking with him all that he had. When he came to Beer Sheba he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. (2) God spoke to Israel in a vision during the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" He replied, "Here I am!" (3) He said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. (4) I will go down with you to Egypt and I myself will certainly bring you back from there. Joseph will close your eyes."*

Now God speaks to Jacob in the eighth vision in his life. There is an incident that happens later in history, in the book of Samuel, with the little boy Samuel. One night God called to him. We know by the way the text was written that it wasn't a spooky voice at all, it was just "Samuel, Samuel," and Samuel so thought of it as a human voice that he went to Eli and asked, do you want me? No, kid, go back to sleep, will you? Now did you ever stop and question, what did God's voice sound like such that he would have confused it with a normal human voice? It wasn't spooky; it was just a normal human voice. And so it was almost hard to recognize as God's voice.

The significance of this is today; today you and I can't expect what's happening in verses 2-4; that's direct revelation; that's while the canon of scripture was yet open. But today there is something akin to this. God can call to you in such a common way that we don't recognize it's His call. You could call it a nudging of the Holy Spirit. When He wants to get us to do something He doesn't communicate verbally. He can through the Scriptures, but He doesn't communicate verbally

as he does in verse 2 but He does communicate perhaps by a nudging that makes us uneasy about something and we just can't seem to settle down about it. Finally we get prodded into seeking in more detail God's will about the matter, then we settle it. But it's His way and because it so often comes to us as simple uneasiness we may attribute it to something we ate, all the way from that to we're going crazy, or some other thing, and we just simply haven't recognized it for the nudging that it is.

So Jacob recognizes it and he says, "Here I am." Now God begins to expand revelation to him. He says, you see Jacob, the problem is that you as a family have become absorbed with the Canaanite culture, so I'm going to take you to the most powerful nation on earth and here are some things that I'm going to do in Egypt. Number one is you're going to be segregated and you're going to be discriminated against, and it's for your good because as a segregated minority you're going to be forced to live by yourselves, meaning your boys will date your own girls, and your girls will date your own boys and we're not going to have cultural pollution in the home, meaning that you will do your business with other Jews and build a community there. Other things you will get in Egypt are some of the arts and skills and crafts, some of the concepts of law, and experiences of building and organizing and administration. These are things that I will do for you now in Egypt. Now He says don't fear, "go down to Egypt," and I'm going to make you a great nation refers not to the spiritual seed of Jacob, this refers to a literal physical nation that comes forth out of Egypt.

But then, **in verse 4 we're introduced to a whole new idea.** Now this idea has been lingering in the text of Genesis for some chapters, but only in verse 4 does this idea burst forth to the surface and because this idea is such a major thing in the rest of the Bible I want to pause and go through this very carefully so you'll all understand it. This is the key to understanding a lot of your New Testament. The New Testament, remember, was written to people who ought to have known the old. Today we don't know the Old so we don't understand the New.

Do you see the contradiction in verse 4? Well, quite obviously he's not going to be brought up alive. Here we have, for the first time in the Bible, a major problem and this chapter is one of the most attacked chapters in the last half of the book of Genesis. What we have is the problem of identity, **individual or corporate.** In our day you and I think of ourselves as individuals, don't we? You say who am I? We use the singular pronoun. From the biblical point of view you are not only you but all the progeny that shall come forth from you. **This is a basic biblical point.** In verse 4 the "you" that's going to be brought up are going to be men and women who have come out of Jacob; **this is called the corporate identity idea of the Bible.** And this is something that basically only in the last 200 years have exegetes really seriously worked with because you just can't handle passages like this and follow literal interpretation unless we say that basically the writers must have a corporate idea to their use of these pronouns.

**Genesis 46:5-7** *Then Jacob started out from Beer Sheba, and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little children, and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent along to transport him. (6) Jacob and all his descendants took their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they went to Egypt. (7) He brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons, his daughters and granddaughters — all his descendants.*

Then after these verses there comes a long list of all the people who came with Jacob. Now here we have a major battleground of the critics and the Bible. Critics claim this list is wrong. Where's the error?

**Genesis 46:21** *The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard.*

How can Benjamin, going down to Egypt at 21 years old, have all those sons? Not only that, say the critics, they say if you compare with Numbers 26 and other passages you discover that those aren't all his sons; some of those are his grandsons. How come they're listed as grandsons in one passage and in verse 21 they're listed as sons? Oh-oh, what do we do with something like this if we believe there are no errors in the Bible?

Some of the problems are trivial; the list includes name shifts, that doesn't bother us because men had three or four names in Bible times. That's not an issue. But how do we solve the issue of

Benjamin's sons? **Corporate identity solves the problem.** It turns out, if you take a concordance and check every name in the list with what that name does later in the Bible you discover an amazing thing. There are twelve tribes listed here and under those twelve tribes there are subdivisions called the *mishphachah*, or the families, and what you have listed are the heads of those family subgroups of the tribes, some of whom were born after they got to Egypt. Now the question is, why are they listed at this point when they're going down to Egypt? For the same reason that you have verse 4. We're not intellectually cheating here; we've looked in the context to subscribe to the author's own intent. The author in verse 4 has introduced us to the theme of corporate identity. Now the list is just simply an expansion of the list of corporate identity.

This is repeated elsewhere in the Bible, Hebrews 7:9 is an example of where a New Testament author uses the principle of corporate identity. Apply that to Adam as well, what Adam did you did. When Adam walked the face of this earth, he, under God, carried your genetic material in his body. And this is the significance, incidentally, of why Eve is not separately created in the Bible from Adam. Eve does not have independent genetic material; that's why she's made out of the side of Adam, so that when Adam and Eve, the first couple walked, the woman is basically not a separate creation; she too comes out of the genetic material of Adam, and thus every living human being walks the face of the earth with the genes of Adam. We are Adam; we are Noah. This also explains why Adam's sin is imputed to us.

