

Genesis Session 23: Joseph Reunited with His Brothers (Genesis 42-45)

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Abstract

This session examines the narrative of Genesis 42–45, where Joseph is reunited and reconciled with his brothers in Egypt during a severe famine. Dr. Kenneth Mathews explains how God superintends the lives of the patriarchs to preserve the covenant lineage and teach Israel of His providential care. Through a series of tests, including the detention of Simeon and the framing of Benjamin with a silver cup, Joseph assesses his brothers' repentance and transformation. Ultimately, Judah's self-sacrificial offer to take Benjamin's place demonstrates their genuine change of heart, prompting Joseph to reveal his identity and welcome his family to Egypt.

Outline

I. Theological Introduction to the Narrative (Genesis 42-45)

- A. God's providential superintendence of the patriarchs and future Israel
- B. Parallels between the descents and enrichments of Abraham, Joseph, and Israel
- C. Reconciliation of brothers as a repeating family motif in Genesis (e.g., Isaac/Ishmael, Jacob/Esau, Joseph/his brothers)

II. The First Journey to Egypt (Genesis 42)

- A. Jacob sends ten sons to buy grain without Benjamin due to lingering suspicion
- B. Brotherly recognition and the testing strategy
 - 1. *Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize his Egyptian persona*
 - 2. *Joseph accuses them of being spies to test their claims of being honest men*
 - 3. *Joseph demands they bring Benjamin back to prove their truthfulness*
- C. The brothers' confession and awakening guilt
 - 1. *Concluding they are being punished for their past cruelty toward Joseph*
 - 2. *Reuben deflects blame, reminding them of his ignored teenage warning*
- D. Detention of Simeon and the silver in the sacks
 - 1. *Simeon is bound and kept in prison as a hostage in Egypt*

2. *Joseph surreptitiously returns their purchase money to cause terror*
3. *The brothers return to Canaan, report the situation, and face Jacob's grief and refusal to let Benjamin go*

III. The Second Journey to Egypt (Genesis 43)

- A. The persistence of severe famine and the exhaustion of initial provisions
- B. Judah's emergence to family prominence
 1. *Judah takes personal responsibility and guarantees Benjamin's safety*
 2. *Contrast with Reuben's desperate and culturally extreme offer of his own sons' lives*
- C. Jacob (Israel) relents, sending Benjamin and appeasement gifts
 1. *Sends the best products of the land and a double amount of silver*
 2. *Entrusts the family's survival and future to El Shaddai (God Almighty) in prayer*
- D. Arrival in Egypt and the Feast
 1. *Presentation of gifts and bowing down, fulfilling Joseph's early dreams*
 2. *Joseph's deep emotional reaction and private weeping upon seeing Benjamin*
 3. *Social segregation: Egyptians refusing to eat with Hebrew shepherds*
 4. *The favoritism test: Benjamin receiving a five-fold food portion to test for jealousy*

IV. The Final Test and Revelation (Genesis 44-45)

- A. The framing of Benjamin (Genesis 44)
 1. *Joseph's silver divining cup placed secretly in Benjamin's sack*
 2. *The search, discovery, and the brothers' grief manifested in tearing their clothes*
- B. Judah's plea and self-sacrificial intercession
 1. *Confession of general guilt and acceptance of servitude in Egypt*
 2. *Detailed recount of Jacob's potential lethal grief if Benjamin fails to return*
 3. *Judah's personal offer to remain as a slave in place of Benjamin*
- C. Joseph's self-revelation (Genesis 45)
 1. *Uncontrolled weeping and declaration "I am Joseph"*
 2. *Reconciliation and comfort: reassuring them that God sent him ahead to save lives*

V. Providence, Reconciliation, and Renewal

- A. The hiddenness of God working out reconciliation and family solidarity
- B. The transformation of both Joseph and his brothers
 1. *Overcoming the past: changing from hatred (refusal to speak) to peaceful, mutual conversation*

2. Meaning of struggles: human actions woven into a larger plan of divine blessing and covenant preservation

- C. Segregation in Goshen preserving Israeli identity and covenant mission from assimilation
- D. Reconnection with Jacob and his revival ("resurrection" of Jacob's spirit)