

Lessons from the Life of Joseph

**Growing Godly Families
Old Testament Series
Manual 4**

By

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Updated 9/2017**

Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics which were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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Joseph Told his Dreams to his Family

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the nation of Edom was made up of the descendants of Esau. The life and ministry of Joseph is the primary focus of this chapter and the rest of the book of Genesis. As a result, we will learn many lessons about the way that the Lord works in our lives by the way that the Lord worked in and through the life of Joseph.

Genesis 37:1-4 says, “Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This *is* the history of Jacob. Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of *many* colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.” Jacob and his family had returned to the land of Canaan and settled there. As a result, we shift from the family of Esau back to the family of Jacob.

Other than his birth, the details of the life of Joseph that are given in the book of Genesis begin with events that happened when he was seventeen years old. We see that he was helping to feed the flock of his father. He was helping the sons of two of the wives of Jacob, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, as they fed the flock of Jacob. We see that Jacob brought a bad report about those brothers. The word translated “bad or evil” is used 663 times in the Old Testament. It is translated *evil* 446 times, *wickedness* 59 times and the rest of the uses are several different words that have a very similar meaning. We do not know what Joseph said about his brothers but we do know that he felt that what they were doing was evil.

One of the other things that these verses say is that Israel loved Joseph more than any of the other children in the family. This was due to the fact that he was the son of his old age. Jacob made it very obvious that Joseph was his favorite son by making him a tunic of many colors. The word translated “tunic” was like a long undershirt and was usually made of linen. However, this created a major problem in the family. The brothers could all see that Joseph was the favorite of their father and they were filled with hatred toward him. The word translated “hated” is a word that expresses a strong emotional reaction that causes one to oppose, despise, and causes one to want to have no contact with that person. It is the opposite of love and so the brothers could not speak peaceably to him. This meant that he often felt the anger of his brothers by their evil words and actions toward him. Every time they saw this shirt of many colors it stirred up that anger.

Genesis 37:5-8 goes on to say, “Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, ‘Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.’ And his brothers said to him, ‘Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?’ So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.” Here we see that Joseph told his brothers about a dream that he had experienced. Instead of causing the brothers to like him, this dream only stirred up more anger and hatred toward him. Joseph wanted his brothers to hear about his dream and so he asked them to listen as he told his dream to them. Telling his brothers this dream stirred up great anger among the brothers.

In the dream Joseph had dreamed that he and his brothers were working together out in the field. He said that in his dream, they were all binding sheaves in the field. To bind sheaves means to cut off a handful of stalks of grain and to tie them together. This meant that Joseph and his brothers were out working in the field and cutting off stalks of grain and tying them together in bundles. These bundles would then be taken to the threshing floor, be untied and then spread around on the threshing floor. The oxen would then walk over and over these stalks which would cause the heads of grain to be broken loose from the stalks and the stalks would be removed from the threshing floor and used for straw on which the cattle could lie at night in a corral, stable or barn. That left the heads of grain and tiny pieces of straw on the threshing floor called chaff. Ruth 3:2 says, “Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he* not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.” The threshing floor was usually on the top of a hill. When the wind blew in the evening the heads of grain (barley in this verse) and the chaff were thrown into the air and the wind would blow the pieces of chaff away and the grain would land back on the threshing floor. At the end of the evening, the people would gather the heads of grain and put them in containers and they would be taken to the barns for storage for the winter.

In his dream, Joseph said that his sheaf of grain stood up in the field. Then the sheaves of his brothers all stood around his sheaf and bowed down to it. That dream caused even greater anger among the brothers. They said to him, “‘Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?’” The word “reigns” means to be a king, queen or some other kind of ruler. The word “dominion” means to rule over. They demanded of him whether he thought that he would become a ruler and then rule them. More than 20 years later, Genesis 44:14 says, “So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house, and he *was* still there; and they fell before him on the ground.” Then Judah spoke to Joseph for all of his brothers in Genesis 44:16 which says, “Then Judah said, ‘What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord’s slaves, both we and *he* also with whom the cup was found.’” Here we see that their statement did become a true statement even though they did not recognize their brother.

However, that day the brothers had a very different reaction. We read, “So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.” In this statement, we see that their hatred increased for two reasons. First, the brothers hated the dream that Joseph had dreamed. Second, they hated the interpretation of the dream. However, that was not the end of his dreams. Genesis 37:9-11 says, “Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, ‘Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.’ So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?’ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.” Here we see that his next dream also included his parents.

In this dream we see that Joseph said that the sun, the moon and eleven stars all bowed down to him. This time Joseph told his father as well as his brothers about his dream. Jacob immediately rebuked Joseph. The word translated “rebuked” means to rebuke or reprove. Jacob made it clear that he thought that Joseph was boasting by telling his dream. In his rebuke, Jacob asked Joseph two questions, the first was, “‘What *is* this dream that you have dreamed?’” The second was an even stronger rebuke when Jacob told Joseph, “‘...Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?’” Jacob wanted to know if he would bow down to Joseph. By telling this dream to his father and brothers, this dream caused two different reactions.

We see that the brothers of Joseph envied him. The word translated “envied” in this verse means to be jealous or to envy. This is a very strong emotion. This word is used of God in

passages like Exodus 20:3-5 where we read, “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me.” Here we see that God will judge sin when people worship false gods. The word is translated zeal in Psalm 69:9 where it talks about the zeal that God has for the house of Israel. That verse says, “Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up. And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” This word is used in Genesis 30:1 where we read, “Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die!’” This word is also used in some contexts regarding adultery which also speaks of very strong emotions.

In contrast, although Jacob rebuked Joseph we see that he kept the matter in mind. The word translated “kept the matter” is usually translated keep or observe. The basic idea of the word means to exercise great care over something. In Proverbs 19:8 we read, “He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will find good.” In this verse, we see that a person who exercises great care to gain wisdom so that he can keep understanding will find good. Here the word is translated *keep*. Then in Deuteronomy 11:32 we see that Moses told the people of Israel, “And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.” Here the word is translated observe. Jacob kept thinking about what Joseph had said and wondered what would happen in his life that might put Joseph in a position of leadership where his family would bow down to him.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God had actually revealed to Jacob what was going to happen in the life of Joseph in the future. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Brothers of Joseph Wanted to Kill Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the fact that Joseph was the favorite of his father caused his brothers to be filled with envy and jealousy. That feeling became even stronger when Joseph told them about his dreams. In this topic, we will see that the jealousy of the brothers was so strong that they were ready to kill him. That will be the focus of this topic.

Genesis 37:12-16 says, “Then his brothers went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, ‘Are not your brothers feeding *the flock* in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.’ So he said to him, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said to him, ‘Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.’ So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, ‘What are you seeking?’ So he said, ‘I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding *their flocks*.’” Here we see that at times the flocks would be fed quite a distance from where the family was living at the time. Shechem was about forty miles north of Hebron and later they traveled still another twenty miles further north.

Jacob wanted to make sure that the brothers were all doing well. As a result, Jacob reminded Joseph that his brothers were feeding the flock in the area of Shechem and asked Joseph to go and see that everything was going well both for them and for the flocks. As we saw in an earlier topic, Simeon and Levi had killed all of the men of Shechem and taken their wives and children as captives several years earlier. Jacob may have had a concern that the people of the surrounding area might take revenge for what Simeon and Levi had done. In addition, anyone who has flocks and herds of animals has a concern for the animals. Jacob also wanted to know that everything was well with the flocks. Joseph obeyed his father and left the region of Hebron and went to the area of Shechem. However, he could not find his brothers or the flocks.

Then a man from that area found Joseph wandering in a field. The man began to talk with Joseph and asked him what he was seeking. Then Joseph explained that he was looking for his brothers. Joseph asked the man if he knew where his brothers were feeding their flocks. We see that the Lord had led the right man to the field where Joseph was wandering to answer the question of Joseph. One of the things that we have seen several times in the book of Genesis is that the Lord led various people in Genesis to the right people to answer their questions. That had happened to the servant of Abraham when he went to look for a bride for Isaac. The same thing happened when Jacob went to Haran to look for the family of Rebekah. Here we see that the same thing now happened to Joseph. This time the Lord brought the man to Joseph as he wandered in the field.

Genesis 37:17-20 says, “And the man said, ‘They have departed from here, for I heard them say, “Let us go to Dothan.”’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, ‘Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, “Some wild beast has devoured him.” We shall see what will become of his dreams!’” Here we see that this man had heard his brothers say that they were going to take the flocks to the area of Dothan. That was an area about twenty miles north of Shechem. The fact that this particular man had happened to walk by at the very time that they were talking about moving the flocks to Dothan shows how the Lord worked to put the man in the right place at the right time to hear the brothers of Joseph when they decided

to go to the area of Dothan.

Then the Lord had brought that same man to the field where Joseph was wandering. This is a reminder of the fact that the Lord is very concerned about the little events that happen in our lives. Romans 8:28-29 tell us, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The Lord wanted to conform Joseph to His image because the Lord had a plan for the life of Joseph that would save many people from starvation. However, the Lord had to do many things in the life of Joseph in order to prepare him for that opportunity. This was just one of many things.

Joseph did go to Dothan and did find his brothers. However, they saw him when he was still quite a distance from them. It was easy for them to recognize him at a distance because of his shirt of many colors. They were not happy to see him because of the fact that his father favored him over all of the brothers. In addition, they had developed hatred toward him because of his dreams. After his first dream, Genesis 37:5 says, “Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more. “ Then after his second dream Genesis 37:11 says, “And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.” As a result, the brothers made a decision long before Joseph even got close to where they were located in the fields. We see that the brothers conspired against Joseph and decided to kill him. Here we see the results of envy and hatred. Their hearts had become filled with that envy and hatred. They were ready to kill their brother because of the hatred in their hearts.

Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” We even see that the brothers called Joseph by a different title rather than calling him by his name. The brothers said, “Look, this dreamer is coming!” This shows how much the dreams of Joseph had angered them. The brothers decided to put an end to his dreams. They said, “...Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit...” Here we see that the brothers were ready to commit murder and then hide the evidence by throwing the body into some pit. In fact, before Joseph even got to them they had already decided what they would tell their father. They planned to tell their father, “Some wild beast has devoured him.” We learn several things about the sinful condition of the hearts of people just from these few verses. We are also given the reason why they decided to kill him as they said, “...We shall see what will become of his dreams!” They thought that if they could kill Joseph that then they would not have to bow down to him at some time in the future. This is just a reminder of the fact that when the heart is controlled by sin that people have no desire to do what is right.

Genesis 37:21-24 goes on to say, “But Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, ‘Let us not kill him.’ And Reuben said to them, ‘Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him’—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph *of* his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was* no water in it.” Reuben was the oldest brother and he felt responsible for his younger brother. He realized that his other brothers were very angry and yet he knew that it was not right to commit murder in their anger. As a result, we see that Reuben made a different suggestion to his brothers.

Reuben told the brothers that it was not right to kill and shed blood. God had told Noah when he came off the ark in Genesis 9:5-6, “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. ‘Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.’” In these verses, we see that God had

said that the penalty for murder was death. God said this was the penalty both for animals and for mankind. In fact, God also said that man is made in His image. We are made in the image of God and so we are to reflect His glory. That is the reason why if one person murders another person that God said that the penalty for murder is death.

Reuben suggested instead that they just throw Joseph into a pit and leave him there. That way they would not be responsible for his actual murder. However, the plan of Reuben was to return later and rescue Joseph from the pit so that he could return to his father. The brothers had completed this discussion before Joseph even got to them so we can see that they had recognized him from a great distance because of his shirt of many colors. As soon as Joseph arrived they took his shirt of many colors off of him. We will see that they later brought this shirt to their father and let Jacob tell them that it was the shirt of Joseph. That way they also deceived their father. Once they had taken the shirt off Joseph they threw him into a pit from which he would not be able to escape by himself. This meant that it was probably a fairly deep hole in the ground.

We also read that this hole was empty and had no water in it. As a result, that meant that Joseph was safe for a period of time in that pit because he would not drown. That was why Reuben thought that he could come back later and rescue Joseph from the pit so that he could return to his father. This was the first of many difficult situations that Joseph would face in the coming years. The Lord knew that Joseph would have to go through these difficult times to prepare him to save the lives of many people in the future. We want to help our physical and spiritual children also realize that the Lord allows us to go through difficult times to prepare us for the future. James 1:2-4 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Godly patience develops through trials. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand and explain these things.

The Brothers of Joseph Decided to Sell Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God had to allow Joseph to go through testing and trials to prepare him for godly leadership. God does the same for us. In this topic, we will see that the brothers of Joseph decided to sell him into slavery.

The brothers of Joseph had thrown him into a pit so that they would not be guilty of murder. Genesis 37:25-28 says, “And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry *them* down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit *is there* if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh.’ And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.” A little later that day we see that most of the brothers sat down to eat a meal together. Reuben had probably gone to care for the flocks because he was not there while the brothers ate.

As the brothers were eating they saw a caravan of camels coming in the distance. The men in this caravan were traders. They were traveling from the land of Gilead to the land of Egypt. The land of Gilead was an area of mountains on the east side of the Jordan River. These traders are called both Ishmaelites and Midianites. Ishmaelites were descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Hagar. Midianites were also descendants of Abraham. After the death of Sarah we read that Abraham married Keturah. Genesis 25:1-2 says, “Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.” We see that Midian was one of the sons of Abraham and Keturah. Apparently the descendants of Ishmael had intermarried with the descendants of Midian. We see that this group had become traders and bought goods in the land of Gilead and then took them and sold them in Egypt.

Judah saw these traders and suggested a different plan to get rid of Joseph. Possibly he was beginning to feel a little guilt at the thought of leaving Joseph in the pit to die. As a result, he made a suggestion to the other brothers as they ate. He said that they would not gain any benefit by killing their brother and hiding his blood. He also reminded the brothers that Joseph was their brother and their flesh because they had all come from the same father. As a result, Judah suggested that instead of leaving Joseph in the pit to die that they sell him to the Ishmaelites as a slave. That way they would not be guilty of murdering their brother and they could also make a little profit. Then they pulled Joseph up out of the pit and sold him to the traders for twenty shekels of silver. The price of an adult slave was later set at thirty shekels of silver. Leviticus 27:5 says, “...and if from five years old up to twenty years old, then your valuation for a male shall be twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels...” Since Joseph was seventeen years old this verse means that this was the common price for a slave of his age for a period of several hundred years following his sale. Then we see that the Ishmaelites took Joseph with them as they traveled to the land of Egypt.

Genesis 37:29-32 says, “Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. And he returned to his brothers and said, ‘The lad *is* no *more*; and I, where shall I go?’ So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said,

‘We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son’s tunic or not?’” Here we see that Reuben came back to the pit where Joseph had been placed. He saw that Joseph was not in the pit. Reuben showed his sorrow by the fact that he tore his clothes. This was a common way to show sorrow. This is shown a few verses later when we read in Genesis 37:33-34, “And he recognized it and said, ‘*It is* my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.’” Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.” Then Genesis 44:13 says, “Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.” Reuben felt great sorrow and inner pain when he did not find Joseph in the pit because he felt responsible as the oldest brother.

However, he apparently joined the other brothers in the plan to deceive their father as we see what the brothers did to deceive the father. The brothers planned the way that they would deceive their father. The brothers kill a young goat and dipped the shirt of Joseph in the blood. This meant that it was partially covered with blood. Jacob had earlier deceived his father. This is another example of the fact that we reap what we sow. Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” Jacob had deceived Isaac when he was a young man. Genesis 27:22-24 says, “So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, ‘The voice *is* Jacob’s voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.’” And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him. Then he said, ‘*Are* you really my son Esau?’ He said, ‘*I am.*’” Jacob had deceived his own father. Now he was about to be deceived by his own sons.

We see that the brothers killed a young goat. Then they took the tunic of many colors of Joseph and dipped it into blood of the young goat. Then the brothers returned home to their father. Just like Jacob had done many years earlier to deceive his father Isaac, the sons of Jacob now told their father a lie to deceive him. They showed the coat of many colors that had been dipped in the blood to their father and said, “We have found this...” Instead Genesis 37:23 tells what actually happened when that verse says, “So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph *of* his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him.” In conflict such as a war this word can speak of a violent or judgmental action. God warned Israel that the enemy would do this to them in Ezekiel 16:39 where we read, “I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines and break down your high places. They shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare.” In this verse, we see that the clothing of the Jews would be forcibly removed. That was what the brothers of Joseph did to him when they stripped Joseph of his tunic.

Genesis 37:33-36 tells us the response of Jacob when he saw the tunic of Joseph. Those verses say, “And he recognized it and said, ‘*It is* my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.’” Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, ‘For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.’ Thus his father wept for him. Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.” Jacob had deceived his father with a bowl of stew made from two young goats. Here he was deceived by his sons with a piece of clothing that had been dipped in the blood of a young goat.

Jacob easily recognized the tunic of Joseph. There was no question in his mind that it was the same tunic. However, the conclusion that Jacob reached as he saw the tunic was exactly what the brothers had hoped. Jacob decided that a wild animal must have killed Joseph. In fact Jacob even decided that Joseph must have been torn to pieces by that wild animal. For more than twenty years that thought of a wild animal tearing Joseph to pieces stayed in his mind. We see that all of his sons and all of his daughters tried to comfort their father. However, we see that he refused to be comforted. In fact, Jacob said that he would mourn for his son until he

went to the grave.

The word translated “refused” is a very strong word. As a result, the word is used only once of God. Numbers 22:13 says, “So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, ‘Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with you.’” However, the word is used several times to speak of Pharaoh. Exodus 7:14 says, “So the LORD said to Moses: ‘Pharaoh’s heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the people go...’” Then Exodus 10:3 adds, “So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.’”” The Lord makes it clear that in the case of Pharaoh that the refusals were the result of a hard heart and refusing to humble himself. In the case of Jacob it was his way of saying that he would continue to mourn for his son until the time of his death.