All right, our list is now explained. **The author here is simply showing us that when Jacob walked down to Egypt he had in seed form, like an acorn has an oak tree, he has in seed form the entire nation.** Now in verse 27 of Genesis 46, after the list there's a summary statement.

**Genesis 46:27** *Counting the two sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt, all the people of the household of Jacob who were in Egypt numbered seventy.*

Why seventy? Again, this is not just a Bible story, it's not just a random number game, there's a reason for this. What he's saying is that if you sociologically and spiritually divide the nation Israel under Jacob, you get seventy sectors in that nation. The corporate entity has seventy sub parts. Why is that so important? We, in this Genesis series, covered another very famous chapter, Genesis 10, and from out of Noah there came all the human race with the sub groups. Remember the number of groups was seventy? Turn to Deuteronomy 32:8 and you'll see these two concepts come together beautifully. Here's the neat design of God.

**Deuteronomy 32:8** *When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.*

When did the God separate the sons of men? It was in Genesis 10, right? All the tribes spread out over all the face of the earth. How did He divide it? On a seventy number base. What's the number of the children of Israel? It's right here in Genesis 46, seventy. Back in Genesis 10 God anticipated what He would do in Genesis 46 and He designed the human race linguistically, culturally, subdivided into seventy sub parts, and Israel is a microcosm of the human race.

Dispensationally this is extremely important because unlike those who were in the Reformation, who did marvelous things in soteriology (the study of salvation) and other areas of theology, they did not handle eschatology (the study of future things) well because they weren't trained that well in exegesis (interpretation). And therefore they missed the point, and that's why dispensationalism is

so important. **Dispensationalism insists that Israel plays an integral role in the evangelization of the world.** The Church does too but Israel has her own little thing that she's doing that has to do with this physical design. She is designed as a microcosm of the structure of the earth; therefore in the tribulation when the world is evangelized, it's not evangelized by the Church; it's evangelized by Jews who are in every area of the earth, the seventy/seventy mix.

This seventy comes up again and again in connection with Israel and the Bible. In Numbers 11 there are seventy elders; there are seventy years to her captivity in 2 Chronicles 36; there are seventy weeks or seventy sevens to her history in Daniel 9; and lastly, when the Lord Jesus sends out representatives into the house of Israel, what does He do? He sends out seventy.

Now this shouldn't be a huge surprise to us. We have found amazing number patterns not only in mathematics, but in nature, in biology. **All we're seeing is the beautiful design of God.**

## Genesis Chapter 47

**Genesis 47:7-10** *Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and presented him before Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh. (8) Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How long have you lived?" (9) Jacob said to Pharaoh, "All the years of my travels are 130. All the years of my life have been few and painful; the years of my travels are not as long as those of my ancestors." (10) Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.*

Now wait a minute, Pharaoh was the most powerful man on earth; in this meeting between this tremendous powerful ruler and this old man, who is the superior? According to the human picture the superior is clearly Pharaoh, but if he's the superior, then the superior is supposed to bless the inferior. But in verse 10, who blesses who? It is the old man that blesses Pharaoh.

Now this is also dispensationally important because it shows you the function of Israel; Israel is a man in Pharaoh's presence, true, but Israel is also the nation Israel to the nations of the world and Israel is the blessing nation on the face of this earth. Israel has given the world the Bible. That didn't come from our Gentile forefathers that were trotting around Europe in their loin cloths digging roots when the Jews had a very high civilization. They gave us the prophets, and Jacob gave us the Lord Jesus Christ, He was a Jew. The Jews have given us an atonement for our sins, and yet to be given us is a worldwide blessing on a global scale of world peace and world law. That too will come from the Jew. That's their function in history and it starts with a man, Jacob, and he walks into THE most powerful man and he blesses Pharaoh; Pharaoh doesn't bless him.

**Genesis 47:13-18** *But there was no food in all the land because the famine was very severe; the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan wasted away because of the famine. (14) Joseph collected all the money that could be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan as payment for the grain they were buying. Then Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's palace. (15) When the money from the lands of Egypt and Canaan was used up, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food! Why should we die before your very eyes because our money has run out?" (16) Then Joseph said, "If your money is gone, bring your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock." (17) So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for their horses, the livestock of their flocks and herds, and their donkeys. He got them through that year by giving them food in exchange for livestock. (18) When that year was over, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We cannot hide from our lord that the money is used up*

*and the livestock and the animals belong to our lord. Nothing remains before our lord except our bodies and our land.*

This is poverty; they've lost everything, all their property and when they have lost their lands they have lost their freedom and that's the story of Genesis 47.

**Genesis 47:19-20** *Why should we die before your very eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we, with our land, will become Pharaoh's slaves. Give us seed that we may live and not die. Then the land will not become desolate." (20) So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. Each of the Egyptians sold his field, for the famine was severe. So the land became Pharaoh's. (21) Joseph made all the people slaves from one end of Egypt's border to the other end of it.*

Now you know what the Egyptians were known for in history—the pyramids. And many have been the scholars who have remarked that those pyramids are but pictures of the whole social order; the social order itself was a pyramid; it was one of the massive totalitarian systems that the world has ever seen. Under God's will Joseph condemned the Egyptians to the fruitful result of their own apostate faith; they wanted it, he gave it to them. There's no compulsion in Genesis 47. You can see in these verses that Joseph didn't force it upon the people. They willingly gave of themselves and they voluntarily entered slavery.