Meanwhile, we see that the Midianites did not keep Joseph when they arrived in Egypt. Instead they sold Joseph to Potiphar. Genesis 39:1-2 says, “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.” In these verses, we learn several things about Potiphar. He was an officer of Pharaoh. He was the captain of the guard. He was an Egyptian. However, we see some even more important things about Joseph. The Lord was with Joseph. Even though he was just a young man and a slave in a foreign country, the Lord was also there with him. The Lord caused his life to be successful even though he was a slave. In fact, the Lord was using that period of slavery to train him for the future position of leadership that the Lord knew would be given to him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children to really understand that the Lord is with us wherever we go. He allows us to go through difficult situations to prepare us for the ministry that He has for us. As a result, the Lord allows everything that happens in our lives to help us become conformed to the image of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Judah Thought Tamar was a Prostitute

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that the Lord allows the difficult times that happen in our lives to help us become conformed to the image of Christ so that our lives will bring glory to Him. In this topic, we are going to see sin in the life of Judah. His actions did not bring glory to the Lord. However, we do see the mercy of the Lord because in the first chapter of Matthew we see that Tamar was one of the four women mentioned as ancestors of Christ.

In Genesis 38:1-10 we read, “It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name *was* Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name *was* Shua, and he married her and went in to her. So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him. Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name *was* Tamar. But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him. And Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother’s wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother.’ But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother’s wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also.” Judah did not have the same faith in the Lord that Joseph had shown. As a result, we see that there were problems with sin in his life and in his family.

Judah wanted to develop friendships with more than just his brothers and sisters. As a result, he went to visit Hirah in the town of Adullam. That town was about fifteen miles northwest of the town of Hebron where Isaac had died. While Judah was visiting Hirah, he saw a woman whose name was Shua. She was the daughter of a Canaanite. Judah decided to marry Shua and took her as his wife and they had three sons. They named those three sons Er, Onan and Shelah. Er means “awake”, Onan means “strong” and Shelah means “petition”. By the time that Shelah was born, they were living at a place name Chezib. When Er became a man, Judah took a wife for him named Tamar. This was not the way that he received his own wife because he had made that choice instead of his father. However, this chapter tells us that Er was wicked in the sight of the Lord and so the Lord killed him. The word translated “wicked” is used 663 times in the Old Testament and was most often translated *evil*. Many times this word is used as the opposite of good and often speaks of the condition of the heart. An illustration of that is found in Proverbs 14:22 which says, “Do they not go astray who devise evil? But mercy and truth *belong* to those who devise good.”

Judah then told his next son, Onan, it was his responsibility to conceive a son through Tamar and raise up that son to carry on the name of his brother (this was called a levirate marriage). Onan knew that such a son would not be recognized as his son and made the choice to rebel against the instructions of his father so that no child would be conceived because he did not want to help conceive a child that would carry on the name of his brother. In this way, Onan showed that his heart was also filled with rebellion. That attitude in his heart also displeased the Lord and so the Lord killed Onan as well. This showed that both of the older sons of Judah had hearts filled with evil thoughts.

Genesis 38:11-14 says, “Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, ‘Remain a widow in your father’s house till my son Shelah is grown.’ For he said, ‘Lest he also die like his brothers.’ And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house. Now in the process of time the

daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. And it was told Tamar, saying, 'Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.' So she took off her widow's garments, covered *herself* with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which *was* on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife." Judah told Tamar to return to the house of her father and remain as a widow until Shelah was grown and then Judah said that she would become his wife. Tamar then returned to the house of her father and remained there.

Several years later Shelah was an adult and Tamar had not been given to him as a wife. About that time Shua, the wife of Judah, died. A period of time passed as he grieved for the loss of his wife. The day came when he had finished his grieving and felt comforted. Then Judah decided to go up to Timnah to visit his sheepshearers. His friend Hirah, the Adullamite, also went along with him. At the same time Tamar knew that Shelah had become an adult and Judah had not kept his promise to Tamar that she would become the wife of Shelah when he was grown. Then someone told Tamar, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." Tamar decided that it was time for action because Judah had not kept his promise.

The inheritance rights of the Hittite people said that if a younger son was not given to a widow as a levirate wife that the father-in-law could enter into a levirate marriage with his daughter-in-law. Whether that custom of the Hittites influenced Tamar we do not know. However, Tamar wanted a son who would carry on the inheritance rights that had belonged to Er. In that day, a widow wore a particular kind of clothing to show that she was a widow. Tamar then took off her widow's garments. She put on a veil to cover her face so that she was disguised and would not be recognized. Then she wrapped herself in the clothing that would normally be worn by a prostitute.

The fact that she thought that Judah would be interested in a prostitute showed that she had no respect for the moral condition of her father-in-law. We go on to read in Genesis 38:15-19, "When Judah saw her, he thought she *was* a harlot, because she had covered her face. Then he turned to her by the way, and said, 'Please let me come in to you'; for he did not know that she *was* his daughter-in-law. So she said, 'What will you give me, that you may come in to me?' And he said, 'I will send a young goat from the flock.' So she said, 'Will you give *me* a pledge till you send *it*?' Then he said, 'What pledge shall I give you?' So she said, 'Your signet and cord, and your staff that *is* in your hand.' Then he gave *them* to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood." Once she was ready she went and sat in an open place along the road that led to Timnah and waited for Judah to come walking along that road. The Canaanite religion had temple prostitutes and so he saw her and probably thought that she was a temple prostitute. These verses show that Tamar knew the moral condition of her father-in-law. She had been a part of the family while she was married to Er before he died and then for a little longer before Onan died.

As Judah came to the place where Tamar was sitting, he saw that her face was covered as was common for prostitutes. He turned off the road and went to where she was and said, "Please let me come in to you". He did not realize that she was his daughter-in-law. The choices of Judah that day illustrate the meaning of James 1:13-15 where we read, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." The sinful desires of the heart of Judah were the cause of his choice to commit adultery with a woman he thought was a prostitute. In our next topic, we will see that he was very quick to condemn Tamar for the choice that she had made. Many times those who are guilty of sin

are the quickest to condemn others for sin.

When Judah made his request to Tamar, she answered him, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?” Here we see that the Tamar acted like a prostitute by asking Judah what he would pay to come in to her. Judah had already shown his character by his question. Now we see that he did not hesitate to tell her that he would pay her by sending her a young goat from the flock. Tamar then asked what he would give her as a pledge until he sent the young goat since he did not have a young goat with him. Judah answered her question with a question. Tamar had an answer prepared when he asked the question. We see that Tamar wanted to have evidence of the choice that Judah had made for the future.

Tamar told Judah that the pledge that she wanted until she received the young goat was, “Your signet and cord, and your staff that *is* in your hand.” Judah agreed and gave those things to her. A signet was a seal used to make a document official and was either a signet ring or a seal that was suspended around the neck on a string. This signet would prove that Judah had been with Tamar. The bracelet or cord was a piece of twisted material that was worn around the wrist. A staff was used as a support when traveling and was especially helpful on rough ground. It later became the symbol of the leader of a tribe. All three things were easy to identify and show that Judah had been with Tamar.

Then Judah went into her tent beside the road and committed adultery with Tamar. The Lord allowed Tamar to become pregnant by her father-in-law that day. Judah then left to go to the sheep shearers and Tamar also arose and went away. She took off the veil that she had worn so that Judah would not recognize her. Then she put on the clothing that showed that she was a widow whose husband had died. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Judah committed this sin because of the sinful desires of his heart. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to explain that sin is caused by the sinful desires of the heart.

Judah Admitted that he was Guilty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Judah sinned because of the desires of his heart. That is the reason why every person commits sin. In this topic, we will see that Judah was quick to condemn Tamar but was forced to admit his own sin.

Genesis 38:20-23 says, “And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman’s hand, but he did not find her. Then he asked the men of that place, saying, ‘Where is the harlot who *was* openly by the roadside?’ And they said, ‘There was no harlot in this *place*.’ So he returned to Judah and said, ‘I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this *place*.’ Then Judah said, ‘Let her take *them* for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her.’” Judah thought that he had committed adultery with a prostitute. He had agreed to pay her with a young goat. As a result, we see that when Judah arrived at the place where his sheep were being sheared in Timnah that he asked Hirah, his friend the Adullamite, to take a young goat back to the prostitute with whom he had committed adultery.

Hirah took the young goat and went back to the place. However, when Hirah reached the place, Tamar had left the place by the side of the road. She had taken off the veil that hid her face and had put on the clothes that showed that she was a widow. Then she had returned to the house of her father. When Hirah found nothing where Tamar had been, he asked the men of that place where to find the prostitute that had shown openly that she was a prostitute in the place where she was by the roadside. The word that is translated “openly” is usually translated by either the eye or by sight so he said that she was in a place where she could easily be seen because she was in full view of the road. Hirah had to return to Judah and tell him that he could not find the prostitute. Then he added that the men of that place said, “...there was no harlot in this *place*.” Judah and Hirah both knew that there had been a woman that had her face covered and had been dressed like a prostitute but they knew that it would be difficult to find her.

At that point, Judah had to make a decision. He still had the young goat but he did not have his signet, his cord or his staff. These three things could all be recognized and there would be people that knew that they belonged to Judah. Judah immediately said, “Let her take *them* for herself, lest we be shamed.” The word translated “shamed” is the key word here. The word is normally translated contempt. One other place where the word is used is in Proverbs 18:3 where we read, “When the wicked comes, contempt comes also; and with dishonor *comes* reproach.” Judah knew that if either he or Hirah continued to ask about a prostitute that none of the men of the area knew that they would be looked at with contempt and it would bring shame upon them. As a result, Judah decided that it was better to let the woman have his signet, his cord and his staff than for them to continue to look for her because of the shame that it would bring on them.

Genesis 38:24-26 says, “And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, ‘Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she *is* with child by harlotry.’ So Judah said, ‘Bring her out and let her be burned!’ When she *was* brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, ‘By the man to whom these belong, I *am* with child.’ And she said, ‘Please determine whose these *are* — the signet and cord, and staff.’ So Judah acknowledged *them* and said, ‘She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.’ And he never knew her again.” Three months later we see that Judah heard that Tamar had not remained a widow. In fact, she was pregnant because she did not remain as

a widow.

Instead of even thinking about the sin he had committed, Judah condemned Tamar and said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!” We see that the same thing happened when Christ was on the earth. John 8:3-5 says, “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’” There are two guilty people when someone is found in the very act of adultery. In order to catch the woman in the very act of adultery, this act had to be planned with agreement by the other guilty person. As a result, it was probably one of the men who condemned the woman that day that had committed adultery with her. The purpose of the scribes and Pharisees was to trap Christ with their question even if one of their own had to commit adultery to try and trap Christ with their question. Here Judah shows that same self-righteous attitude and that was why he said to “Bring her out and let her be burned!”

We see that she was brought out of her father’s house. Judah was ready to have her burned to death. Instead Tamar had a surprise for Judah. The word translated “she sent” means to *send to reach out* or to *extend a hand*. As Tamar extended her hand toward her father-in-law, she said, “By the man to whom these belong, I *am* with child.” Then she added, “Please determine whose these *are* — the signet and cord, and staff.” Suddenly Judah was looking at his signet, cord and staff. He could not say that those things belonged to someone else. In Numbers 32:23 Moses warned the men who settled on east side of the Jordan River, “But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.” In the same way, Judah had sinned against the Lord in two different ways. First, he had sinned against the Lord by not giving Shelah to Tamar to be her husband. Second, he had sinned against the Lord by committing adultery with Tamar. Now his sin had found him out and everyone who was there that day could see that Judah was guilty.

Judah had condemned Tamar to death for her sin. Now he had to face the fact that he was also guilty. Judah then admitted that the things that Tamar was holding did belong to him. He was the man who had caused Tamar to become pregnant. Then Judah said, “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.” By these words Judah made it clear to all those who were there that he had not kept his promise to Tamar. He knew that he had broken his promise to her by not giving Shelah to her as her husband. He had made that promise to her several years earlier and she had waited for Judah to keep that promise. Tamar was a Canaanite and the descendants of Canaan had been cursed in Genesis 9:25 where we read, “Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.” However, God chose to show His great mercy to Tamar and she is included in the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:3 we read, “Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram.” We see that the family line of Christ passes through both Tamar and her son Perez. Meanwhile, Judah realized his sin and never had sexual relationships with his daughter-in-law again.

We go on to read that Tamar actually gave birth to twin sons. Genesis 38:27-30 says, “Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins *were* in her womb. And so it was, when she was giving birth, that *the one* put out *his* hand; and the midwife took a scarlet *thread* and bound it on his hand, saying, ‘This one came out first.’ Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, ‘How did you break through? *This breach be* upon you!’ Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet *thread* on his hand. And his name was called Zerah.” In these verses we actually see that something unusual happened in the process of giving birth to these twins.

The midwife who helped Tamar with the delivery of the twins realized that there were actually

twins being born. As a result, a hand came out first and she tied a bright red thread around the wrist of this hand that came out first. However, once she tied the bright red thread around the hand of the baby, the baby pulled the hand back into the womb. Then the other twin came out of the womb unexpectedly. As a result, the twin with the bright red thread on his wrist was actually born after his brother.

The midwife noticed this unusual event and said, “How did you break through? *This breach be upon you!*” The word that is translated “break through” was most commonly used either in the time of war or in the time of disaster. In Nehemiah 4:3 we read, “Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* beside him, and he said, ‘Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up *on it*, he will break down their stone wall.’” In this verse the word is used to speak about breaking down their stone wall. The word is also used in Ecclesiastes 3:3 where we read, “A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up...” In this verse, we see that break down is contrasted with build up.

The word translated “breach” is another form of the word that is translated “Break through”. As a result, the name that was given to Perez is very similar to the spelling of the Spanish and English words “Perez”. This makes it clear that he was given that name because of the fact of what had happened at the time that the twins were born. In many cultures around the world a similar thing happens in the naming of the children. They are named for something that happened at the time of their birth. Perez was given his name because of the fact that he had been born first even though Zerah had stuck his hand out of the womb before Perez was born. The name translated “Zerah” means rising. When he was born the midwife and any others who were there at the time could see that it was his hand that came out first. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the Lord shows great mercy and chose this as one of many illustrations of the fact that He is quick to show mercy to all those who will come to Him in repentance and faith. The Lord chose to show mercy to Tamar and included her in His family line even though she was a Canaanite. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the mercy of God to all who come to Him.

Joseph Ran from Temptation

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain from the life of Tamar that the Lord will show great mercy to all who will come to Him in repentance and faith. In this topic, we will see that Joseph shows us what it means to flee from temptation.

In Genesis 39:1-6 we read, “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.” The Ishmaelites did not keep Joseph as their slave. Instead they sold him to Potiphar when they got to Egypt. As a result, Joseph became a slave in Egypt at the age of seventeen. Potiphar was an Egyptian and an officer of Pharaoh. He was the captain of the guard of Pharaoh so he had a very influential position.

Although Joseph was just a young slave, we see that the Lord was with him and caused his life to be successful. The Lord has also placed him in the household of his master. The master saw the way that the Lord was with him. In fact, the Lord caused everything that Joseph did to be blessed. This caused Joseph to find favor in the sight of his master. Potiphar made Joseph the overseer of his house and placed everything that he had under the authority of Joseph. Even though Joseph was a very young man the Lord was working in his life and through his life.

Joseph was faithful to the Lord and he was also faithful to his master. After Potiphar placed Joseph over everything in his house, the Lord also blessed Potiphar for the sake of Joseph. In fact, this blessing extended to everything that Potiphar had both in the house and in the field. This makes it clear that the Lord may choose to bless people who have not repented of their sin of unbelief but have shown kindness and trust to those who are followers of the Lord. Potiphar had such a trust in Joseph that he gave Joseph the total responsibility for the care of everything that belonged to him. He ate the food that Joseph made certain was there every day but other than his daily food Joseph was in charge of everything that belonged to Potiphar. We also see that Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. The word translated “handsome” is translated *beautiful* when it talks of Rachel in Genesis 29:17. That verse says, “Leah’s eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.” This shows that Joseph was a very handsome young man. Together these verses show us that Joseph probably gained all of the beauty that his mother had when Jacob first met his mother. The fact that he was a slave just meant that he was a very handsome slave.

Genesis 39:7-9 says, “And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’ But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. *There is* no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’” In these verses, we see that the wife of Potiphar became interested in an adulterous

relationship with Joseph. At first, she just looked at him. However, the day came when she asked Joseph to begin a relationship with her. This meant that Joseph now had to deal with sexual temptation. In a previous topic, we saw that his older brother, Judah, became guilty of sexual sin.

In contrast, we see that Joseph made a very different choice. We see how Joseph answered the wife of his master the first time that she tried to seduce him. First, Joseph talked about the trust that her husband had in him. He said that Potiphar had placed everything that he owned under the supervision of Joseph. This trust was so great that Potiphar did not even know all that he possessed. Joseph realized that his master trusted him more than any of his other slaves. Second, Joseph explained to the wife her position in the sight of her husband. Joseph said that of everything that Potiphar had that his wife was the only person or thing that Potiphar had withheld from Joseph. Joseph reminded her that the reason he would not touch her was due to the fact that she was the wife of Potiphar. It would not be right for him to do anything with her.

However, the third reason that Joseph gave was the most important reason of all why Joseph would not lie with her. Joseph asked how he could do this great wickedness. The word translated “wickedness” is usually given as the opposite of good. It usually speaks of moral evil or ethical evil against other people or against God. This can involve either words or actions against other people. In addition, it can involve words, actions or evil sacrifices when it talks about God. Malachi 1:8 says, “‘And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is *it* not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is *it* not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?’ says the LORD of hosts.” In this case the word is used in relation to the sacrifices Israel made to God. Joseph chose to do what is pleasing to the Lord and not to follow the desires of sinful flesh.