And as we said earlier, this system worked only because they had Joseph in charge, who had the hotline with God. Every totalitarian system would work if you had a Joseph at its helm; the problem is, we have no Josephs today. I'll show you what happened to this pyramid, turn to Exodus 1:8 and look at what happened.

**Exodus 1:8** *Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power over Egypt.*

That's all that had to happen to turn a beneficent totalitarian scheme into one of the most awful things of ancient history. You have a change in leadership, and what happened by the time you read to the end of that chapter? You have one of the first recorded genocides in history, an attempted destruction and obliteration of one people from the face of the earth. How did such a thing happen? Because somebody built a massive pyramidal society, totalitarian, fascist, with all the capital concentrated in the hands of a few. And all it took was a few bad people at the top.

**Genesis 47:27** *Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen, and they owned land there. They were fruitful and increased rapidly in number.*

What does that mean? They were free; they had capital, they had the best land, they had the flocks, they were fruitful, they increased rapidly. So now you see that the Egyptians were going more and more into bondage, they had lost their freedom, while the Israelites prospered, owned land, and had freedom.

**Genesis 47:28-31** *Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; the years of Jacob's life were 147 in all. (29) The time for Israel to die approached, so he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, (30) but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." Joseph said, "I will do as you say." (31) Jacob said, "Swear to me*

*that you will do so." So Joseph gave him his word. Then Israel bowed down at the head of his bed.*

Now verse 27 could have been a great ending to the story, but unfortunately, it doesn't end there. That prosperity for the Israelites doesn't last, and by the first chapter in Exodus things have changed drastically.

What you've got in verse 29 and 30 is a very strong reference to the future orientation of the Bible authors; they're not looking just at their present prosperity, that's fickle, it can come and it can go. In Exodus 1 it's going to go. Jacob is looking at eternity, he's looking at the promises God gave him and his ancestors. That's why he wants to be buried back in the land that God gave him and his forefathers.

Now we're going to look at three New Testament passages that apply this truth for every day life.

**Hebrews 11:1** *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.*

This is the the famous description of faith. Now many people read verse 1 wrongly, they say that faith is the evidence of things invisible in the sense that you may never see them. No, that's not what verse 1 is talking about. Verse 1, when it says "being convinced of what we do not see" would be best understood as saying "convinced of what we do not YET see. In other words, they will be seen, they are future components to God's plan but they're not seen now. Faith looks forward; its future oriented to what God is going to do, not what he's doing right now.

**Hebrews 11:13-16** *These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth. (14) For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. (15) In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) But as it is, they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Here is the patriarchal concept of the pilgrimage. I can't have my treasure in vulnerable surroundings; I have to have it in invulnerable, imperishable surroundings. Who are "these all?" Those are the patriarchs. What these verses mean is that if they did not have the future orientation, if they kept thinking in terms of security now, in this world, peace and affluence here, then they would have gone back to it; they would have sunk back to the same levels, finally, as the Egyptians. The thing that keeps a Christian separated is not setting down and vowing to not do things; I will not do this, I will not do that, blah, blah, blah. Because that doesn't have any energy to it. **What keeps a Christian biblically separate is that he's obsessed with future concerns and it just overrides the present things; he's simply not that interested in the things that are present centered.**

Now that's what you want to strive for, the fact that you live in the world but it doesn't really turn you on that much. What turns you on is anticipating your eternal relationship, face to face, with God the Father. If that isn't the biggest turn-on in your life, then you've got a spiritual problem; you may not even be a Christian. That's the message.

**Romans 8:18** *For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us. For the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God.*

This one emphasizes physical suffering. I figure that the sufferings of this time aren't worth worrying about in the light of eternity. This is the eternal perspective. These men we've studied made decisions that endangered their own peace and affluence. We as Christians are going to go through the same process; it is becoming increasingly obvious that this is going to become the conflict in this country, as we lose our freedoms more and more.

## Genesis Chapter 48

**Genesis 48:1** *After these things Joseph was told, "Your father is weakening." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him.*

Genesis challenges us in every area and these last few chapters don't leave us disappointed. In chapter 48, 49 and 50 we deal with death and dying. And these chapters give us some good wisdom principles on death and dying. One of the problems, of course, today is that we live in a society that wants to avoid death, the mention of death, preparation of death at all costs and the result is that people simply don't make adequate preparation for death.

**Genesis 48:5-6** *"Now, as for your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, they will be mine. Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine just as Reuben and Simeon are. (6) Any children that you father after them will be yours; they will be listed under the names of their brothers in their inheritance.*

Jacob makes a division in the family of Joseph. You would normally expect the father to bless his son. In this case that is not so; he blesses Joseph by blessing two of Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, so the blessing sort of bypasses Joseph and goes to his two sons. Notice Jacob says these two sons will be mine. In other words instead of them being his grandsons he's claiming them as his own. Jacob claims Ephraim and Manasseh and that is the origin of the two tribes of Israel of the northern kingdom: Ephraim and Manasseh. That's historically how they came into existence; that's why there's not a tribe called Joseph. There is no tribe in the Bible called Joseph. Joseph disappears in history and he reappears in his two sons. And they become two of the twelve Jewish tribes. At this point, theoretically you've got 13 tribes; one, Levi, will not have an inheritance because of their service as priests. So it goes back to twelve tribes.