Joseph also pointed out one other lesson about that wickedness. Joseph told the wife of Potiphar that for him to do such wickedness would be to sin against God. Here we learn a key lesson. Sins that we commit are sins against God and not just sins against another person. David realized this after he was confronted with his sin by Nathan, the prophet. In his prayer to the Lord David said in Psalm 51:4, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight — that You may be found just when You speak, *and* blameless when You judge.” However, the wife of Potiphar did not stop trying to tempt Joseph. It is important for us to realize that we live in a sinful world and those who have no relationship to God are dead in trespasses and sins. They reach a point where their conscience does not bother them because they sear their conscience. It is important for every follower of the Lord to depend on the Lord for victory over temptation.

In Genesis 39:10-12 we go on to read, “So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her *or* to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house *was* inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’ But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.” Here we see that the wife of Potiphar was very persistent. She continued to try to seduce him day after day. However, Joseph refused to listen to her. This is a reminder that Satan continues to try to tempt followers of the Lord. However, Joseph had made a choice in his heart to please the Lord in all that he did. Psalm 19:14 says, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.” Joseph had made a commitment in his heart that he would not sin against the Lord. In fact, we see that Joseph chose to avoid being around the wife of Potiphar when he was in the house.

However, one day the wife of Potiphar saw the opportunity for which she had been waiting. She knew that none of the other men were in the house. Joseph went into the house to do his

work just as he did every day. This time she did not come to him and try to seduce him. Instead, she tried a different approach while he was busy working. The word translated “caught” means to *seize* or *lay hold of*. This meant that she probably slipped up from behind him and seized the garment or outer robe that he was wearing. Then she demanded again, “Lie with me.” She was very determined to get what she wanted. She had asked Joseph many times in the past and he had refused. However, this time she had a firm hold on his outer garment. She was either going to what she wanted or she was going to get even with Joseph.

Joseph had determined that he was going to please God regardless of what happened. He immediately left her with his robe or outer garment and then fled from her and ran outside so that he was completely away from the house and the wife of Potiphar. In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” Then 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Joseph knew that the best way to escape temptation was to flee and escape out of the house. This is a very important example of what those verses teach. The choice that Joseph made that day was due to the fact that his greatest desire was to please God and take the way of escape that the Lord had provided for him.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that Joseph provided an example for their own lives. We also want to help our children learn to explain to others the choice that Joseph made that day and why he made that choice even though he would later be falsely accused for making the godly choice. The choice that Joseph made was a very important key in his preparation to be used greatly by the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to follow this example.

Joseph was Falsely Accused

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children make the choice to follow the example of Joseph when he was being tempted by the wife of Potiphar. In this topic, we will see that the wife of Potiphar chose to falsely accuse Joseph when she did not get what she wanted.

Genesis 39:13-15 says, “And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, ‘See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside.’” We saw in our last topic that Joseph chose to flee from temptation. However, here we see that the next thing that happened to Joseph was that he was falsely accused of a sin that he did not commit. The wife of Potiphar was angry that she had failed in her attempt to seduce Joseph. As a result, she decided to get revenge by falsely accusing him.

The wife of Potiphar immediately accused Joseph to the other men who worked in her house. They had been out of the house when she tried to seduce Joseph. As a result, she called to those men and made her accusation to them first. She had grabbed the garment of Joseph to try and get what she wanted. Joseph had fled immediately and when she kept holding that outer robe he just left the garment behind. Now she used that robe to accuse Joseph. She told the other men to look at the outer garment. Then she added, “‘See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.’” The first thing that she did was blame her husband. Then she made it sound like her husband was against both her and the other Egyptians servants. She claimed that he had bought this Hebrew slave to mock them. This word is used in Genesis 21:9-10 where we read, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.’” In these verses the word is translated scoffing. That was the reason that Sarah told Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son.

The wife of Potiphar used that word to accuse Joseph. She wanted to make these Egyptian servants angry at Joseph so that they would back up her story. Then she said that the purpose that Joseph had come into the house was to commit sexual sin with her. She then claimed that she had cried out with a loud voice. She said that when Joseph heard her calling out with a loud voice that it was her calling out that caused Joseph to flee. In his hurry to escape he had left his outer robe behind. She said that he had fled out of the house and went outside. In her efforts to get revenge because Joseph had rejected her attempts to seduce him, she made it sound like he was a very evil man. She said that he had only fled from the house because of her cries.

Genesis 39:16-18 goes on to say, “So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, ‘The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.’” The wife of Potiphar kept the outer garment that she had pulled off Joseph as he fled and waited for her husband to come home. When he came home she repeated the lies that she had told to the Egyptian servants. She again called Joseph the Hebrew servant. Then she reminded her husband that he had brought Joseph into their house by purchasing him as a slave. Then she made her accusation against Joseph. She said that Joseph had come into the place where she was in the house to mock her. Here we see that

she made it sound like he had come to where she was in the house to try and rape her. Of course she was actually the one who had tried for many days and probably many weeks to seduce Joseph and get him to commit adultery with her. Each time he had refused. However, when she had grabbed his outer garment and held on to it, he had pulled his arms out of the garment and had fled outside to avoid her temptations.

In contrast, she gave a very different reason why he had fled out of the house. She said that she had lifted up her voice and cried out loudly. She said that only then did he leave his garment with her and flee out of the house. Joseph had been faithful to the Lord. Many years later Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Joseph had fled so that he would not yield to the temptation. He had called out to the Lord out of a pure heart. However, he was being falsely accused by the wife of Potiphar who was not able to carry out her own sinful desires.

We go on to read what Potiphar did when he heard the false accusation of his wife. Genesis 39:19-23 says, “So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, ‘Your servant did to me after this manner,’ that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners *were* confined. And he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was* under *Joseph’s* authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made *it* prosper.” Here we see that because he was falsely accused that Joseph was put in the prison where the prisoners of the king were confined.

We read what Potiphar did when his wife made her false accusation against Joseph. Joseph had told the wife of his master in Genesis 39:8-9, “But he refused and said to his master’s wife, ‘Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. *There is* no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’” Joseph had made it clear to the wife of Potiphar that he would not sin with her because it would be great wickedness and sin against God. Now she had falsely accused Joseph of the very sin which he had refused to commit. Her husband was very angry when he heard the words of his wife. Since Joseph was a slave, his master could have put him to death. However, his master chose to put Joseph into the royal prison instead. This may have been due to the fact that even though Potiphar was very angry that he was not convinced that Joseph was guilty.

Meanwhile, the Lord had allowed Joseph to be placed in the prison because the Lord was working to prepare Joseph for the future ministry that the Lord had for him. James 1:12 says, “Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Joseph had experienced temptation and he continued to experience additional testing in prison because he would be in that prison for several years. However, Genesis 39:21 says, “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” While serving Potiphar, Joseph had learned to manage everything that belonged to Potiphar. Now he was in prison even though he had chosen to do what was right. We are reminded that the Lord was with Joseph while he was in prison. The Lord also chose to show mercy to Joseph in that prison and He (the Lord) gave Joseph favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. This favor came from the Lord because the Lord was going to use the prison to prepare Joseph for the future.

Like Potiphar, the keeper of the prison soon learned that Joseph was a good administrator and the keeper of the prison soon committed all of the prisoners in the prison into the hand of Joseph. The word translated “committed” is used more than 2000 times in the Old Testament. Slightly more than half of the time (1078) the word is translated *give*. Here we see that the keeper of the prison gave Joseph the responsibility for the particular work that was done by all of the prisoners in the prison. In Genesis 40:17 we read, “...In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.” In this case the baker had made the baked goods for Pharaoh before being sent to the prison. In the prison each prisoner had a responsibility to do certain things. Joseph became the man who assigned those tasks to each prisoner.

The keeper of the prison had delegated to Joseph the responsibility for assigning the tasks that each prisoner was to do. The keeper of the prison was so confident in the abilities that the Lord had given Joseph that he did not even inspect the tasks that Joseph assigned the other prisoners to do. This shows us that the keeper of the prison knew that Joseph would make certain that the various tasks were done properly by the other prisoners. However, Joseph did not depend on his own abilities. Instead we read that the Lord was with Joseph. Here we see the real key to effectively doing whatever the Lord gives us to do. When the Lord is with us we can trust Him to guide us. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Joseph trusted the Lord with his whole heart. He did not depend on his own understanding. Instead he looked to the Lord to guide and direct him as he assigned the various tasks to the different prisoners. The result was that the Lord directed him and guided his decisions. We read that the Lord made everything that Joseph did to prosper.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Lord to guide them in the things that they do and direct their paths in whatever work the Lord has for them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to seek the understanding and direction of the Lord in all that they do.

Joseph Interpreted the Dream of the Butler

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Lord to guide them in whatever work the Lord has for them to do. We saw that the Lord blessed the work of Joseph as he assigned the various tasks to the other prisoners in the prison. In this topic, we will see that Joseph interpreted the dream of the butler of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

Genesis 40:1-4 says, “It came to pass after these things *that* the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph *was* confined. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.” Although Joseph was prison, the Lord had put him in the position where he was responsible for all of the prisoners. One day, two new prisoners arrived at the prison because they had offended the king of Egypt. These two men were the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh. The butler or cupbearer was the one who tasted the water and other drinks of Pharaoh before he drank them to make certain that no one had placed any poison in the water or other drink. As a result, it was a job with great responsibility because he helped to protect the life of the Pharaoh. The job of the chief baker was to prepare the bread of the king and make certain that it was safe to eat.

Joseph was given the responsibility for the care of these men by the captain of the guard. Joseph served these two men. The word translated “served” meant to *serve* or *minister to someone who held a high position* or *to serve the Lord as a priest*. Here we see that Joseph chose to serve these two and provide them with all of their needs while they were in the prison. These two men spent a period of time in the prison. However, Joseph did more than just serve these men. Genesis 40:5-8 says, “Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who *were* confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man’s dream in one night *and* each man’s dream with its *own* interpretation. And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they *were* sad. So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who *were* with him in the custody of his lord’s house, saying, ‘Why do you look *so* sad today?’ And they said to him, ‘We each have had a dream, and *there is* no interpreter of it.’ So Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them* to me, please.’” Here we see that Joseph also took time to encourage them.

One night both of the men had a dream the same night. In this case, we see that both of these dreams had a meaning and an interpretation. This meant that the dreams had been given by God and had a specific meaning. However, the butler and the baker did not have any idea what their dreams might mean. Joseph demonstrated that his service of these men included much more than just taking care of their needs. When Joseph came to them in the morning the first thing that he noticed was that they both were sad. Many people just ignore people when they look sad. They figure that the sadness that can be seen in others is not their problem and so they have no concern for the people. In contrast, Joseph had a great concern for these two men and so he asked them why they looked so sad. Joseph had compassion and he wanted to know the cause of the sadness so that he could do whatever possible to encourage these two men.

The butler and the baker explained to Joseph that each of them had had a dream during the night. Both dreams had been so clear and so vivid that they could remember all of the details of each of their dreams. Then they explained that their problem was the fact that there was no interpreter who could interpret their dreams. Joseph immediately responded to them by telling them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them* to me, please.” Here we see that

Joseph explained the fact that God is the only true source for the interpretation of dreams to the butler and the baker. Two years later, we see that he explained the same thing to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Genesis 41:15-16 says, “And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it.’ So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘*It is* not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’” Joseph was ready to serve the butler and the baker just as he was later ready to serve Pharaoh.

With the encouragement from Joseph the chief butler was ready to tell his dream to Joseph. Genesis 40:9-11 says, “Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, ‘Behold, in my dream a vine *was* before me, and in the vine *were* three branches; it *was* as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then Pharaoh’s cup *was* in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.’” The most important work of the chief butler was to taste the things that Pharaoh would drink before Pharaoh drank them so that no one could poison him. As a result, the dream of the chief butler was about a vine as the Lord wanted to make this dream so clear to the butler that he could remember the exact details to tell Joseph.

In the dream, he had seen a grape vine. This vine had three branches on it. Each of the three branches of the vine suddenly started to bud. First the blossoms appeared on each branch of the vine. Then those blossoms shot up and developed into clusters of grapes on each of the branches. This dream was very easy for the butler to remember because he saw the grapes in each cluster continue to grow until they became ripe grapes. God allowed this dream to continue until the entire process from the branches budding until they became ripe clusters of grapes were clear to the butler. In the previous years, the butler had probably watched the growth and development of many fields of grapes because of the fact that he was the one who was going to taste the juice from the grapes before he gave the grape juice or wine to Pharaoh.

However, in this dream the butler also saw that he had the cup of Pharaoh in his hand. He took the grapes off of the branches of the vine and squeezed them until the grape juice came out of them and ran into the cup of Pharaoh. Fresh squeezed juice is the best juice from any fruit. Since Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt the butler had tasted this juice for Pharaoh many times during the period that he had been the chief butler. Finally, in his dream, he had placed the cup in the king’s hand. This meant that the dream had included all of the main events from the shooting forth of the buds, the development and ripening of the fruit, the squeezing of the juice into the cup of Pharaoh, the tasting of the juice by the butler to the presentation of the cup to the king so that he could drink and enjoy that fresh juice that the butler had tested for him. That work was a very important responsibility because Pharaoh knew that the person who had that job was actually protecting his life each time that he gave something to the king to drink. With such a vivid dream the chief butler really wanted to know the meaning of the dream.

Genesis 40:12-15 says, “And Joseph said to him, ‘This *is* the interpretation of it: the three branches *are* three days. Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.’” Joseph had made it clear to the butler that the Lord is the One who is able to interpret dreams. This told the butler that Joseph was going to depend on the Lord to give him the interpretation of that particular dream. Then Joseph began to explain the meaning of the dream to the butler.

The Lord showed Joseph that the three branches stood for the fact that this dream would be

fulfilled in three days. The fact that Pharaoh would lift up the head of the butler meant that the king was going to restore him to his position as the chief butler. He would again begin to serve the king by tasting both the things that he drank and the food that he ate so that the king could be sure that his food and drink were safe and would not poison him. That was great news to the butler and he was probably very excited for the next three days as he waited for this event to happen.

However, Joseph also made four requests of the butler. Joseph asked the butler to do four things for him. First, Joseph asked the butler to remember him when it went well for the butler. Second, Joseph asked the butler to please show kindness to him. Third, Joseph asked the butler to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. Fourth, he asked the butler to do what he could to get Joseph out of the prison. Joseph had just told the butler that he would be restored to his former position in only three days. Joseph had spent several years in the prison and described it as the dungeon. The word translated “dungeon” is used 69 times in the Old Testament and 42 of them are translated *pit*. Eleven times it is translated *dungeon*. Part of the reason for this is that sometimes a deep pit was used as a dungeon to prevent the escape of prisoners. That could be either a dry pit or in the case of Jeremiah a miry pit with mud in the bottom. Jeremiah 38:6 says, “So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which *was* in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.”

That meant that Joseph may have suffered from the heat during the day and the cold during the colder months at night for several years. Life in such a prison would have been very difficult. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that life for Joseph was not easy during those years but that he had his trust in the Lord even in a very difficult situation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how the Lord was working in Joseph life even during these years.

Joseph Interpreted the Dream of the Baker

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Joseph experienced a very difficult life in prison for several years and yet he faithfully served the Lord and others during those years. In this topic, we will see that the baker also asked Joseph to interpret his dream.

The baker had heard Joseph interpret the dream of the butler and so he decided to tell his dream to Joseph. We read in Genesis 40:16-17 that, “When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, ‘I also *was* in my dream, and there *were* three white baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.’” We learn a key lesson that the Lord even guided the two men as to which of them should be first as they told their dreams to Joseph. If the baker would have told his dream first, the butler would probably never have told his dream to Joseph. Both the baker and the butler wanted to hear a good interpretation from their dreams. The butler had received a very good message as Joseph explained the meaning of his dream. That was why the baker was ready to tell his dream to Joseph.

The chief baker was the man who had been responsible for at least all of the bread and all of the other baked goods that were prepared for Pharaoh. He may have been in charge of all of the food that was prepared and eaten by the family of Pharaoh. However, Joseph wanted to please God and so he was going to speak the truth whether the dream had good news or evil news for the baker. The dream of the baker had also been very vivid so that he could remember all of the details of his dream as well. The fact that he mentioned that in his dream there were three white baskets on his head shows that he remembered the details including the color of the baskets. In many countries of the world the people carry baskets and similar things on their heads. These may even be stacked one on top of another. This helps to prevent back injuries when carrying heavy loads.

The baker said that the top basket of the three basket of the three was filled with all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh. Since the chief baker was responsible for all of the baked goods that the king and his family ate, the chief had to be someone that Pharaoh could trust so that no enemy would conspire with the baker to put poison in the food of the king. However, something very different happened to the baked goods of the baker than had happened to the grapes of the butler. Since that was the top basket, the birds landed on the basket and ate the baked goods out of the basket. That may have been the reason that the baker was afraid to tell his dream first. However, the good interpretation of the dream of the butler encouraged him to also tell his dream. There were some things in their dreams that were similar. They both had three things. The butler had three cups and the baker had three baskets. The butler squeezed grape juice into the cups and the baker prepared baked goods for Pharaoh.

Genesis 40:18-19 tells us the interpretation that God gave to Joseph regarding this second dream. Those verses say, “So Joseph answered and said, ‘This *is* the interpretation of it: The three baskets *are* three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.’” Suddenly, we see that the similarities in the two dreams stopped. This interpretation of this dream was not a message that brought happiness to the baker. Instead this dream was a message about the coming death of the baker. Joseph was also faithful as he told the meaning of this dream and did not try to give the baker false hope. Instead, his message gave the baker three days to prepare for his death. That meant that he had only three days to learn about the true and living God that Joseph knew

who could give him eternal life. That gave him the same choices that the two thieves on the two crosses with Jesus had. He could learn how to have forgiveness by God and eternal life or he could ignore the warning and experience judgment in just three days. We are not told which choice he made that day. However, we also need to speak the truth in love to those who are rejecting Christ.

Joseph had already been serving both men and they knew that he cared for them. People want to hear the truth spoken to them in love. In this case, that meant that the baker had time to prepare. Joseph told the baker that Pharaoh would also change his situation in three days. However, he would not restore the baker to his former position. Instead, the king would hang him on a tree in three days. His body would be left hanging after he died and the birds would come and eat the flesh of his body. This was not the good news that the baker had hoped to hear. Instead, it was a very painful message for him because he knew that he only had three days to live. However, it also gave him the opportunity to learn from Joseph about God.

We go on to read in Genesis 40:20-23, “Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.” These verses show us how the interpretation of the dreams by Joseph was fulfilled by Pharaoh even though he knew nothing about the dreams. The third day was the birthday of Pharaoh. He decided to have a feast for all of his servants. This was a birthday feast but we see that Pharaoh also used this time to give a warning to those servants.

While all of the servants were gathered for the feast, the king had the butler and the baker brought from the prison. The word translated “lifted up” meant to *call attention to the person or people who are lifted up*. Pharaoh called attention to both of these men. He honored the butler by restoring the chief butler to his position. This helped all of the servants to realize that when the king chose to honor a person that he wanted everyone to know that he was being restored. He made this a very public honor by placing his cup in the hand of the chief butler. Then, Pharaoh called attention to the chief baker. However, he did something very different to him. He had the chief baker publicly hanged so that all of the servants were given a warning that made it clear that Pharaoh had the power of life and death over his servants. Those he chose to honor would be honored and those he chose to kill would be put to death. This made it very clear to the servants that they better serve Pharaoh in such a way that he would be pleased with their work.

Joseph had interpreted the dreams of both men very accurately. The chief butler should have been very thankful for the fact that Joseph had given him peace by telling him that he would be restored to his position on the third day. Joseph had asked the chief butler to do four things for him when he was restored to his former position. First, Joseph had asked the butler to remember him when it went well for him. However, we read that the butler did not remember Joseph but instead forgot him. Many people are like the butler. Luke 17:12-18 says, “Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ So when He saw *them*, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’” Here we see that the butler was like the nine lepers. He did not show his thanks by remembering Joseph.

The fact that the butler did not remember Joseph also meant that he did not do these three others things. Joseph had also asked the butler to show kindness to him, to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf and to get him out of the prison. The butler had been honored and restored to his position. He was able to enjoy his life again. It was a life of ease and comfort because he was in the house of Pharaoh so that he could taste the things that Pharaoh ate and drank in the comfort of the palace. However, the fact that he forgot Joseph meant that he had to suffer in the prison for an additional two full years. Even though the Lord was blessing Joseph in the prison, the conditions were still very difficult there. He had to suffer from both the heat and the cold with very little protection because the butler forgot him.

Joseph later told his brothers in Genesis 50:19-20, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.’” Joseph realized that everything that had happened to him was allowed by God to prepare him for the great responsibility that the Lord would later bring into his life. Although Romans 8:28-29 was not written until nearly 2000 years later, those verses explain what the Lord was doing in the life of Joseph to prepare him to save many people alive. Those verses say, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Joseph came to understand that God worked all things for good.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and illustrate these things from the life of Joseph. The Lord is the One who is working in their lives to conform them to the image of Christ. They can experience the joy of the Lord as the Lord works through the difficult things that happen in their lives to prepare them for the ministry that the Lord has for them as they serve the Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain this lesson to others.

Pharaoh Had Two Dreams that None Could Interpret

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain and illustrate from the life of Joseph that the Lord is the One who is working in our lives to conform us to the image of Christ. This understanding will bring great joy even when we are going through difficult times. In this topic, we will see that Pharaoh had two dreams that no one could interpret.

Genesis 41:1-4 says, “Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river. And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke.” Joseph had interpreted the dream of the butler but the butler forgot all about Joseph in the prison. We see that Joseph spent an additional two full years in the prison. Life in the prison was difficult even though Joseph was in charge of all of the other prisoners. Joseph probably soon realized that the butler had forgotten him as several weeks passed in the prison and nothing changed. However, Joseph was faithful to the Lord as he experienced the trials of the next two years

Two full years later, Pharaoh was the person who had a dream. He dreamed that he was standing by the river. In Egypt, that would have been the Nile River because the people of Egypt used that as their main source of water. In his dream as the king stood by the river he saw seven cows come out of the river. These cows were beautiful looking and fat cows. Once they were out of the river the cows went to a field near the edge of the river and began to eat the grass. While these cows were eating in the field, seven other cows came up out of the river. However, these cows were not beautiful. In fact, they were quite ugly. The word translated “gaunt” in relation to the cows is usually translated *thin* and is used that way five additional times in the second dream of Pharaoh regarding heads of grain. These cows were so thin that it caused them to look very ugly.

In the dream of Pharaoh, these seven thin and very ugly cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. When Pharaoh told Joseph this dream, he added one important detail that is not mentioned here. Genesis 41:21, “When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.” Here we see that in the dream that when the thin and ugly cows ate the fat cows that it did not help them. They still looked just as thin and ugly after they had finished eating the fat cows. This dream was so shocking to Pharaoh that it caused him to wake up from his sleep.

However, he finally went back to sleep. Genesis 41:5-8 says, “He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was* a dream. Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but *there was* no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.” We see that he had a second dream after he went back to sleep. This time the dream was about grain instead of cows. We see that something happened very suddenly in this second dream. As Pharaoh dreamed, he saw a stalk of grain come up out of the ground. It grew very rapidly and quickly developed seven heads of grain on this one stalk. These seven heads of grain were all plump and good. The word translated

“plump” is the word that was used in verse two when it said that the seven cows were fat and good as the basic meaning is *fat* or a closely related word.

As Pharaoh dreamed, suddenly seven very thin heads of grain came up. These heads of grain had been blasted or blighted by a very strong east wind. In the dream, the seven thin heads of grain ate the seven plump and full heads of grain. This dream woke up Pharaoh just like the first dream. Then he realized that this was also a dream. We read that in the morning the spirit of Pharaoh was troubled. The word that is translated “spirit” in the Old Testament can refer either to God or man. In Genesis 1:2 we read, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” In this verse, it is clear that the verse is talking about the Holy Spirit. In contrast, Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” In this verse, we see that the human body will return to the dust and the human spirit will return to the Lord who created that human spirit. In these verses, it is clear that the spirit of Pharaoh is talking about the fact that his human spirit was troubled. His dreams had been so clear and vivid that he could remember all of the details.

That morning, Pharaoh immediately sent for all of the magicians and wise men in the land of Egypt and asked them to interpret his dreams. The word translated “magician” is from a word that means *diviner, magician* or *astrologer*. The word translated “wise men” when used in the plural form as it is here means *the educated, the astrologers* or *the shrewd*. As a result, Pharaoh felt that among these men there would certainly be at least a few of these men that could interpret his dreams. Many times the people of this world will turn either to the highly educated or to those people who are involved in some form of communication with the evil spirits to get an answer to the things that cause their spirits to be troubled. The word translated “troubled” here is used five times in the Old Testament and means to be *disturbed*. The dreams had disturbed Pharaoh and he was determined to find out what they meant.

However, the wise men and magicians were not able to help Pharaoh. These dreams had been given to Pharaoh by God and so only a person who depended on the Lord for wisdom could give a true interpretation. 1 Corinthians 2:14 explains, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” The wise men and magicians of Egypt were spiritually dead which made it impossible for them to interpret accurately a dream that had been given by God. They were without spiritual discernment. The interpretation of these dreams required one who had a true faith in the Creator of heaven and earth. The Lord knew that there was only one man in the entire land of Egypt that would be able to interpret that dream.

Suddenly, the chief butler remembered what had happened when he and the chief baker each had a dream while they were in the prison two full years earlier. Genesis 41:9-13 says, “Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: ‘I remember my faults this day. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream. Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his *own* dream. And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him.’” The Lord had allowed him to forget the fact that Joseph had interpreted his dream. Now was the time for that dream to be remembered and the Lord reminded the chief butler of Joseph.

The word translated “faults” is used 35 times in the Old Testament and means *sin* or *punishment*. Thirty of those times, the word is translated sin. This word usually refers to sins against God although in this use the chief butler had been placed in prison because he had

disobeyed the rules of Pharaoh. The word is also used in that way in Ecclesiastes 10:4 where it is translated *offences*. That verse says, "If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post; for conciliation pacifies great offenses." The chief butler then went on to remind Pharaoh of what Pharaoh had done when he and the baker had broken some of the rules of Pharaoh. He said that he and the chief baker had both been placed in the prison where they were under the supervision of the captain of the guard. While they were in the prison, both of them had a dream the same night. They did not know what their dreams meant but each dream had its own interpretation.

Like Pharaoh, the butler and the baker could not understand their dreams. However, there was also a young Hebrew man with them in the prison. That young man was actually a servant of the captain of the guard. When Joseph had questioned them, they had told him in Genesis 40:8, "And they said to him, 'We each have had a dream, and there *is* no interpreter of it.' So Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.'" Then the butler said that the two men had told the young Hebrew man their dreams and he had interpreted the meaning of each dream to the two men. In that way, that had actually found out the meaning of their particular dreams. Then the butler said the most important thing of all about the dreams of the two men.

The butler said just exactly what the Hebrew servant had told them was the exact thing that had happened to each of them. Joseph had said that the butler would be restored to his office in three days. That was what had happened and that was why the butler was now in the position that he could tell Pharaoh about a young man that could interpret dreams. In contrast, the Hebrew servant had told the chief baker that he would be hanged in three days. That was exactly what had happened to the baker. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain when God chose to speak to a person in a dream in the Old Testament that the interpretation of that dream had to be given by God and did not come from human reasoning. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this to others.

Joseph was Asked to Interpret the Dream of Pharaoh

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that when God gave a dream to someone in the Old Testament that the interpretation of that dream had to come from God and did not come from human reasoning. In our topic today, we will see that Joseph was asked to interpret the dream of Pharaoh to him.

Pharaoh was excited when the butler told him that there was a young Hebrew servant in the prison that could interpret dreams. He had just seen that all of his magicians and wise men were unable to interpret his two dreams. However, the dreams had been so clear and specific that he desperately wanted to know the meaning of those dreams. Now, he had just heard that there was still another person that might be able to interpret his dreams. Genesis 41:14-16 says, “Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.’ So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘*It is* not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’” We see that Pharaoh immediately sent someone to go and get Joseph.

Here we see that Pharaoh was very eager to learn as soon as possible the meaning of his dreams. We read that Joseph was brought quickly out of the dungeon. We mentioned in an earlier topic that the word translated “dungeon” meant a *deep open pit*. That also meant that the prisoners in it were exposed to both the heat and the cold. Joseph had spent several years in this dungeon. As a result, he had to prepare before he could go and talk to the Pharaoh. First, he had to shave. The Egyptians were clean-shaven so that was necessary before Joseph was taken into the presence of Pharaoh. In addition, the clothing that he had been wearing in the dungeon was certainly not the kind of clothing that would be worn in the presence of a ruler. This meant that he changed his clothes probably into something that was much fancier than the clothing that he had worn in prison.

Once Joseph was ready to appear before Pharaoh, he was immediately taken into the presence of Pharaoh. Pharaoh began their conversation by saying, “...I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it.” After telling Joseph that he had a dream, Pharaoh said that there was no one who could interpret his dream. Then Pharaoh added that he had heard that Joseph could understand dreams so that he knew how to interpret them. Joseph knew that he was not able to understand the meaning of dreams from his own wisdom or understanding. As a result, he could not depend on his own understanding to interpret dreams. Joseph immediately made it clear to Pharaoh that he did not have that ability. He said that it was not in himself that he could interpret dreams. Instead, it was only God who could give Pharaoh an answer of peace. This was a very important statement to make to Pharaoh because it meant that the understanding and interpretation of dreams is not possible for any human being. Instead only God can interpret dreams and give them an answer of peace. This made it clear to Pharaoh that Joseph could not depend on himself. Instead he had to depend on the Lord to give Pharaoh an answer.

However, he did give Pharaoh a wonderful promise that came from the Lord. Joseph said that the Lord would give Pharaoh an answer of peace. This meant that Joseph knew that the Lord is able to interpret dreams. The Lord is able to give peace to those who are troubled. As a result, Pharaoh felt free to tell Joseph his dream. Genesis 41:17-21 says, “Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: ‘Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. Suddenly seven cows came up

out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.” Since Joseph said that the only answer that could be given to Pharaoh had to come from God, Pharaoh knew that the only person that could give him an accurate interpretation was a person who knew the true and living God.

Pharaoh said that in his dream he was standing by the bank of the river. Of course in Egypt to talk about the river was to talk about the Nile River. It was their main source of water for much of Egypt. Then Pharaoh went on to tell Joseph about the cattle that he saw in his dream. He probably would not have remembered the details of his dream if the dream had just been about seven fat cattle coming up out of the river and eating in the field. The thing that made his dream so vivid was the fact that they were followed by seven extremely ugly cows. Pharaoh said that he had never seen such ugly cows in the entire land of Egypt. In areas where there is a large river, people living near the river are used to seeing cattle that have been well fed. The fact that these thin ugly cows came up out of the river meant that they had been near the river for a period of time and should have been well fed like the first seven cows.

However, what happened next was the thing that had caused Pharaoh to be troubled by this dream. Suddenly, the very thin cows ate the fine looking and fat cows. Cows are not meat eating animals. They eat grass and other similar things. This meant that when Pharaoh dreamed that the thin, ugly cows ate the fat and beautiful looking cows that his dream was about something that he had never seen happen in real life. That was the thing that it was not possible for him to understand because he had never seen anything like it before. The same was also true for all of the magicians in the land of Egypt. They could not interpret something that they had never seen and that was impossible to happen from their knowledge of the eating habits of cattle.

However, there was still one more detail that was even more difficult for the magicians to try and explain. After the ugly thin cows ate up the fat cattle the thin cattle looked just as ugly and thin as they had previously looked. In the dream, they had eaten fat cattle that were much larger than themselves. Even though it was a dream, Pharaoh at least expected the thin cattle to grow larger when they ate the fat cattle. Instead, they had remained just as thin and ugly as they had been before. That was why the dream was so shocking that it caused Pharaoh to waken from his sleep. In fact, he probably lay awake for a period of time before he even went back to sleep. Then when he went back to sleep, Pharaoh had a second dream. Genesis 41:22-24 says, “Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.” Here we see that when he did go back to sleep that he had a second dream which was similar to the first dream.

Once Pharaoh had gone back to sleep, he dreamed a second dream. This time, he dreamed that he saw a stalk of grain grow up from the ground. In this dream, the stalk grew very suddenly and developed seven beautiful heads of grain on the stalk. This dream would probably have also been forgotten even though it developed these seven beautiful heads of grain very suddenly. However, it was what happened next that caused Pharaoh to remember this dream in vivid detail. Pharaoh described these heads of grain as withered, thin and blighted by the east wind. The word that is translated “withered” is only used in this verse and means to *dry up, harden and wither*. Such a head of grain could not even be eaten by a person. We also see that the second seven heads of grain were thin or small.

A third thing that we see about these heads of grain is that they were blighted by the east wind. Jonah 4:8 describes this east wind when it says, “And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, *‘It is better for me to die than to live.’*” This same type of east wind will sometimes blow for two or three days at a time in Israel and Egypt. It comes from the Arabian Desert to the east. This wind is such a destructive wind that it can wither grass, flowers or standing grain in just a day. However, in the dream of Pharaoh these seven heads of grain suddenly appear on the stalk and look withered by the east wind from the moment that they appeared. Then these heads of grain did one more thing that Pharaoh had never seen or heard of before. The thin, blighted heads of grain quickly ate the seven good heads of grain.

Then Pharaoh told Joseph one more thing about his dreams. He said that he had told the dreams to the magicians of Egypt and that none of them had been able to explain to him what the dreams meant. Pharaoh had been troubled by these dreams from the time that he woke up. This was very upsetting to him that that none of the magicians could explain the meaning of those dreams to him. However, before Joseph had even heard the dreams Joseph had told Pharaoh in Genesis 41:16, “So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’*” Here we see that Joseph had told Pharaoh that he could not answer those dreams with his own abilities. Instead, Joseph had said that God would be the One who would give Pharaoh an answer. In addition, Joseph said that the interpretation that God would give to Pharaoh would result in giving him peace. That was exactly what Pharaoh wanted because his heart was very troubled when he woke up that day and he was still just as troubled when Joseph came.

Many people are like Pharaoh. They are very troubled for many different reasons. However, they are looking for answers to the problems that are troubling them. That is why we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help people find answers to their problems from the Word of God because the Lord is able to meet every need of a troubled heart. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to find the answers to those problems from the Word of God.

Joseph Interpreted the Dreams of Pharaoh

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that the Word of God does have answers for those who are troubled and distressed. In this topic, we will see that Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh that had caused him to become troubled.

Genesis 41:25-32 says, “Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do: The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one. And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass...” Here we see that Joseph explained to Pharaoh the meaning of his dreams.