**Genesis 48:8-14** *When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he asked, "Who are these?" (9) Joseph said to his father, "They are the sons God has given me in this place." His father said, "Bring them to me so I may bless them." (10) Now Israel's eyes were failing because of his age; he was not able to see well. So Joseph brought his sons near to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. (11) Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see you again, but now God has allowed me to see your children too." (12) So Joseph moved them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. (13) Joseph positioned them; he put Ephraim on his right hand across from Israel's left hand, and Manasseh on his left hand across from Israel's right hand. Then Joseph brought them closer to his father. (14) Israel stretched out his right hand and placed it on Ephraim's head, although he was the younger. Crossing his hands, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, for Manasseh was the firstborn.*

The reason Joseph positioned the boys like he did was because of the twins Manasseh is the firstborn and usually the firstborn will obtain the inheritance. Now remember, here's the old man stretching out, he can't see what he's doing, but it's as though God just moves his hand over so when he lifts they're crossed, and he blesses the wrong boy, Joseph thinks, and he blesses Manasseh; he guides his hands knowingly.

**Genesis 48:15-19** *Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked — the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, (16) the Angel who has protected me from all harm — bless these boys. May my name be named in them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. May they grow into a multitude on the earth." (17) When Joseph saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him. So he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. (18) Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head." (19) But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a nation and he too will become great. In spite of this, his younger brother will be even greater and his descendants will become a multitude of nations."*

Historically this came to pass with the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom was known as Ephraim. Ephraim lived in this part of the area; Manasseh was a Transjordanian tribe. And so historically that's exactly what the blessing of the old man was and it turned out this way.

**Genesis 48:20** *So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you will Israel bless, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim before Manasseh.*

He's prophesying that God is going to so bless Ephraim and Manasseh, and by the way, why is that such a big deal? Because these kids are half Gentile, remember. Joseph married a Gentile woman; these are not all Jewish kids. But God is going to so bless them any way that they'll be a proverb saying may God bless you as He has done Ephraim and Manasseh and that will become a Jewish proverb in the centuries to come. So it's his way of saying you'll really be blessed.

## Genesis Chapter 49

Genesis 49 is one of the most prophetically large passages in all the book of Genesis. What we have here is a panorama of history from the time of Jacob, approximately 1600 or 1800 BC depending on which chronology you follow, all the way down, beyond our day, future to 2008. That's how large the panorama is in this chapter. When you see the expression "in the future" you and I have not yet seen that entire future yet.

**Genesis 49:1-4** *Jacob called for his sons and said, "Gather together so I can tell you what will happen to you in the future. (2) "Assemble and listen, you sons of Jacob; listen to Israel, your father. (3) Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, outstanding in dignity, outstanding in power. (4) You are destructive like water and will not excel, for you got on your father's bed, then you defiled it — he got on my couch!"*

These are prophecies of the destiny of not just the sons but prophecies of their descendants. And here we have to remember something. It's a vital rule to interpret and understand God's Word, and it's a rule that if you don't understand you will not grasp and appreciate some of the things that are

yours in Jesus Christ.

As we mentioned before, there's such a thing in the Bible as corporate personality. The Bible argues that we are not individuals, that we are in a sense united. The Bible speaks of us in Adam, because we are genetically related to Adam. For those who have trusted in Jesus Christ, the Bible speaks of us as "in Christ," Every person who has Christ, every person who has trusted in Him is part of Him in this corporate way, and the Bible recognizes this.

Now in this case we have Jacob and you'll notice in verse 7, it says "I will divide them in Jacob," what that means is that Jacob looks down the corridors of time, century upon century and he says, when I see your children and your children's children and their children's children, and I look down to almost an endless hallway seeing one family after another through time, that's me, that is Jacob. And so all the descendants of Jacob are collectively called Jacob; they're part of Jacob. And so this is why the father, at the point of death, has a right to talk about himself; in talking about his children he talks about himself. Verse 7 did not come true in the lifetime of those two brothers, Simeon and Levi. Verse 7 came true centuries later when the tribes of Levi and the tribe of Simeon branched out and were scattered.

Now this is interesting because today men are looking for standards by which to judge themselves. It's largely lacking in our culture. Here is one of those passages of Scripture that give us men some guidance. The first boy that is approached, verses 3-4, is Reuben. Now there are some cultural situations in these verses that you want to be aware of to see the magnitude of why he's angry at this son, Reuben.

**The number one son is Reuben, but the property of the firstborn goes way down to Joseph, number 11 in the line and the leadership of the firstborn gets transferred to number 4. What you're looking at in verses 3-4 is a quite shocking thing. Here you have a young man, probably 35 or 40, facing his father on his death bed and getting disinherited. Verses 3-4 is the stripping of Reuben of his firstborn rights.**

Now why did Jacob do this? He wasn't being unreasonable. He was looking at the character of this firstborn son, and men in the Bible were measured by the size of their moral strength, and Reuben doesn't have it, he's "destructive as water" it says. "You will not excel." He says you are as "unstable as water," and you're never going to amount to a hill of beans.

It says, "because you got on your father's bed," turn to Genesis 35:22, it's a small little notice in the Bible, it's one of those little verses that you can pass over and never think about, but it's one of those verses that gives you a tip on a man's character.

***Genesis 35:22 While Israel was living in that land, Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard about it.***

And then the text seemingly, almost passively, goes on and lists the sons. Now apparently what is involved here is more than just a little sexual affair; it's that Reuben can't wait until his father dies before he's trying to usurp his father's position. So here's Reuben, kind of on his father's heels all the time, can't wait until he dies so he can get all the goods. That's the background for why Jacob disinherits him.

***1 Chronicles 5:1-2 The sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn —(Now he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph, Israel's son. So Reuben is not listed as firstborn in the genealogical records. (2) Though Judah was the strongest among his brothers and a leader descended from him, the right of the firstborn belonged to Joseph.)***

This passage proves that's the correct interpretation. Now verses 5-7, the next two boys come up, Simeon and Levi.

***Genesis 49:5-7 Simeon and Levi are brothers, weapons of violence are their knives! (6) O my soul, do not come into their council, do not be united to their assembly, my heart, for in their anger they have killed men, and for pleasure they have hamstringed oxen. (7) Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their fury, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel!***

What did they do? In Genesis 34 Jacob and his family were dwelling near Shechem. There could have been other daughters in the family, but the Bible only mentions Dinah. Well, Dinah was visiting some of the girls of Shechem and a boy named Shechem forced himself on her and raped her. So her brothers, Simeon and Levi, decided they were going to do something about it, without daddy's approval.

**Genesis 34:26-30** *They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, took Dinah from Shechem's house, and left. (27) Jacob's sons killed them and looted the city because their sister had been violated. (28) They took their flocks, herds, and donkeys, as well as everything in the city and in the surrounding fields. (29) They captured as plunder all their wealth, all their little ones, and their wives, including everything in the houses. (30) Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought ruin on me by making me a foul odor among the inhabitants of the land – among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I am few in number; they will join forces against me and attack me, and both I and my family will be destroyed!"*

Now the whole episode back here in Genesis 34 shows the profound disobedience of Jacob's sons; now there were ways of handling this problem that were perfectly just, but they flew off the handle and they wanted vengeance. They were very harsh men; they were men who were very cruel.

What does it mean to scatter them in Israel; what would that mean? If you visualize the land of Israel and you have each tribe allocated in a certain area, who was going to rule in these territories? The head of the tribe. In other words, they formed like counties in America, and they'd exercise their power in these counties. Well, if he's going to scatter them in and among Israel, he's deprived them of the right to administer and to rule because they're scattered into small communities, some over in this tribe, some in this tribe, some over here, and they never can get large enough power of their tribe together to rule anybody. They tried prematurely to use the sword, therefore they are disqualified from ever using the sword. And so they are scattered, meaning they have no judicial authority for the rest of the history of Israel

This was played out in a most marvelous way and to see it I want to take you to a chapter that's parallel with Genesis 49 but occurs 400 years later. The chapter is Deuteronomy 33 - Moses is dying and when he dies he allocates inheritance among the tribe. Notice, if you just skim quickly down, verse after verse and log mentally in your mind the names of the sons that are talked about, you'll notice one's missing. It's Simeon; Simeon doesn't receive any large area of land to rule. He was "scattered among the nation".

But then to act as an encouragement, verses 8-11 speaks of Levi. Levi was given the same destiny as Simeon, he was to be scattered, he was never to rule in the political power of the state because he was volatile in his personality. However, later on there came a time when Levi, the tribe of Levi, saw there was apostasy and they were so zealous to obey the Scriptures that they killed some of their own tribe to conform to the Scripture. How is God ever going to bless Levi without breaking His original curse? Do you know what happened? The nation got in the land, they needed a priesthood. They needed some group of people that would take care of the Word of God, copy the scrolls, the Torah, take those scrolls around from village to village and teach the people the Word of God. Who was available? Levi, and so out of the cursing came fantastic blessing because what tribe got to be closest to God? Levi. And they started off cursed.

Back to Genesis 49; we've seen the first three sons. And we've seen defects in their male character. One, Reuben was the impetuous male; Simeon and Levi were impetuous but they were violently impetuous, they were the kind that go out and beat everybody up. Then Genesis 49:8-12 we find Judah. Now Judah is interesting because he gets the role of the firstborn as far as leadership is concerned.

**Genesis 49:8-12** *Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies, your father's sons will bow down before you. (9) You are a lion's cub, Judah, from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches and lies down like a lion; like a lioness – who will*

*rouse him? (10) The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him. (11) Binding his foal to the vine, and his colt to the choicest vine, he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. (12) His eyes will be dark from wine, and his teeth white from milk.*

Now all those are connotations of leadership. So Judah receives the leadership. So what did Judah do right to deserve this blessing? What did God like about him? Verses 9 and 10 tell us what God liked about Judah. What's true of a lion? The lion is the picture of controlled strength; he's aggressive when he needs to be and when he doesn't, he isn't.

This is the point of this metaphor of the lion, Judah is a man who has proved himself; he doesn't have to go out here tomorrow and beat somebody up in the alley to show what a man he is. He's proved that; but more important than just the physical side of his character is his moral side. Now Judah wasn't perfect, remember the incident with Tamar. But there was a difference between Judah and his brothers and you can perhaps see this best in Gen. 43:9-10, of all the events I think this one shows his lion-like character. The scene was that the brothers were afraid to go down into Egypt again because they were afraid they were going to mess up with "The Man" down there, his father is petrified, and so they're starving, their animals are dying, and everybody is hand-wringing, what are we going to do kind of thing. Judah spoke up and took responsibility for the safety of Benjamin. He showed responsible initiative and that's what God is primarily looking at.

Judah is a man who has sinned, but he's responsible and when the chips are down he assumes responsibility and at least tries to do something to solve the problem, instead of worrying about it, instead of running away, instead of getting violent like Simeon and Levi, he's basically a man who undertakes responsibility.