Joseph had promised Pharaoh that God would give him an answer of peace. We see that Joseph began his answer by giving all praise to the Lord. Joseph said that both of the dreams of Pharaoh actually had the same interpretation. Joseph said that what God had done in those dreams was show Pharaoh what was going to happen in the land of Egypt over the next fourteen years. The fact that Pharaoh had dreamed about seven good cows and seven good heads of grain was the way that God had chosen to show Pharaoh that the next seven years would be very good years with plenty of crops that would produce a lot of food for the land of Egypt. In fact, those years would be so good that there would be much more food than the people would be able to eat.

Then Joseph went on to explain that God had used the seven ugly cows and the seven blighted heads of grain to show Pharaoh that the seven very good years of crops would be followed by seven years of famine in which very little food would grow. Those seven years of famine would be so bad that the people would forget all about the seven years when they had enjoyed wonderful crops. In fact, the food in the land would be totally depleted by the famine. The famine would be so severe that the people would forget about the previous seven years when they had plenty of food.

Then Joseph explained why God had given Pharaoh two dreams even though they both pointed to the same events. Joseph told Pharaoh that God had given Pharaoh both dreams to let him know that God would surely cause these things to come to pass. Daniel made a similar statement in Daniel 2:45 where we read, “...Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” In this dream we see that Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his dream would certainly come to pass. God chose to speak to both rulers through a dream and then revealed the interpretation to a godly person who could explain what God was going to do in the future. God can choose to work in any way that He desires to make His will known.

However, Joseph did not stop once he had explained the meaning of Pharaoh’s dreams to him.

Genesis 41:33-36 says, “...Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of *the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.” Here we see that Joseph also suggested a plan of action to Pharaoh so that he and the entire land of Egypt could prepare for the famine during the seven years of large harvests.

Joseph suggested to Pharaoh that he select a discerning and wise man to set over the land of Egypt. The word translated “discerning” means to *understand, have insight or have discernment*. It involves more than just gathering information and includes the thought of knowing how to use the knowledge that one has. This same word is used by Pharaoh just a few verses later as Genesis 41:39 says, “Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you...’” Here we see that Pharaoh recognized that God was the One who had given Joseph this discernment. Joseph then showed this discernment by suggesting that Pharaoh also have this man appoint officers to collect one-fifth of the food grown during the seven plentiful years so that the Egypt would have adequate food to last through the seven years of famine.

Joseph went on to suggest that Pharaoh give instructions for these officers to gather that food during the good years and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh. Joseph suggested that this food be stored in the cities. This was important because the cities would be the first places to lack food. If the food was not already stored in the cities, the people living in the cities could have faced starvation quickly. In that day, it was difficult to move large amounts of food quickly from one region of the country to another. However, if the food was stored in cities throughout the land, then each city would have food already in the city prior to the beginning of the famine.

Joseph said that the food stored in the cities would be a reserve for the entire land when the time of the famine came. One of the things that we will see is the fact that even though the people knew that food was being gathered for the famine that the people did not prepare for the famine themselves. Genesis 41:55 says, “So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.’” People in the time of Joseph were just like the people today. Most of the people did not prepare for the famine during the years of plenty. Their crops were so plentiful that the one-fifth gathered during the years of plenty meant that one fifth of the food was enough to feed the people for the seven years of famine. However, most of the people did not prepare for the famine by keeping part of the four-fifths that they had for the famine.

Genesis 41:37-39 says, “So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?’ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you.’” Joseph was only thirty years of age at the time that he gave this advice but both Pharaoh and all of his servants recognized that it was good advice. This is a reminder that godly young men can be used greatly by the Lord if they seek the guidance of the Lord and share principles taught by the Word of God with others. However, Pharaoh and his servants recognized that this was more than just good advice.

Pharaoh recognized that Joseph had the Spirit of God in him. He also told his servants that he did not know of anyone else in whom he could find the Spirit of God. The fact that Joseph gave the honor to God for interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh was about to have a huge impact on the land of Egypt. This is a reminder that even those who are not followers of the Lord can

recognize that the Lord is guiding a person when that person has their total dependence on the Lord. Joseph had been sold as a slave by his brothers. Then he had faced temptation in the house of Potiphar. After that he experienced several years in the prison. Through these experiences Joseph had learned that he could trust the Lord in each situation. Now the results of that trust were recognized by Pharaoh and all of his servants.

Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph again. He realized that God had shown him the meaning of his dreams through Joseph. Pharaoh told Joseph that no one else has shown that kind of discernment. We saw that discernment means, “It involves more than just gathering information and includes the thought of knowing how to use the knowledge that one has.” Pharaoh realized that Joseph had done much more than just interpret his dreams. He realized that God had also given Joseph discernment to tell him how to prepare for the famine during the seven years of plenty. The Lord had given Joseph the discernment needed to preserve the lives of many people in Egypt. Joseph told his brothers many years later. Genesis 50:19-20 says, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.’” Truly the Lord worked through the faithfulness of Joseph.

Pharaoh also recognized that Joseph was a man of great wisdom. The word translated “wise” here speaks of *practical advice based on revelation from God as well as from his experience and what he had observed*. Joseph had certainly provided practical advice to Pharaoh based on the things that the Lord had told Joseph about the dreams of Pharaoh. Then the Lord also led him through the experience that he had gained as the servant over the household of Potiphar and then his experience as he served others for several years in the prison. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn from the example of Joseph how to become a person with both discernment and wisdom so that they can have a real impact on the lives of those to whom the Lord gives them the opportunity to serve as they serve the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to grow in discernment and wisdom.

Joseph Became the Second Ruler of Egypt

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow in godly discernment and wisdom so that they will be able to give practical advice from the Word of God and help people learn to apply the Word to their own lives and situations. In this topic, we will see that Joseph was appointed by Pharaoh to be the second ruler in the land of Egypt.

Joseph had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and had suggested a practical plan to Pharaoh to help the nation of Egypt prepare for the coming famine. Pharaoh realized that Joseph was the only person that had the discernment and wisdom to carry out that plan because he was guided by the Spirit of the living and true God. Genesis 41:40-45 says, "...You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.' And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, 'Bow the knee!' So he set him over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh also said to Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.' And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt." In these verses we see that the Lord used Pharaoh to move Joseph from the prison to the palace.

The very first responsibility that Pharaoh gave Joseph was to appoint Joseph over his house. This was the same responsibility but for a different household that had been given to Joseph by Potiphar. However, this included a much greater responsibility because the next thing that Pharaoh said was that Joseph would be over all of the people of Egypt. The only person in the entire land that would have more authority was Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh also gave Joseph four things that would show that Joseph had been given this authority. The first was the signet ring of Pharaoh. Pharaoh took that ring off his own hand and placed it on the hand of Joseph. The signet ring was used in that day to sign all legal documents. Hot wax would be placed at the bottom of the document and then the ring would be pressed into that hot wax so that the image on the ring was placed on the bottom of the document. This meant that the king had delegated all legal authority to Joseph so that anything he signed became the law of the land.

Pharaoh also did three other things including giving Joseph clothing of fine linen, a gold chain around his neck and gave him the second chariot of Egypt with men who ran before it to say "Bow the knee" as Joseph rode wherever he went. When people saw Joseph coming and heard the words of the runners, these things made it clear that Pharaoh had given Joseph authority over the entire land. Pharaoh also defined that authority since Joseph was second to Pharaoh. He said, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name or title, Zaphnath-Paaneah, which means *treasury of the glorious rest*. Finally Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife. Her name was Asenath and she was the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. By the time Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, he was over all of the land of Egypt. The Lord had allowed all of the suffering through which Joseph had gone to prepare him for this great responsibility.

Genesis 41:46-52 says, "Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. So he gathered

up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable. And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: 'For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.' And the name of the second he called Ephraim: 'For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.'" Joseph was thirty by the time that he was brought before Pharaoh and he had been seventeen when he was sold as a slave by his brothers, so he had suffered for thirteen years to prepare him for this service.

Over the following months, Joseph traveled throughout the land of Egypt. In each city he found places to store the grain. He appointed those who were responsible for gathering one-fifth of the grain during the seven years of plentiful crops from the people and taking the grain from the area surrounding each city to these storage places in each city. Then throughout the seven years, Joseph continued to travel throughout Egypt to make certain that everything was ready before the seven years of famine began. During those seven years, the crops were so plentiful that even though only one-fifth of the grain was gathered by Joseph that a huge amount of grain was gathered. The amount was compared to the sand of the sea and became impossible to even continue counting how much was gathered. It could no longer be measured there was so much grain. One thing of interest to notice, is the fact that the people as a whole did not save part of the grain from their remaining fourth-fifths of the grain. They did not prepare for the coming famine.

We also see that Joseph and his wife had two sons born to them during the seven years of plenty. The meaning of the names that Joseph gave to his sons explains why Joseph was able to care for his brothers when they came to him for food during the famine. Joseph named the first son that was born Manasseh. The meaning of the summary of that name means "causing to forget". We see what Joseph chose to forget by the statement that Joseph made about that name. Joseph said, "...For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." Here we see that God was the One who gave Joseph strength to forget or let go. First, Joseph was able to let go of all of the unjust suffering that he had suffered during those thirteen years he was a slave or a prisoner. Second, he was able to let go of the fact that he might never see his family again in order to preserve many people alive. Joseph named the second son Ephraim which means *I shall be doubly fruitful*. Joseph also gave the full meaning for him of this name when he said, "...For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." As a slave, Joseph did not even know that he would have one son in his suffering. However, God had a plan for Joseph that he did not know. Here we see that God chose to give him two sons and not just one.

Genesis 41:53-57 says, "Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.' The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands." Joseph had prepared well during the seven years of plenty. We see that most of the rest of the people of Egypt had not prepared for the famine by storing a larger part of their own grain even though they knew that Joseph was gathering grain in every city. As a result, there was bread throughout the land of Egypt when the famine first began. However, the little grain that had been stored individually soon was gone and then we see that all of the land of Egypt was famished.

It was when the people of Egypt became famished that they cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh told the people, "...Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do." However, Joseph had prepared carefully for the famine. He had people in charge of every storehouse. He told the officers that he had appointed to be in charge of each storehouse to open all of the storehouses and sell grain to the other Egyptians. For the Egyptians the storehouses were scattered throughout the entire country because there was a storehouse in every city. Joseph had shown his wisdom in the suggestion that he had given to Pharaoh more than seven years earlier. Joseph had told Pharaoh in Genesis 41:34-36, "...Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine." When Pharaoh appointed him that was what Joseph had done.

However, the famine was not limited to the nation of Egypt. All of the surrounding nations were also suffering from the famine. Joseph opened all of the storehouses and was selling grain to the Egyptians. The famine became even more severe as the famine was just beginning and it continued to get worse. People in the surrounding countries began to hear that there was grain in the land of Egypt. As a result, people in these other countries also began to come to Egypt to buy grain. This became necessary because the famine was severe in all of the surrounding lands. We see that those who came from other countries came to Joseph to buy food. The people of each city of Egypt could buy grain in their own city but those from other countries had to come to Joseph because Pharaoh had said, "...Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do."

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord used Joseph both to preserve the lives of the people of Egypt and also explain that the Lord was going to use his plan to save the lives of the people of the surrounding nations. Here we see that the Lord was going to help many nations. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how the Lord worked through Joseph.

Joseph Saw His Brothers Come for Food

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that the plan that the Lord had given to Joseph was going to save the lives of people from many lands. In our topic today, we are going to see that this also included the family of Joseph.

Genesis 42:1-5 says, “When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why do you look at one another?’ And he said, ‘Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.’ So Joseph’s ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, ‘Lest some calamity befall him.’ And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.” Here we see that the famine that was happening in the land of Egypt was also happening in the land of Canaan. However, the word quickly spread to other countries that there was food in the land of Egypt. Jacob heard about the fact that there was grain in the land of Egypt.

Jacob told his sons that it was time for them to do more than just look at each other as their grain supply decreased. Jacob realized that the day would soon come that they had no grain. He told the brothers of Joseph that he had heard that there was grain in the land of Egypt. He told the brothers that it was important for them to go down to Egypt and buy some grain so that they and their families would live and not die. Jacob realized that if they did not get grain that it would be possible that they and their families could starve to death in a short time. The brothers agreed and prepared to go to Egypt so that they could buy food for their families.

However, we see that only ten of the brothers actually went to Egypt. Joseph had probably been in Egypt for more than twenty years. Joseph was seventeen years old when he brought the bad report about his brothers in Genesis 37:2. Then soon after this event his brothers took the sheep to Shechem to feed them. They went from there to Dothan and that is where Joseph found them when his father sent him to check and see if things were going well with his brothers. They were so angry that their father favored Joseph over them that they sold him as a slave to the Midianites who then took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar. Genesis 41:46 says, “Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.” Here we see that Joseph was thirty years old when he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh. Then came the seven years of plenty so Joseph was thirty-seven years old by the time the famine started. All of the people stored enough grain to last until the next harvest. As a result, it would have been a year later before the famine meant that no food had grown. That was why Joseph had probably been in Egypt more than twenty years.

Even though Benjamin was an adult, his father did not allow him to go with his brothers to Egypt. Jacob was afraid that some calamity might happen to him and he would not return safely from Egypt. That was why Jacob did not allow Benjamin to go with his brothers to Egypt to buy food. We go on to read what happened when the ten brothers arrived in Egypt. Genesis 42:6-12 says, “Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, ‘Where do you come from?’ And they said, ‘From the land of Canaan to buy food.’ So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them,

and said to them, ‘You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!’ And they said to him, ‘No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all one man’s sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies.’ But he said to them, ‘No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land.’” Joseph recognized his brothers and realized that he needed to test their attitudes before he revealed to them that he was their brother.

Earlier we saw that Joseph had been given an Egyptian name by Pharaoh. Genesis 41:45 says, “And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.” We also mentioned that the Egyptians were clean shaven. As a result, in addition to his Egyptian name we will see that Joseph was dressed like an Egyptian, talked to his brothers through an interpreter and was the Egyptian governor. The brothers came and bowed down to Joseph with their faces to the ground. Joseph recognized his brothers but acted like a stranger and spoke roughly to them. These things were all in addition to the fact that it was probably more than twenty years since the brothers had seen him. The brothers did not even imagine that the Egyptian governor might be their own brother because of all of these things.

Then Joseph demanded of them, “...Where do you come from?” And they said, ‘From the land of Canaan to buy food.’” As Joseph saw his brothers bowed down before him, we read that he remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about his brothers. It is very possible that he had not thought about those dreams since the time that his brothers had sold him into slavery. Suddenly, he saw those dreams being fulfilled right in front of his eyes. However, to test his brothers and to make sure that they did not recognize him, he again spoke roughly and said, “...You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!” This probably filled the brothers with great fear. As a result, we see that they almost pleaded with him as they said, “...No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all one man’s sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies.” The brothers here used several words to describe themselves as honest men who had only come to buy food for their families.

They called Joseph *lord* to show that they recognized his authority. They called themselves *servants* to try and show an attitude of humility. They said that their only purpose for coming to Egypt was to buy food. Then they started describing their family. They said that they were all the sons of one man. They said that they were honest men. They again said that they were servants of the governor and not spies. Instead of changing his tone and speaking kindly to them, Joseph continued to test their attitudes and said, “...No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land.”

This forced the brothers to tell more about their family. Genesis 42:13-17 says, “And they said, ‘Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘It is as I spoke to you, saying, “You are spies!” In this manner you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies!’ So he put them all together in prison three days.” We see that their answer helped Joseph to learn more about the rest of his family. This was the first time in all of those years that Joseph had heard anything about his family and so the news that the brothers shared with him probably really filled his heart with joy.

That was especially true when they said, “...and in fact, the youngest is with our father today...” By that statement Joseph immediately learned two things. First, Benjamin was still alive. Second, his father was still alive. However, he then said to them, “It is as I spoke to you, saying, “You are spies!” In this manner you shall be tested...” This test was not to find

out if they were spies. Instead, this test was to see if they had changed their attitudes. They did not know that was the purpose or that it was even a test. Then Joseph told the brothers how they could prove that they were not spies. He told them that they could prove that they were not spies by sending one of them back to their home country and getting their youngest brother and bringing him to Egypt. Joseph said that only if their youngest brother came to Egypt would he know that they were not spies.

Then Joseph told them that they could decide who they would send to get their brother. Joseph said that the rest of them would be kept in prison while the one went back to get their youngest brother. Joseph said that was the way that their words could be tested to see if they were speaking the truth or not. If the one brother did not bring back their youngest brother, then Joseph said that by the life of Pharaoh that would prove that they were spies. To give them time to think and choose a brother to send back to their home to get their youngest brother, Joseph put them all together in prison for three days. Since Joseph was directly under Pharaoh, that meant that they were prisoners of Pharaoh and those who served him. That meant that they may have been placed in the same prison where Joseph had earlier spent several years before he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh.

This also gave Joseph time to more fully develop the plan to test his brothers. This was necessary to reveal the condition of their hearts to see if the Lord had been working in their hearts during the many years that Joseph had been in Egypt. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The time in the prison gave them time to think because they had no idea what this governor of Egypt might do to them. Joseph truly understood the importance of helping his brothers learn that he loved them even though they may not have understood that at this time. In fact, they did not fully understand until after the death of their father. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain the importance of Joseph testing his brothers before he revealed to them that he was their brother. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to explain why Joseph did what he did.

Joseph Gave His Brothers a Test

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Joseph placed his brothers in the prison in Egypt for three days. That gave them time to think about their past as well as fear for their future. In our topic today, we will see that Joseph took his brothers out of the prison and sent them home with food to keep their families alive as he further tested them.

Genesis 42:18-24 says, “Then Joseph said to them the third day, ‘Do this and live, *for* I fear God: If you *are* honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses. And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.’ And they did so. Then they said to one another, ‘We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.’ And Reuben answered them, saying, ‘Did I not speak to you, saying, “Do not sin against the boy”; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.’ But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.” Here we see that on the third day that Joseph had his brothers brought out of the prison and had them stand before him again.