So now he's rewarded and he's rewarded two ways, verse 10, and then verse 11-12. In Genesis 49:10 his reward is Messianic. Here is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ and here is what determines that the Messianic seed will now be passed through Judah. Apparently Judah develops in the lineage of the Jew this lion-like nature that is sort of hidden there and at times breaks forth and will, of course, under the supernatural work of the virgin birth culminate in the Lord Jesus Christ, who in the book of Revelation is known as "the lion of the tribe of Judah." This is why C. S. Lewis in the Narnia stories pictures Aslan, the Christ-type as a lion. And you remember what the little girl says: and he's not a tame lion either. That's always the picture, you see, of God, in His power, untamed by man.

The idea in verses 10-12, is the Messiah and His kingdom, because it says, "the nations will obey him," meaning He will eventually have worldwide authority.

**Genesis 49:13** *Zebulun will live by the haven of the sea and become a haven for ships; his border will extend to Sidon.*

Zebulun is next. And all of these names, incidentally, are names that describe something of what the prophecy is about; like Zebulun means dwelling. So we interpret verse 13 to mean Zebulun kind of men are your natural made businessmen. They are the traders, they are the little kids in high school that by the time that in the sophomore or freshman year they've already got a business selling school supplies or something.

**Genesis 49:14-15** *Issachar is a strong-boned donkey lying down between two saddlebags. (15) When he sees a good resting place, and the pleasant land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and become a slave laborer.*

Issachar is the kind of man who is a hard worker but he's basically docile; these are the kind of men who sometimes are the most hard working men in the community, they are guys that will work, work, work, and then after 30 years have nothing to show for their work, they are still at the same level, there's no zeal for promotion, there's no zeal for advancement, and that's why it ends he will, "*become a slave laborer*". It's not that Issachar is a lazy man, he's not lazy, he's a very hard

worker but he just never seems to desire greater responsibility; he has no initiative, in other words.

**Genesis 49:16-18** *Dan will judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. (17) May Dan be a snake beside the road, a viper by the path, that bites the heels of the horse so that its rider falls backward. (18) I wait for your deliverance, O LORD.*

One of the most famous judges of the Bible came from the tribe of Dan; Dan was a man who meant he was a freedom fighter and the man's name was Samson. Samson was out of the tribe of Dan. But also in verse 17 you find something disturbing because you find a very definite Satan motif. This may be because the tribe of Dan, who's involved in judgment, was the first tribe in Jewish history to become involved, officially, in idolatry. So there's the future of Dan.

**Genesis 49:19** *Gad will be raided by marauding bands, but he will attack them at their heels.*

Gad is the kind of man who is tenacious; Gad settled on the east side of the Jordan River, and of course when the Arabs would come over, any time to attack the Jews, guess who they hit first—Gad. So Gad was always in a situation involving being oppressed, that's why the verse starts out by saying they will be raided, but in the end, he will overcome them. That's the kind of guy that's not the shining light, he's not the hero, he's not the most bright guy in the class or the greatest athlete on the team but he's the fellow that just keeps on keeping on. He out perseveres his opponents.

**Genesis 49:20** *Asher's food will be rich, and he will provide delicacies to royalty.*

Here's another kind of guy; the verse is talking about agricultural prosperity. These are men who love the soil, men who can't get the land out of their heart. They want that land, they're rooted to the land and they want to care for the land, they want to see the land produce. It is the farmer heart that is just inborn in some men, and no matter what happens they still are farmers at heart.

**Genesis 49:21** *Naphtali is a free running doe, he speaks delightful words.*

The prophecy for Naphtali is hard to figure out, this probably is a fellow who is basically his own man and operates independently.

**Genesis 49:22-26** *Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough near a spring whose branches climb over the wall. (23) The archers will attack him; they will shoot at him and oppose him. (24) But his bow will remain steady, and his hands will be skillful; because of the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, (25) because of the God of your father, who will help you, because of the sovereign God, who will bless you with blessings from the sky above, blessings from the deep that lies below, and blessings of the breasts and womb. (26) The blessings of your father are greater than the blessings of the eternal mountains or the desirable things of the age-old hills. They will be on the head of Joseph and on the brow of the prince of his brothers.*

You'll notice that just one verse per boy, or maybe two or three verses per boy, except for two and who are they? Judah and Joseph. Both those boys are given extra blessings. Judah inherits the leadership role of the firstborn; Joseph inherits the economic blessings of the firstborn.

**Genesis 49:27** *Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning devouring the prey, and in the evening dividing the plunder."*

Benjamin is said to be a cruel man and a ruler. And later on Benjamin expresses this nature; you can read it for yourself in Judges, the last part of the chapters.

**Genesis 49:28-33** *These are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He gave each of them an appropriate blessing. (29) Then he instructed them, "I am about to go to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. (30) It is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought for a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite. (31) There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah; there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah; and there I buried Leah. (32) The field and the cave in it were acquired from the sons of Heth." (33) When Jacob finished giving these instructions to his sons, he pulled his feet up onto the bed, breathed his last breath, and went to his people.*

Now verses 28-33 Jacob makes specific provisions for his own burial and his own funeral. The second thing besides specifying his place of burial he gives his boys a little review of their family history. Think about that; when you die, records die with you; it's gone, it's irretrievable. Try to dig up your own family, you can get back three or four generations and then it's stymied because great-grandfather when he died was out in the Civil War or something and got blown away and everything got blown away with him, and there goes your family documents, everything gone.

Now isn't that an orderly picture of death? Everything done decently and in order. How could this be? Because he was a man who had solved his eternal problems. He was a man who was so sure of his personal relationship to God he did not fear to discuss the details of his own death. He was comfortable dealing with this topic because he basically solved the root problem which was the sting of death, which is guilt.

## Genesis Chapter 50

**Genesis 50:12-14** *So the sons of Jacob did for him just as he had instructed them. (13) His sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, near Mamre. This is the field Abraham purchased as a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite. (14) After he buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, along with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to bury his father.*

The sons obey Jacob's wishes concerning funeral arrangements.

**Genesis 50:15** *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge and wants to repay us in full for all the harm we did to him?"*

Why are the brothers nervous about this again? What it shows is that when Joseph forgave the brothers and they accepted it, they didn't fully accept it. They must have been telling themselves that Joseph accepted them because of their father, and Joseph and Jacob were really close. In other words, their acceptance of forgiveness wasn't still fully by faith; there were still some things in there that had to be cleaned up. So when the old man dropped out of the picture, all of a sudden this stuff comes up in their minds and they wonder, now what are we going to do.

**Genesis 50:16-17** *So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave these instructions before he died: (17) 'Tell Joseph this: Please forgive the sin of your brothers and the wrong they did*

*when they treated you so badly.' Now please forgive the sin of the servants of the God of your father." When this message was reported to him, Joseph wept.*

Apparently Jacob recognized this would take place, so he commanded certain things to take place in that family. He had talked to the brothers. And you will notice in verse 16 he not only told them what to do he told them how to do it. He told them word for word what to say to Joseph.

Notice they send a messenger, they don't do it in person. Why? Because sometimes it's a lot easier to write a letter to a person than it is to tell them face to face.

**Genesis 50:18** *Then his brothers also came and threw themselves down before him; they said, "Here we are; we are your slaves."*

Now this is where they show up. See the word "also;" after they sent the letter and they knew the letter was received, then they come down personally. So here they cast themselves completely into Joseph's hands. Now that took an act of faith because of the fear they had in verse 15.

**Genesis 50:19-20** *But Joseph answered them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? (20) As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day.*

By the time we get to chapter 50 Joseph's godliness has transformed his character so he can say these things to his brothers. If verse 18 had occurred back in chapter 37 you can imagine what he would have done; I'm gonna squash you guys like a roach on the floor. But he doesn't do that and in verse 19 he takes his place under God and he says don't fear. What were they afraid of? His sin nature. How did Joseph deal with his sin nature? The only way you can deal with your sin nature is to submit.

Then in verse 20 we have the tools; verse 20 is fantastic. Let's put this in a way that you can use in your own life. Maybe you're getting persecuted. You're a believer and you're getting it dumped all over you. Maybe you're a businessman in your organization and because you're a Christian you get bypassed for the promotion but you get all the responsibility or something like that. Maybe you're a woman operating in certain social circles and all of a sudden everybody treats you like you've got a bad case of B.O. What's the problem? The problem is that you are being persecuted; you're just picking up flack from being a Christian in Satan's world.

In that situation how do you cope with it? One way not to cope with it is to use some psychological gimmick, well, everything's fine, everything's fine, and you try to put it out of your head and you don't think about it. Just having a positive attitude doesn't work. You can't stop thinking about it. When somebody is really giving you the shaft you are not going to stop thinking about it.

So notice in verse 20 the first step in the technique is you do not stop thinking about it, you say "you thought evil against me," so the first step is that you honestly label evil as evil. Verse 20 is a capsule summary of how Joseph coped with the animosities and the temptations to resentment, bitterness, vindictiveness towards people in his own home. It happened in a home just like yours. People in a home that didn't get along together just like yours. So, how do we apply the principle?

The first thing is you identify evil as evil but now look what happens. Suppose in a discussion with a non-Christian, say you talk about answered prayer. Then they come along and they envelop your claim with a counter claim which says, yeah, well, that's just an interesting coincidence if you prayed that on Tuesday and got an answer on Saturday, but that's just chance, it's just coincidence. So what have they done to your claim? They've swallowed it up in their frame of reference. Now what to you have to do? You have to swallow them up in your frame of reference. You have to go back to the fact that there is no such thing as chance in the universe but there's God's sovereignty and you can go into the various details there. Well then they'll try to counter and envelop your frame in their frame. And they you envelop their frame in your frame. And that's the contest that goes on, whether you deal with miracles, the deity of Christ, salvation, it's basically whose frame is going to envelop the other guy's.

Notice what Joseph has done in verse 20; it's the same thing. What he has done is he calls evil evil but then he envelops that problem in a bigger truth. He knows his brothers tried to really kill him, but he encased that thing and put a cage around it so it wouldn't erode his soul. Now what is this cage that he grows around that point of evil? God's sovereign plan. "God intended it for a good purpose," not just Joseph's good because you can say well, that really doesn't always work. **It's not just the sovereign plan of God for you or for me personally; Joseph doesn't say, God meant it for my good.**" You will see that he defines what the good is that he's talking about. The good is "so He could preserve the lives of many people. The good is God's sovereign plan, the big plan that He's doing in history with Israel through Joseph.