Joseph then explained the test that he had prepared for them to see if their hearts had really changed. Joseph said that he feared God. The brothers probably did not realize that he was talking about the true and living God that created the heavens and the earth. Joseph then told the brothers how he would find out if they were honest men. He told them that one of their brothers would be confined in the prison where they had been and the rest of them would be allowed to take grain to feed their families because of the famine. He said that when they returned that they would have to bring their youngest brother with them to show that what they had said about their younger brother was true. Joseph said that then they would not die.

The brothers immediately began to talk to one another in front of Joseph. They did not realize that Joseph understood them because he had been talking to them through an interpreter. They said to one another, “...We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.” Here we see that the days that they had spent in the prison certainly made them think about their past. In fact, we see that Joseph had really pleaded with them not to do what they chose to do. They saw the great suffering that he was experiencing but refused to listen. Their first thought was that they were being punished by God for their sin. Then Reuben reminded them that he had told them not to do what they did but they refused to listen to him. Now the blood of their brother was being required of them. That was too much for Joseph to hear and he had to get away from them for a few minutes to cry. After a few minutes he came back and talked with them again and told them what he was going to do. Then as they watched he took Simeon and bound him to return him to the prison. Parents who have been in court when their child has been convicted of a crime and is immediately bound and taken back to prison can certainly understand how the brothers felt at that moment. The words that Joseph had heard Reuben speak just a few minutes earlier were probably the reason why the second son instead of the oldest son was bound before their eyes.

Genesis 42:25-28 says, “Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for

them. So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. But as one of *them* opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack. So he said to his brothers, 'My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!' Then their hearts failed *them* and they were afraid, saying to one another, 'What *is* this *that* God has done to us?'" The brothers apparently then gave their money to Joseph to pay for the grain that they would take back to their families. Once his brothers had gone out of the place where they met with Joseph, he instructed the men who served him to fill the sacks of those men with grain. Then he told them to put each man's money back in the bag of that man. He also told the men who served him to give the men food for their trip back to their homeland.

Once the men who served Joseph brought the bags out to the brothers, they loaded them on their donkeys and began the trip back to the land of Canaan. It would have been about a ten day trip back to the land of Canaan. That evening when the brothers got to the place where they were going to camp that night, one of the brothers opened his sack to get some grain to feed to his donkey. Suddenly he saw his money right at the top of his sack. He immediately spoke to his brothers and said to them, "...My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" He was shocked to see his money and he also saw that it was the exact amount that he had paid for his grain. We read that their hearts failed them. The word translated "failed" is used over a thousand times in the Old Testament and usually means *to go out*. One of the major uses of the word is to speak about the way that the people of Israel went out of Egypt in the Exodus. Here it has the thought that the brothers were filled with great fear. All that they could say was, "...What is this that God has done to us?" This fear became even greater when they got home and all of the men found that their money was in their sacks as we see in the following verses.

Genesis 42:29-38 says, "Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying: 'The man *who* is lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. But we said to him, "*We are honest men*; we are not spies. *We are* twelve brothers, sons of our father; one *is* no more, and the youngest *is* with our father this day in the land of Canaan.'" Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, "By this I will know that you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers *here* with me, take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone. And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you *are* not spies, but *that you are* honest men. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'" Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their father said to them, 'You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.' Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, 'Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.' But he said, 'My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'" The brothers were very anxious to tell their father how they had been treated in Egypt because that was the first thing that they told him when they returned to him.

They said that the lord of the land had spoken very roughly to them because he thought that they were spies. They then told their father what they had done to convince that man that they were honest and not spies. They said that they told the lord of the land that there were a total of twelve brothers from the same father. One of their brothers was no longer alive and their youngest brother was at home with their father in Canaan. It was then that the lord of the land told them what they had to do to prove that they were honest men. They said that they had to leave one of their brothers in Egypt. Then the lord of the land said that they could take grain with them to feed their households as they returned to their land. However, he also said that the way that they would prove that they were not spies was to bring their youngest brother back with them so that he could see that they were telling the truth. That way they would prove that

they were honest men and not spies. Once they brought their youngest brother their other brother would be returned to them and they would be able to trade in the land.

Later when they emptied their sacks they suddenly realized that all of their money had been returned to them and the money of each man was in his sack. This time their father was filled with fear along with the brothers. The word translated “bereaved” means to *make childless or to have great sorrow at the loss of children*. Jacob said that he has lost Joseph, he had lost Simeon and now they wanted to take Benjamin. Since they had told him how the lord of the land had talked, he immediately feared that he would also lose Benjamin. He felt like everything had been turned against him.

Reuben then said to his father, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.” This offer did not bring any comfort at all to Jacob because it meant that he would also lose two of his grandsons. Jacob quickly rejected the offer of Reuben as he said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone.” Rachel had been the favorite wife of Jacob. Here he made it clear that the two sons of Rachel were still his favorite sons as he said that Benjamin was the only one that remained from that wife. The word translated “calamity” means *evil, mischief or harm*. Jacob was saying that if any harm, evil or hurt happened to Benjamin on a trip for grain to Egypt that it would cause his grey hair to go to the grave because of his sorrow. If something happened to Benjamin, Jacob said that the sorrow would kill him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jacob said that the death of Benjamin would do to him if Benjamin died. This helped the other brothers to understand how much sorrow Jacob had experienced through all of those years because he thought that Joseph had been killed. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Joseph Saw His Brothers Come a Second Time

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the sorrow that Jacob had experienced for many years because of the fact that he thought that Joseph was dead. Joseph knew that this test would reveal if there had been repentance in the hearts of his brothers. In this topic, we will see that Jacob did send Benjamin with his brothers in order to buy grain and protect them from starvation.

Joseph had told Pharaoh that the famine would last for seven years. This famine was affecting the land of Canaan as much as it was affecting Egypt. Genesis 43:1-6 says, “Now the famine *was* severe in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’ But Judah spoke to him, saying, ‘The man solemnly warned us, saying, “You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.” If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, “You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.”’ And Israel said, ‘Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?’” Jacob realized that they would soon starve if they did not get additional grain from Egypt.

As a result, Jacob told his sons, “Go back, buy us a little food.” When they returned from the previous trip to Egypt, Reuben told his father that his father could kill his two sons if they did not bring Benjamin back since the governor of Egypt had told them that the only way that they could buy food would be to bring their youngest brother. Jacob had not been ready to really hear that the governor required them to bring Benjamin before they could buy any more food. As a result, we see that Judah now took the leadership and explained that the governor had warned them that they would not be able to buy any more food until they brought Benjamin with them to Egypt. In fact, the governor said that they would not even be able to see his face unless they brought Benjamin with them. Judah explained that they did not have a choice. They had to take Benjamin with them or they would not be able to buy any more food.

In fact, Judah said that they would not go back to Egypt to buy food unless Benjamin went with them. However, they were ready to go if Jacob agreed to send Benjamin with them. Then Jacob did what we often do when we do not want to make a difficult choice. He blamed his sons by saying, “Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?” The word translated “wrongfully” is even translated by some word for evil and is frequently listed as the opposite of good. In Micah 3:2 we read, “You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones...” Jacob actually accuses them of doing evil to their father for even telling the governor that they had a younger brother. Since the time when Adam and Eve sinned, people have wanted to blame someone else when they are not happy with a decision. That was what Jacob did here as he blamed the brothers for telling the governor that they had a younger brother. Such blame does not solve problems but it may create new problems.

Genesis 43:7-10 says, “But they said, ‘The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, “Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?’” And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, “Bring your brother down?”’ Then Judah said to Israel his father, ‘Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. For if we had not lingered, surely by now

we would have returned this second time.” Since all of the brothers felt that they were being blamed they all began to speak.

They said that the governor of Egypt carefully inquired about their family. In fact, he had asked them two specific questions, “Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?” Of course Joseph asked these two questions because he really wanted to know what had happened to his father and brother during the more than twenty years since he had been sold as a slave by his other brothers. The sons of Jacob explained to their father that they had no idea that the governor would then ask them to bring their brother down to the land of Egypt. However, that was a key part of the way that Joseph was testing his brothers to see if the brothers had truly changed their attitudes.

Then Judah spoke to his father. He asked his father to send Benjamin with him. Judah said that was necessary for them to live and not die. That would mean life for the brothers for their father and for their families including their children. Then Judah said that he would be surety for Benjamin. The word translated “surety” means to *become bail, a pledge or surety for someone or something*. Judah was saying that he would take the place of his brother if the governor or anyone else tried to keep Benjamin in Egypt. Later, Judah used this same word when he spoke to Joseph and said in Genesis 44:32 “...For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’” This word is also used several times in Proverbs to speak of guaranteeing a debt. Proverbs 22:26 warns, “Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts...” Earlier Reuben had said that Jacob could kill his sons if Benjamin did not return. Here Judah said that he would take the place of Benjamin so that Benjamin could return home if anything happened. There is a great difference between these two choices.

Judah said that if anything happened to Benjamin that he could not prevent that he would personally bear the blame forever. The word that is translated “blame” is usually translated *sin*. We will see that Judah did not have to bear the blame or sin of Benjamin. However, one of the descendants of Judah did bear our sin and perfected us for eternity. Hebrews 10:12-14 says, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Christ took our sin and died in our place so that we could receive eternal forgiveness and have all of our sins blotted out. By that one action, Christ became sin for us and placed His righteousness on all those who have come to Him in repentance and faith. Christ did what Judah could never have done. Judah concluded his words by saying that if they had not waited that they would already have been back with food.

Genesis 43:11-17 says, “And their father Israel said to them, ‘If it *must* be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!’ So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, ‘Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon.’ Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph’s house.” Here we see that Jacob told the sons how to show kindness to the governor of Egypt.

Jacob also asked God Almighty to give his sons mercy as they stood before the governor so that he would release both Benjamin and Simeon. Then Jacob said, "...If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!" The word translated "bereaved" means *to be robbed of his son or sons*. This shows how great the fear was in the heart of Jacob that something evil would happen to Benjamin. However, Jacob had realized that only God Almighty could show mercy and spare his sons and especially Benjamin. This showed that Jacob favored Benjamin just as he had favored Joseph but that at least Judah and probably all of the brothers were willing to accept that favoritism and do whatever was necessary to protect Benjamin.

The brothers took the present from Jacob along with their brother and the double money and made their journey to Egypt. They were again brought before Joseph and he saw that Benjamin was with them. Joseph probably wanted to show kindness to Benjamin immediately but he first had to finish the test of his brothers to make certain that they had a different attitude toward Benjamin. As a result, Joseph told the steward of his house to take the brothers to his home and kill an animal so that they could have a feast at his home for dinner. The steward was to kill the animal and prepare it so that the feast would be ready when Joseph came home for dinner at noon. Since Joseph spoke to his steward in the Egyptian language the brothers did not know what the steward had been told.

The steward did exactly as Joseph had ordered. He took the brothers with him and they went to the home of Joseph. Then the steward had the animal killed and prepared so that the feast would be ready when Joseph arrived home at noon. Meanwhile, that gave the brothers a few hours to prepare for the return of the one they knew as the governor. They certainly did not realize that the governor was Joseph, their brother. We do not know what the brothers did as they waited for the governor to return to his home. This also gave them a few more hours to think and from what we see in the next topic they had great fear in their hearts during the remaining hours of that morning. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why this test was necessary and how it revealed the hearts of the brothers. May the Lord bless you richly as you help your children learn to understand and explain both why this test was necessary and what it revealed to Joseph about the hearts of his brothers.

Joseph Had the Brothers Eat at His House

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why it was necessary for Joseph to test the hearts of his brothers to see if they had changed their attitudes. In this topic, we will see what happened at the home of Joseph that day as Joseph had ordered his steward to prepare a feast for the brothers.

We learn what happened at the home of Joseph before he came home for dinner. Genesis 43:18-22 says, “Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph’s house; and they said, ‘It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys.’ When they drew near to the steward of Joseph’s house, they talked with him at the door of the house, and said, ‘O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, each man’s money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.’” Here we see that the brothers were filled with fear as they went with their donkeys to the house of the governor.

Before the brothers even got to the house, we see that they began talking among themselves. Their hearts were filled with fear by the very fact that they were being taken to the home of the governor. This fear caused them to immediately think about the reason for going to the home and they expected the worst to happen when the governor arrived there. They came to the conclusion that the reason they were going to the home of the governor was due to the fact that their money had been returned to them in their sacks the first time. They knew that they had given that money to the governor and his helpers the first time. However, they thought that he would probably use the fact that he did not have the money after they left to return home as an excuse to make a case against the brothers. In fact, they expected the governor to seize them and force them to become slaves. They also expected that he would keep their donkeys. Many people are like the brothers and when something evil happens to them they expect the worst possible consequences to happen to them.

As a result, the brothers did not even go into the house before they began to talk to the steward and tell them what had happened the first time that they had come to Egypt. The brothers said that when they had come to the first place that they camped on the way home that when each man opened his sack that each had found his money at the top of their sacks. They said that they had brought all of that money back so that they could pay the money in full for the grain that they had received the first time that they had come to Egypt. They said that they had also brought additional money with them for the food that they were planning to buy this time while they were in Egypt. The brothers probably hoped that by telling the steward what had happened and then giving him the money that they would not be seized and forced to become slaves. They also told the steward that they did not know who had placed that money in their sacks to make sure that he did not think one of them had taken the money.

Genesis 43:23-28 says, “But he said, ‘Peace be with you, do not 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. So the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. Then they made the present ready for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. Then he asked them about their well-being, and said, ‘Is your

father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?’ And they answered, ‘Your servant our father is in good health; he is still alive.’ And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.” The steward told the brothers that they did not need to be afraid. Instead, he said that their God and the God of their father had given them the money in their sacks. Then the steward said, “...I had your money.” His statements were true. God had provided them with that money through Joseph. The steward had received their money and then Joseph had told him to place the money back in their sacks when the brothers were not present.

The steward also brought Simeon out of the prison and presented him to the brothers. That made it possible for them to see that he was in good health and had now been set free from the prison. Then the steward brought the men into the house. He gave the brothers water so that they could wash their feet. He also gave their donkeys feed to eat. This kindness did not take away their fear as we see that they still expected something evil to happen to them. The steward also told the brothers that they would eat bread with the governor at noon. When the steward and the other servants were preparing the meal the brothers also prepared the gift that they were planning to give to the governor.

Joseph arrived at noon for the feast and immediately the brothers brought him the present that they had prepared for him. Then they bowed down before him to the earth. When they bowed down to him, Joseph probably remembered again the dream that he had dreamed many years earlier. Genesis 37:7-8 says, “...There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.’ And his brothers said to him, ‘Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?’ So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.” Just as they had done the first time that they came to Egypt, they bowed down before Joseph to the ground.

Then Joseph began to ask them a few questions. First, he asked about their well-being. The word that is translated “well-being” is usually translated *peace*. Their actions just a few minutes later showed that they did not have inner peace but were still filled with fear. Next, Joseph asked them if their father was well. Joseph also asked if their father was still alive. These two questions were very important to Joseph because he wanted to know anything that he could find out about his father. Of course the brothers had absolutely no idea that they were talking to Joseph. Instead, they were still controlled by the things of which the governor had accused them the first time, especially when he spoke roughly to them and accused them of being spies. They said that their father was in good health and then quickly bowed again and prostrated themselves. The word translated “prostrated” means to *worship, bow or bow down flat on the ground*.

While this was happening, Genesis 43:29-34 says, “Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, ‘Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?’ And he said, ‘God be gracious to you, my son.’ Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there. Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, ‘Serve the bread.’ So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin’s serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.” Joseph was watching as the brothers bowed before him and quickly recognized Benjamin.

Joseph asked the brothers if this was the younger brother of whom they had spoken. Then

Joseph spoke directly to Benjamin and said, ““God be gracious to you, my son.”” Joseph could not control his emotions any longer. He quickly turned away and walked out of the room where they would eat that day. He went to his bedroom where he could be alone for a few minutes and cried. Then when he had control of his emotions and was able to stop crying he washed his face so that it could not be seen that he had been crying. After washing his face he came out of his bedroom and returned to the room where they were going to eat. Instead of saying anything more to his brothers, Joseph just told his servants, ““Serve the bread””.

The Egyptians felt that it was an abomination for them to eat with the Hebrews. The word translated “abomination” means a *thing of horror*. In some passages, God calls certain things an abomination and in other passages man calls certain things an abomination. This might be something that was physical (such as eating things that were considered unclean), ritual (things that people would avoid) or ethical (things such as human sacrifices or idolatry) or things like the Lord lists in Proverbs 6:16-19 where we read, “These six *things* the LORD hates, yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness *who* speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.” In these verses, the Egyptians avoided eating with Hebrews so this would be a ritual abomination. This meant they had three different tables.

Joseph then seated his brothers according to their age from the oldest to the youngest. This caused his brothers to be amazed since to them he was the Egyptian governor. Joseph then served each of the brothers and purposely gave Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. This gave him the opportunity to see how the brothers reacted to the fact that he showed favor to Benjamin. He had one more test which we will see in the next chapter of Genesis. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Joseph did a variety of different things to test his brothers before he told them that he was their brother, Joseph. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Joseph Gave His Brothers a Final Test

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Joseph gave his brothers a variety of tests to prepare them for the time when he revealed to them that he was Joseph. This was to help them understand how God had worked when he told them in Genesis 45:7, “And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.” In this topic, we will see that Joseph gave them one final test.

Genesis 44:1-5 says, “And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, ‘Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack. Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money.’ So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys. When they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, ‘Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, “Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.”’” By the things that Joseph did to test his brothers, Joseph was probably also teaching his steward several important lessons.