So, **he enveloped it with God's sovereign plan for God's good, or God's glory.** Now notice there's something that has shifted between step one and step two in this technique and if you can catch what I'm saying here that spells the difference between success and failure in the use of this thing. Now verse 20 is just the Old Testament version of Romans 8:28. So somebody remembers Romans 8:28, they're a new Christian, the first time they get into a situation to apply it they say, let's see, "all things work together for good to them that love God". Well, someone totals your car and then you discover it's an uninsured driver, and so now you're without a car and you buy a bike and you get a flat tire on the first day, it's just one sequence of events after another. And you say hey, I don't buy this Romans 8:28, "all things working together for good," I don't call an auto wreck and a flat tire and walking and going on buses, I don't call that working together for good. And so the tendency is to become discouraged and depressed about the whole thing and say hey, that's just too idealistic. Ah, but **it was a wrong application.**

Look again at what Joseph is doing; he is not reading it as though God is going to bless him and make him feel good right away. Do you notice how the word good is qualified very carefully in verse 20? **What the point is that Joseph was put in a place where he can satisfy God's good, so he has not only enveloped this evil with an enveloping frame, but the enveloping frame has moved him from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. His perspective now has shifted from what Joseph is doing to what God is doing about it.** Now, this is hard, I'm not making light of it, this requires tremendous spiritual insight, prayer, patience and meditation to apply Romans 8:28 or Genesis 50:20 correctly. But I guarantee if it's applied correctly you don't have that depression that sets in so often when people apply it carelessly.

**What made this work for Joseph is he saw that God's plan was going to be furthered by this thing and really what's going to make me happy in the long run anyway, is God's plan. So that relaxes him emotionally, so he doesn't go into bitterness, vindictiveness and hostility because he's moved from a self-centered perspective to a God-centered perspective.**

What Joseph does, instead of getting small and our tendency in our sinfulness is to always get small; Joseph's attitude is no, I'm going to get big, I'm going to let this whole little episode in my life get thoroughly encompassed and surrounded by bigger concerns. So he doesn't drown it out, he doesn't hypnotize himself, he takes his problem and says, let's see how God's purposes are going to be furthered. And for the Christian who's born again he's thankful when he sees God's purposes furthered because if there's anything that will give you security as a Christian, is to see God's purposes advanced. What if you saw His plans fall apart? Would you feel secure? You'd have some real bad emotional problems then, wouldn't you? So the real source of healthy emotions, as a Christian, is God's advance, not yours. So don't view these things as just sort of pills that you take at 6:00 p.m. every evening. These verses are descriptions of very profound things that go on in these sorts of situations.

**Genesis 50:21** *So now, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your little children." Then he consoled them and spoke kindly to them.*

Now see that positive action; not only does he not kill them, you know, he could have signed them work on a pyramid out in the heat some place and hope they dropped dead on the south side under the sun. That would have been a convenient thing, he could have done it through the bureaucracy of Egypt. There are lots of ways he could have faked out his brothers, but he takes a positive step. He sees the big picture, that his your whole meaning and purpose in life is to preserve this family.

And, as we have discussed earlier, you can see in all these verse a picture of Christ. Joseph is a type of Christ for all of us, a type of savior. These verses are also a prophecy, foretelling a day when his chosen people will recognize their Messiah and He will respond as Joseph did in verses 20-21.

**Genesis 50:22-26** *Joseph lived in Egypt, along with his father's family. Joseph lived 110 years. (23) Joseph saw the descendants of Ephraim to the third generation. He also saw the children of Makir the son of Manasseh; they were given special inheritance rights by Joseph. (24) Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to you and lead you up from this land to the land he swore on oath to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (25) Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He said, "God will surely come to you. Then you must carry my bones up from this place." (26) So Joseph died at the age of 110. After they embalmed him, his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt.*

This is only the second time in the Bible there's an embalming mentioned. The reason is the body is kept out of the ground. Notice it was placed in the coffin but it apparently was not buried. It was kept sealed as in a mummy case and from what we can judge, both Jacob and Joseph were Egyptian mummies. That means that if archeologists were to dig around Hebron today, that there's a theoretical possibility of them finding the bodies. We found the bodies with the flesh still intact on Egyptian kings, these bodies were embalmed using the same processes. Under Pharaoh, the same crews that were embalming the Pharaoh's were embalming Joseph and Jacob. I don't know whether it will happen, maybe the bodies were dug up in history and ruined but there's a theoretical possibility on the basis of these verse that someday we could see the body of Jacob and Joseph.

**WE HAVE FINISHED GENESIS!** *Genesis has taught us all kinds of things. Systematic theology is fine, except it's not the way God teaches His truth. God teaches His truth in events; never abstractly. If he wanted to teach systematic theology of doctrine He would have written it up, made copies, and dropped it. But God doesn't teach that way, He teaches us in the middle of events.*

*Why? Because as humans we learn things in a deeper way if there is an emotional connection. Think about some of the things that you remember when you were a child. Why do you still remember them? Because they were charged with emotion, good or bad. God gave us these stories so we can identify with these people, there can be an emotional connection with them. We learn God's truths better that way.*

*So as we go through the Bible and as you read the Bible, don't think that all the doctrine is in Paul's epistles. Yes, doctrine is in Paul's epistles and it is immensely important. But much of that doctrine is unable to be understood unless you understand what happened in these stories in Genesis. **They are real stories!** Maybe you like certain portions of the stories more than others. I like Genesis, you may like the stories in Judges or something, or you may like Joshua going in and knocking the walls of Jericho down. All right, then go to the book of Joshua and in your mind's eye paint the pictures, let the Holy Spirit give you the tools you need inside your soul. As you do this process you find your faith strengthening, because what you're doing is enveloping those chunks of human viewpoint that have been sabotaging your Christian life, you're slowly encapsulating them with God's truth.*

*What comes next? Well, next we will do a series that will basically summarize the rest of the Pentateuch. We won't be spending the time to go verse by verse through these books, but it is important that we study Moses and the Law in some depth before we go on to the New Testament. I hope you have enjoyed the Genesis series and gained some useful knowledge about God's plan for the world, and for your life personally. I pray that you're able to put some of the principles we have taught into action!*

*May God continue to bless you with wisdom and knowledge as we continue to study His Word!*

*Dusty*