Genesis 43:34 said, “Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin’s serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.” The last part of this verse indicates that the brothers spent a period of time with Joseph. Joseph was doing two things by spending this period of time with them. He was keeping them there so that they would not leave until the next morning. He was also giving the steward time to prepare their sacks for this final test. We see the instructions that Joseph gave the steward. He was to fill the sacks with as much grain as the sacks would hold. Then he was to put the money of each man in the very top of his sack. However, he was to add one additional thing in the sack of Benjamin. The steward was to put the silver cup of Joseph in the top of the bag of the youngest brother along with his grain money.

Early the next morning as soon as it started to get light the men were sent away along with their donkeys that carried their sacks of grain. While they went out of the city Joseph gave instructions to his steward. Joseph told the steward that once the men were out of the city and had gone just a short distance from the city that he was to go after them and catch up with them. Once he caught up with the brothers he was to tell them, “Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.” Joseph knew that these questions would really make the brothers think. The second question made it clear that the silver cup of the governor was no longer in his house. Since the brothers were the only people that had been in the house overnight, the fact that the cup was missing meant that one of them had taken the silver cup. That would give the steward the opportunity to check each of the sacks.

Genesis 44:6-9 says, “So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words. And they said to him, ‘Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing. Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house? With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord’s slaves.’” The steward quickly caught up with the brothers and spoke to them the words that he had been told to tell them. These verses show how the brothers answered the steward when

they heard these words.

The steward accused the brothers of stealing the silver cup of the governor. The brothers were shocked to be accused of such an action. In fact, their first words were, “‘Why does my lord say these words?’” This is almost like saying, “How could you even imagine that we would do such a thing? That would be the last thing that we would think of doing.” Then the brothers went on to explain why they felt that way. They reminded the steward that they had brought back the money that they had found in their sacks when they arrived in Canaan. That certainly showed that they were honest men. Then they asked a second question, “‘...How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord’s house?’” The brothers probably could not understand why they had been accused of being spies originally. As a result, it was probably difficult for them to understand why they would even be accused of stealing silver or gold from the governor. They had tried to be honest in all that they did when they came to Egypt for food. They certainly could not understand the various things that had happened to them.

That is why they gave the answer that they gave to the steward. First they said, “‘With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die...’” The brothers certainly could not image that the silver cup would be found in the bag of Benjamin because this answer was actually like a death sentence for the one in whose sack the cup would be found. Of course the steward knew that the cup would be found in the bag of Benjamin because that is where he had placed the cup. The second thing that the brothers said also meant that they would suffer if their suggestion was carried out by the governor. They said that the rest of the brothers would become the slaves of the governor if the cup was found in the sack of any of the brothers.

We go on to read what the steward answered to the brothers. Genesis 44:10-16 says, “‘And he said, ‘Now also let it be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless.’ Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city. So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house, and he *was* still there; and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said to them, ‘What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?’ Then Judah said, ‘What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord’s slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found.’” Here we see that the steward suggested a much easier penalty than the brothers had suggested. He said that the one in whose sack the cup was found would become a slave but the rest of the brothers would be blameless which meant that they could return to their own homes.

Then the brothers quickly took the bags of grain off of their donkeys. Each of the brothers opened his sack. Then the steward started checking each bag. Since Joseph had set the brothers in order from the oldest to the youngest at the table, the steward knew their birth order. That was shown by his search. The steward began with the oldest brother and finished the search with the youngest brother. The steward found the cup in Benjamin’s sack exactly as he knew he would since he was the one who had placed the cup in that sack. However, the brothers had no idea that was what would happen. They did not expect the steward to find that cup in the bag of Benjamin. Of course Benjamin did not think it was possible that it would be found in his sack since he had never touched the silver cup of the governor. Suddenly the steward brought the cup out of the sack of Benjamin. The brothers were filled with so much shock that they tore their clothes. That was a common sign of sorrow and mourning. Then they loaded their sacks back on their donkeys and they all returned to the city.

When they reached the city, Judah and his brothers immediately went to the house where the

governor lived. Joseph was still at his house as he had waited for them to return. The brothers saw the governor and immediately fell before him so that they were on the ground. The brothers did not know how the cup got into the sack of Benjamin but they knew that they were in great trouble. Joseph immediately asked them two questions. First he said, “What deed is this you have done?” The brothers did not know how to answer this question because they had not done anything wrong. None of them had touched the cup but the steward had found the cup in the bag of Benjamin. Second he said, “Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?” The word translated “divination” means that Joseph was saying that *he was able to know secret things that others did not know*. Of course the reason that he knew this secret information was due to the fact that the steward had followed his instructions.

Then Judah began to speak for the brothers. He began by asking three questions, “What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves?” Judah made it clear that they did not know what to say. They had no way to explain how the cup was found in the bag of Benjamin. Judah made it clear that he could not think of any way to prove their innocence of the charge because the steward had found the silver cup. God had found out about their sin and had shown that information to the governor. Judah said that since they could not understand how this had happened that there was nothing that they could say because the steward had found the evidence that he was seeking when he checked their bags.

All Judah could say was that since the evidence proved the charge that he and the rest of the brothers must become the slaves of the governor. That included the brother in whose bag the silver cup was found. Judah had said earlier that the one who had the silver cup could die and the rest would be slaves. Now he changed that to the fact that all would be slaves. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Judah and the brothers must have felt as they returned to house of the governor since the evidence showed that Benjamin was guilty. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how people feel when the evidence says they are guilty.

Joseph Saw the Good Attitude of Judah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how people feel when the evidence says that they are guilty especially when they are actually innocent. In this topic, we will see that Joseph was able to see the good attitude of Judah as he offered to become the slave in place of his brother Benjamin.

Joseph had told the steward to place the silver cup in the bag of Benjamin to test his brothers. We see how Judah responded to that test. Genesis 44:18-23 says, “Then Judah came near to him and said: ‘O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’” And we said to my lord, “We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, who is young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him.” Then you said to your servants, “Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.” And we said to my lord, “The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.” But you said to your servants, “Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.”” In these verses, we see that Judah gave a quick review of what had been said on their previous visit.

Judah said that the governor had questioned them about whether they had a father or a brother. Here we see that instead of calling Joseph the governor that Judah called him lord. He certainly had no idea at all that the governor was his brother, Joseph. The word translated “lord” is most commonly translated either *lord or master* in the Old Testament. Since Judah called himself “your servant” he made it clear that he was using this word to speak of a master-servant relationship. Judah went on to explain what they had said on their first visit. They had a father that was an old man. They also had a younger brother that had been born when their father was old. That younger brother was still young. In addition, his older brother was dead and he was the only other child of his mother. They had said that their father had a great love for this youngest brother.

Then Judah said again that they were his servants and that as their lord he had said, “Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.” The brothers had then explained to their lord that their younger brother could not leave his father. They felt that if something happened to their younger brother the sorrow would cause their father to die. However, as their lord, the governor did not give them a choice because he had answered them, “Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.” Judah and the other brothers knew that they had to make the choice to bring Benjamin if they were going to get any additional grain.

Judah went on to explain what had happened when they told their father. Genesis 44:24-29 says, “...So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, “Go back and buy us a little food.” But we said, “We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.” Then your servant my father said to us, “You know that my wife bore me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, ‘Surely he is torn to pieces’; and I have not seen him since. But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.”” In these verses, we see that Judah explained that when the brothers had gone home that they had told their father what the lord of Egypt had said to them.

When they became low on food again, their father had told them that they needed to go to Egypt

and buy additional grain so that they did not starve. Judah then said that they had to tell their father again, “We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.” Judah said that they had made it clear to their father that they had no choice. Then they explained to their father again why they could not go down to Egypt again unless they took their younger brother with them. Judah said that the brothers clearly understood that the lord of Egypt would not see them or talk to them if they did not bring their younger brother with them. They had helped their father to realize that they had no choice but to bring their younger brother with them.

Judah then explained what their father had said to them. Their father had reminded the brothers that his wife had given birth to two sons. Here we see that their father still made it clear that their mother was the one that had been his wife. The other brothers understood the fact that they were not loved with the same love that those two sons were loved. As you remember, the fact that Joseph was the favorite son and the fact that Joseph had told his brothers about his dreams were the two things that had caused his brothers to hate Joseph and that was why they had sold him as a slave. By this statement, Judah made it clear that he and the other brothers had accepted the fact that those two sons would always be the favorites of their father.

Then Judah went on to explain what their father felt had happened to the son that he never saw again. Their father had said, “Surely he is torn to pieces.” Then their father added, “I have not seen him since.” Suddenly Joseph knew what his father thought had happened to him. His father thought that he had been killed by a wild animal. This helped Joseph to better understand why his father was so fearful about sending Benjamin to Egypt with his older brothers. He was afraid that something might happen to him either on the trip to Egypt or while he was in Egypt. Judah went on to explain that his father had a great fear that something would happen to Benjamin. He was afraid that Benjamin was taken to Egypt that he would lose both of the sons of his wife because some calamity might also happen to Benjamin in Egypt. Jacob had told his sons that if something happened to Benjamin that it would bring down his grey hairs to the grave. This meant that if anything happened to Benjamin on this trip that Judah knew that it would kill his father.

Genesis 44:30-34 says, “...Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad’s life, it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is* not *with* us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, “If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.” Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?” Here we see that Judah could not bear the thought of going to his father without Benjamin. He fully understood how special the youngest son was to his father. Judah knew that if the youngest son did not come back with the brothers that their father would die. Judah said that he and the other brothers would cause their father to go to the grave in sorrow if they did not have Benjamin with them when they returned to their father.

Judah went on to say that he had taken the personal responsibility for the life of Benjamin. Judah said that he had become surety for his younger brother. The word translated “surety” means to *become bail or surety for another*. By this statement, Judah said that he had promised to personally take Benjamin’s place and would bear the blame forever if anything happened to Benjamin. Then Judah said, “...Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.” Here we see that Judah personally pleads with the governor to allow him to become the slave and to allow Benjamin to

return to his father. This statement made it clear that Judah and the other brothers had greatly changed their attitude that caused them to sell Joseph as a slave even though he had pleaded with them. Genesis 42:21 says, “Then they said to one another, ‘We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.’” The brothers had expressed their guilt the first time that they had come to Egypt because they did not realize that Joseph could understand what they were saying.

However, this time Joseph saw that Judah had taken the personal responsibility to stay in the place of Benjamin. This attitude on the part of Judah and his great concern to not cause the death of his father showed that he no longer had the attitude that had been shown many years earlier. There was no way that Judah could even bear the thought of evil coming on his father and so he was willing and ready to take the place of his brother. Judah showed by his words that he had passed the test and that any anger that he had in the past when they sold Joseph as a slave was no longer present.

One of the descendants of Judah was Christ. We see that Christ also wanted to please God, the Father, and so Christ was willing and ready to take our place and die for our sins so that we could receive forgiveness as a free gift. As a result, Judah gave us a small illustration of the much greater ministry that Christ would have when He came to this earth to do the will of the Father. Christ established a new covenant by His obedience. Hebrews 10:9 says, “...then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how the Lord had changed the attitudes of Judah and his brothers during the 22 years since they had sold Joseph as a slave. The Lord is able to change and transform the hearts of all those who will come to Him in repentance and faith just as He had changed the attitude of Judah. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Joseph Revealed Himself to His Brothers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord is able to change the attitude of all those who come to Him in repentance and faith. In this topic, we will see that Joseph told his brothers that he was their brother that they had sold 22 years earlier.

Joseph had tested his brothers. Judah had shown that the Lord had been working in the hearts of his brothers. Genesis 45:1-5 says, “Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, ‘Make everyone go out from me!’ So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph; does my father still live?’ But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Please come near to me.’ So they came near. Then he said: ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.’” In these verses, we see that the first thing that Joseph did was give glory to God for sending him to Egypt in order to preserve many lives including the lives of his own family.

Joseph had been able to restrain himself at least in front of his brothers during the time that he was testing them. However, at this point he could no longer restrain himself. He immediately told all of the Egyptians to leave the room. As a result, the only people who were left in the room were his brothers during the time that he made himself known to his brothers. Once everyone was out of the room except his brothers Joseph began to cry with a loud voice. His voice was so loud that the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard him crying even though they were not in the room. Then Joseph spoke to his brothers and said, “‘I am Joseph; does my father still live?’” This statement caused his brothers to be so shocked that they could not even answer him.

The word translated “dismayed” means *to be filled with terror or fear*. The word is translated *distress them* in Psalm 2:5 where God speaks about the nations in rebellion and we read, “Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure...” The brothers were so terrified when they found out that Joseph was the governor that they could not even speak. They probably immediately thought of all of the negative things that had happened to them. Joseph had accused them of being spies. Simeon had been kept in the Egyptian prison. Their money had been in their sacks when they returned to their home after the first trip. They had been forced to bring Benjamin back to Egypt with them or they would not even see his face. The silver cup of Joseph was found in the sack of Benjamin. Their money was again found in their sacks. The brothers must have certainly thought that now Joseph would kill them.

In addition, Joseph had just now asked if his father was still alive. Then Joseph spoke to them again and told them to come close to him. In their fear, they did come close to him. Then Joseph went on to say several additional things after they came close to him. Joseph told them that he was their brother that they had sold into Egypt. Then he said something that probably came as a real shock to the brothers. He told them not to be angry or grieved with themselves because they had sold him and he had been taken as a slave to Egypt. He said that God was the One who had sent Joseph to Egypt ahead of them to preserve life. Then Joseph went on to explain what he meant by that statement. Genesis 45:6-11 says, “‘...For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which *there will* be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to

save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, “thus says your son Joseph: ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.’”” Here we see that Joseph had a great desire to see his father again.

However, we see that Joseph went on to explain why God had sent him to Egypt ahead of his brothers. Joseph explained that the famine had only lasted two years so far but that it was going to last for an additional five years. During those five years it would be no use to plow because there would be no harvest. Then Joseph explained in greater detail why God had sent him to Egypt ahead of his brothers. God had sent him to Egypt to preserve a posterity for the sons of Jacob in the earth. The word translated “posterity” means a *remnant or a good residue*. In this verse it means that God had sent Joseph to Egypt to preserve the family of Israel from the famine. The Lord uses the same word to say that He is presently keeping a remnant of Israel for the future. Zechariah 8:6 says, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?’” says the Lord of hosts.” Then Zechariah 8:11-12 adds, “...But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew—I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these.’” This promise for Israel is still in the future.

Joseph went on to tell his brothers that the Lord had sent him to preserve their lives by a great deliverance. This promise in Genesis 45:8 is so great, “...it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.” In order to present his family alive, God had made Joseph a father to Pharaoh. God had made Joseph the lord over the household of Pharaoh. The Lord had made Joseph the ruler of the entire land of Egypt. Then Joseph instructed his brothers to go quickly and get their father. He told them exactly what to tell his father when he said in verses 9-11, “...Thus says your son Joseph: ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.’” Here we see that he instructed his father to bring everything to Egypt including his entire family, their flocks and their herds and all of their possessions. He said that he would place them in the land of Goshen.

Joseph told them to explain to their father why it was necessary for him and his entire family to come to Egypt. In that way, Joseph could provide for the entire family of Jacob. Otherwise, they would end up in poverty or even die from the famine because the famine was going to last for another five years. By this message for their father, Joseph explained to his brothers that God had shown him how to preserve his family throughout the entire length of the famine. This would also begin to lead to the fulfillment of the prophecy that God had given Abraham in Genesis 15:13-14 where we read, “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.’” These verses show that it was the plan of God for Israel to go to Egypt.

Joseph then spoke directly to his brothers and told them in Genesis 45:12-15, “...And behold,

your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my mouth that speaks to you. So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.’ Then he fell on his brother, Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.” In these verses, we see that Joseph told his brothers that they had all seen him with their own eyes. For the older brothers, this was their second trip to Egypt so they had seen him before even though they did not realize that he was Joseph. However, this trip was the first time that Benjamin had seen him since he had been sold as a slave 22 years earlier. They now knew that he was Joseph and had spoken to them with his own mouth.

Then Joseph went on to tell his brothers what to do. Joseph told them to tell his father about all of the glory that Joseph had in the land of Egypt. They were also to tell Jacob what they had seen. Then Joseph gave the most important instruction of all. He told them, “...you shall hurry and bring my father down here.” Joseph had a tremendous desire to see his father face to face. He was only 17 when he was sold as a slave. Now he was 39 years old and had not seen his father for 22 years. Joseph had said for the brothers to tell his father about his glory in Egypt because Joseph knew that would encourage Jacob to make the long trip to Egypt. He wanted them to hurry because he realized that his father was an old man and could die at any time.

Once Joseph had given this message to his brothers, he could no longer hold back his feelings of love for his family. He gave his brother Benjamin a long hug and fell on his neck and wept. At the same time, Benjamin also wept on his neck. This was a very emotional time for these two brothers. Then Joseph went to each of the other brothers, kissed them and wept over them. Finally, after this great time of reunion, his brothers were no longer terrified and they began to talk with Joseph. They realized that Joseph loved them and was not angry with them. Joseph gives us a real picture of what it means to forgive and be reconciled to others. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain and demonstrate forgiveness by their own words and actions toward others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Joseph Told His Brothers to Bring His Father to Egypt

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Joseph teaches us from his example of forgiveness and reconciliation with his brothers. The news about the brothers of Joseph also had a great impact on the household of Pharaoh. That will be the focus of this topic.

Genesis 45:16-20 says, “Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying, ‘Joseph’s brothers have come.’ So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Say to your brothers, Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’” Here we see that Pharaoh and his household were also happy when they heard the news that the brothers of Joseph had come to the land of Egypt for food and Joseph had welcomed them.

Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph and told him what to tell his brothers because Pharaoh also wanted the family of Joseph to come to Egypt. Pharaoh had now known Joseph for nine years. Pharaoh had seen the wisdom of Joseph many times during those years. He had seen how Joseph had prepared the land for the coming famine. Now that two years of the famine had passed he realized even more how Joseph had protected the people of Egypt by his plan. He had seen how Joseph had organized the entire land of Egypt so that there was food stored and ready in every city. As a result, Pharaoh knew that Joseph would be concerned for the protection of his family during the remaining five years of the famine. That is why Pharaoh was eager to have the family of Joseph come to Egypt.

Pharaoh told Joseph to have the brothers load their sacks of grain on their donkeys and return to the land of Canaan. However, they were not to stay in Canaan. Pharaoh told Joseph to have his brothers get their father and all of their families and return to the land of Egypt. In fact, Pharaoh promised them that they would be given the best that the land of Egypt had to provide for them and their families. Pharaoh said that they would be able to enjoy the best foods in the land. Then we see that Pharaoh told Joseph to give a command to his brothers. They were to take carts from the land of Egypt with them as they went to Canaan so that the carts would make it possible for their little ones and their wives to ride to Egypt as easily as possible. They were also to have their father ride in a cart so that it would be possible for him to travel to Egypt. Pharaoh then told Joseph that his family did not need to bring all of their household goods to Egypt because the best household goods in Egypt would be given to them. Pharaoh wanted to make it as easy as possible for the entire family of Joseph to come to Egypt. That is why he even said that the best of all of the land of Egypt would be given to them.

Genesis 45:21-24 says, “Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments. And he sent to his father these things: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, ‘See that you do not become troubled along the way.’” In these verses, we see that the brothers of Joseph followed the instructions that had been given to them by Pharaoh through Joseph. They were given enough carts for their father and all of their families to be able to ride during

the trip to Egypt from Canaan. Genesis 46:27b says, “All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.” That number of people meant that they had to take quite a number of carts so that everyone could ride.

Joseph also gave his brothers some other things. He gave them all of the food that they would need for the time that they would be traveling. In addition, he gave each of his brothers a complete change of clothing. However, he had a much greater gift for Benjamin. Joseph gave Benjamin five changes of clothing and three hundred pieces of silver. These would have been shekels of silver. Genesis 37:28 says that Joseph was sold as a slave for twenty shekels of silver while Leviticus 5:15 says that a male ram (adult male sheep) was sold for two shekels of silver. That meant that this gift of silver to Benjamin was enough money to buy 150 adult male sheep. Joseph also prepared a special gift for his father that included ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt and ten donkeys loaded with grain and other food for his father for his trip to Egypt. This meant this was a large gift for his father as well.

Joseph then gave his brothers one final instruction as he sent them away to get their families and their father. He said, “See that you do not become troubled along the way.” The word translated “become troubled” means to *become angry or to quarrel*. Joseph realized that there was a real danger of conflict among his brothers as they traveled back to the land of Canaan. When they told their father that Joseph was the governor of Egypt, it meant that they would also probably have to admit to their father that they had sold Joseph as a slave and that was the way that he had gone to Egypt. That was a secret that they had kept from their father for 22 years. Joseph realized that it would be very easy for them to begin blaming one another since the ten brothers had been experiencing guilt for 22 years about what they had done to Joseph.

The fact that they had this guilt in their hearts was shown by what they said and did seventeen years later after their father died. Genesis 50:16-18 says, “So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, ‘Before your father died he commanded, saying, “Thus you shall say to Joseph: I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.” Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, ‘Behold, we are your servants.’” This meant that the brothers lived with their guilt for more than 39 years. Joseph showed his total forgiveness when he said in Genesis 50:19-20, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.’” These verses show the powerful impact of guilt in the life of any person. Genesis 45:25-28 says, “Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. And they told him, saying, ‘Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.’ And Jacob’s heart stood still, because he did not believe them. But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. Then Israel said, ‘It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’” Here we read what happened when the brothers reached Canaan and came to their father. The first thing that they said to their father was, “Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.” Those words came as a shock to Jacob because for 22 years he thought that Joseph was dead. In fact, he did not even believe his sons at first.

However, there were two things that finally convinced Jacob that their words were true. First, the brothers told their father everything that Joseph had spoken to them. It probably took them a period of time to tell their father everything that Joseph had told them. In addition, Jacob probably had several questions as they talked. Second, Jacob then saw the carts that Joseph had sent to carry their families down to the land of Egypt. As mentioned earlier, it took quite a number of carts in order to carry 70 people. After Jacob heard the words that his sons told him

about Joseph and saw the carts that Joseph had sent to carry them down to Egypt, we read, "...the spirit of Jacob their father revived." The word translated "revived" means to *live or to be alive*. For 22 years, Jacob had grieved the loss of his son. Now he suddenly knew that his son was living instead of dead and that he was also the governor of the entire land of Egypt. The grief was immediately gone and was replaced by great joy. That was the greatest news that he had heard in that entire 22 years. Jacob (Israel) was now eager to go and see his son.

That caused Israel to say, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die." The word translated "enough" means *it is great or enough*. This was really great news for Jacob to know that his son Joseph was alive. Since Jacob had felt for so long that Joseph was dead, this was a miracle so great that it was hard for him to believe that he could be alive. He probably felt almost like the disciples felt when they heard that Jesus had risen from the dead. Mark 16:13-14 says, "And they went and told *it* to the rest, *but* they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." The disciples only believed when they saw Jesus. In a similar way, Jacob only believed when he saw the carts that Joseph had sent to carry the family down to Egypt.

Many times when people receive very special news, it causes them to have a completely different attitude. That was what happened to Jacob that day. He was now ready and eager to travel to Egypt so that he could see Joseph. That trip probably seemed like just a short trip because he was so eager to see his son again. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord changed the attitude of Jacob by the good news that he received about his son Joseph. The same thing will happen as they share the good news about the resurrection of Christ as the Lord draws people to Himself. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to explain the good news of the Gospel.

Joseph Visited His Father When He Arrived

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how the Lord is able to totally change the attitude of others when they hear good news that will change their lives. Jacob was eager to travel to Egypt after he heard the good news that Joseph was alive. In this topic, we will learn what happened when Jacob arrived in Egypt and saw his son.

Genesis 46:1-7 says, “So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ So He said, ‘I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.’ Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. His sons and his sons’ sons, his daughters and his sons’ daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.” In these verses, we see what happened to Jacob as he traveled to Egypt.

One of the things that we notice as we get closer to the end of the life of Jacob is the fact that we now frequently see that he is called Israel. “Israel” means *God rules or prevails*. The Lord had changed his name many years earlier. However, as he grew in his understanding of who God is, his life was changing and more and more he allowed God to rule his life. On the way to Egypt, Jacob and his family stopped at Beersheba to offer sacrifices to the Lord. There God spoke to Jacob in a vision. In that vision God told Jacob, “‘I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.’” Here we see that God explained to Israel why he did not need to be afraid to go to the land of Egypt with his family. The Lord said that his family would become a great nation while they were in the land of Egypt. The Lord also promised that He would bring that nation out of Egypt and back to the land that they were just leaving. Then God promised Israel that Joseph would put his hand on the eyes of Israel (Jacob).

After Israel had seen that vision from the Lord, he was able to experience the peace of God as he traveled to Egypt. His sons had placed their father, their children and their wives in the carts that Joseph had sent with them to carry their family down to the land of Egypt. They also took all of their cattle and flocks along with all of the other goods that they had gained while they were in the land of Canaan. This meant that Joseph had sent enough carts for their possessions as well as for their families. Israel took all of his sons and daughters as they traveled to Egypt. His sons and daughters also took all of their children. The entire family of Israel traveled to Egypt so that they could be reunited with Joseph and his family. That meant that all of the descendants of Israel would be located in Egypt for the next four hundred years and they would become a great nation.

Genesis 46:8-18 gives us the names of all of the sons and grandsons that traveled with Israel to Egypt. Those verses tell us, “Now these were the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob’s firstborn. The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron. The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. These were the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the persons, his sons and his daughters, were thirty-three.” These were the descendants of Israel through Leah. “The sons of Gad were Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. The sons of Asher were Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and Serah, their sister. And the sons of Beriah were Heber and Malchiel. These were the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons.” These were the descendants of Israel through Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah.

Then Genesis 46:19-27 gives us the descendants of Rachel and her handmaid Bilhah. Those verses say, “ The sons of Rachel, Jacob’s wife, were Joseph and Benjamin. And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. The sons of Benjamin were Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard. These were the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons in all. The son of Dan was Hushim. The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all. All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, were sixty-six persons in all. And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.” A key phrase to note in verse 26 is the fact that the wives of the sons of Israel were in addition to the ones who were the actual descendants of Israel. The wives that were still alive increased that total as Acts 7:14 says, “Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him*, seventy-five people.” We see that the wives were included as relatives since they did not descend from Israel.

When Israel and his family arrived in the land of Egypt, Genesis 46:28-34 says, “Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him the way to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen. So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said to Joseph, ‘Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive.’ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, ‘I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, “My brothers and those of my father’s house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.” So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, “What is your occupation?” that you shall say, “Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,” that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.”” When Israel and his family arrived in Egypt they stopped in the area called Goshen. Then Israel sent Judah to let Joseph know that the family had arrived in Egypt.

Joseph had been eagerly waiting for the arrival of his father in Egypt. When Judah came with the message that they had arrived and were in Goshen, Joseph had an animal harnessed to his chariot so that he could go and see his father. Then Joseph rode in his chariot to Goshen to meet his father. When he arrived, Joseph presented himself to his father so that his father could see him. This was a meeting that Israel never thought that he would have on this earth. It was a meeting for which Joseph had longed for the entire 22 years that he had been in Egypt. As a result, Joseph hugged his father and wept on his neck for an extended period of time. This was a very emotional meeting for both of them. Finally Israel said to Joseph, ““Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive.”” Israel had been in sorrow for many years because he thought that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. The Lord had replaced that sorrow with peace in the heart of Israel. He had seen Joseph and knew that he was still alive.

Joseph then explained to his brothers what he would do. He said that he would go and explain to Pharaoh that his father, brothers and their families had all arrived. They had left Canaan and had come to Egypt as Pharaoh had suggested. Joseph said that he would tell Pharaoh that his brothers were shepherds. Throughout their lives, they had taken care of livestock. They had brought their flocks and their herds with them to Egypt along with their other possessions. Joseph knew that one of the questions that Pharaoh would ask them was, “What is your occupation?” Joseph knew Pharaoh and the Egyptians very well and he knew how they viewed shepherds. That was why Joseph realized that it was very important for him to explain to his brothers exactly what to say when they met Pharaoh because what they said would determine where he would tell them to live.

Joseph told his brothers to say, “Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers.” The brothers had grown up caring for the sheep and cattle. In fact, that had also been the occupation of Abraham and Isaac. Joseph had a very important reason for explaining this information to his brothers in advance. Joseph knew that the Egyptians and Pharaoh considered shepherds an abomination. The word translated “abomination” means *a thing of horror and can be something that is physical, ritual or moral*. Joseph knew that Pharaoh would probably have his family stay in the area of Goshen so that they would be separate from the Egyptians since Genesis 43:32 said that to sit at a table with Hebrews was an abomination to the Egyptians (ritual abomination). That would keep Israel and his family separate from the Egyptians and preserve them as a separate people. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how God used this fact to keep the people of Israel separate so that they could grow into a great nation of people instead of being absorbed into the Egyptians during the more than 400 years that they were in the land of Egypt. The Lord used what was an abomination to Egypt to cause the Egyptians to keep them separate so that they could grow into a great nation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Joseph Presented His Father to Pharaoh

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how God used something that was a thing of horror to the Egyptians to keep Israel a separate people so that they could grow into a great nation while in Egypt. In this topic, we will see that Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh.

After Joseph had seen and talked with his father, he went to Pharaoh to tell him that his father and the rest of his family had arrived in Egypt. Genesis 47:1-4 says, “Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, ‘My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they are in the land of Goshen.’ And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, ‘What is your occupation?’ And they said to Pharaoh, ‘Your servants are shepherds, both we and also our fathers.’ And they said to Pharaoh, ‘We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.’” Here we see that Joseph took five of his brothers with him when he went to tell Pharaoh that his family had arrived in Egypt.

Joseph arrived at the house of Pharaoh and told him that his father and brothers had done as Pharaoh had instructed and had come from the land of Canaan to Egypt. They had brought with them their flocks and their herds and all of their possessions when they came from Canaan to Egypt. Then Joseph said that they were still in the area where they came when they first reached Egypt, which was the land of Goshen. The land of Goshen was the area of Egypt located in the northeast section of Egypt in the delta region of the Nile River. That was the first area that the family reached when they came from Canaan. However, it was also an area of much grass for the sheep and cattle because it was watered by the Nile River. Joseph took five of his brothers with him to present to Pharaoh so that Pharaoh also became acquainted with part of the family of Joseph. One of the first questions that Pharaoh asked the brothers was, “‘What is your occupation?’”

This question made it possible for the brothers to make their request to Pharaoh to live in the area of Goshen. The brothers told Pharaoh that they were shepherds. They also told Pharaoh that had been the occupation of their fathers as well. This was important for Pharaoh to know because this meant that these men had grown up as shepherds and had been shown from childhood the best things to do to care for the cattle, sheep and goats. That statement was by Pharaoh because we will see that it led Pharaoh to make a request of Joseph regarding his own cattle. After answering the question of Pharaoh the brothers went on to tell Pharaoh why they had come to the land of Egypt. They said that there was no grass in the land of Canaan to feed their flocks because the famine was very severe in the land of Canaan. Then they made their request to Pharaoh. They asked Pharaoh to allow them to remain in the land of Goshen because they had seen that there was much grass in that area.

Genesis 47:5-10 says, “Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.’ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Jacob, ‘How old are you?’ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they

have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.” Pharaoh then gave Joseph instructions for his family after he had heard their request.

Pharaoh recognized that the land of Egypt was prepared for the famine because Joseph had told Pharaoh how to prepare for the coming famine during the seven years of plenty. He realized that Egypt would also be facing starvation if Joseph had not told him how to prepare the land for the famine. As a result, Pharaoh wanted the family of Joseph to have the land that would be the best for shepherds with large flocks of cattle, sheep and goats. In addition, since the Egyptians considered shepherds an abomination, he probably thought that it would be best to have the family in an area where they did not have regular contact with the other Egyptians. Pharaoh then instructed Joseph to have his family remain in the land of Goshen since the Nile River caused much grass to grow and that would provide plenty of food for their herds and flocks.

Then Pharaoh made his request of Joseph. Pharaoh said, “And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.” Here we see that Pharaoh recognized that the family of Joseph probably had some brothers that knew more about caring for flocks than any of the Egyptians. The word translated “competent” means *strength of power* and is most frequently used to speak of military strength. However, in this use it refers *to men of strength and knowledge of caring for flocks*. As a result, Pharaoh said that if Joseph knew that any of the brothers were known for their ability to care for herds and flocks that Joseph should appoint those brothers to be the chief herdsmen over the livestock of Pharaoh.

Later, Joseph also brought his father into the palace to meet Pharaoh. When Pharaoh saw Jacob, the first recorded question that he asked Jacob was, “How old are you?” The word translated “pilgrimage” usually means *sojourner or stranger*. That word was applied to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during the time that they lived in the land of Canaan because they had no property rights. Abraham had purchased a piece of land to bury Sarah and Jacob had purchased a piece of land to build an altar. Since these were small pieces of land they did not include property rights. As a result, Jacob was considered a sojourner his entire life because he had no permanent place to live. Abraham had lived 175 years and Isaac had lived 180 years while Jacob was only 130 years old so he felt that his years had been few in comparison. He also felt that the years had been evil because of the many difficult things that he had experienced. In addition, for the last 22 years, he had thought that Joseph was dead so that had filled him with sorrow and grief. However, before Jacob left the presence of Pharaoh, he gave him a blessing. Then he went on his way and returned to the land of Goshen for the remaining years of his life.

Genesis 47:11-14 says, “And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number in their families. Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house.” Pharaoh had commanded in Genesis 47:6a, “The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen.” Here we see that Joseph followed the command of Pharaoh. They were given a place to live in the land of Goshen which was the best land for cattle and sheep because there was abundant grass for cattle and flocks in that area because of the Nile River. In addition to having land for their cattle and flocks, Joseph was also able to provide his entire family with grain so that they had bread throughout the remaining years of the famine. This is an

illustration of the fact that the plan of Joseph made it possible for many people to live through the famine including the family of Joseph.

Joseph had been faithful in serving Pharaoh and preparing the land of Egypt for the famine. The famine was very severe and had a very great impact on both the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan. The word translated “languished” means to *faint, to become feeble or to become weak*. The people became discouraged because of the famine because it was so severe that there was no bread throughout the land of Egypt. This shows that very few of the people had prepared for the famine during the seven years of plenty. That is why Genesis 41:55-56 said, “So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.’ The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.” The longer the famine lasted the more severe the conditions became.

Here we see that as the famine continued that the people eventually used up all of the money that they had buying grain to make bread. This was true both in the land of Egypt and also in the land of Canaan. Meanwhile, Joseph did not keep the money. Instead, Joseph brought that money into the house of Pharaoh. Pharaoh had given Joseph the key position of leadership to prepare for the famine. However, Joseph did not use that position to personally benefit himself. Instead, he used that position to save the lives of many people from starvation. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that godly leadership is not selfish. Instead, the desire of godly leaders is to serve the needs of others instead of seek personal benefits for self. We also want to help our children learn to show by their example that godly leaders seek to serve others because the love of God has been poured out in their hearts. This will provide others with an example of the greatness of the love of God. Christ modeled this love for us when He gave his life a ransom for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this lesson.

Joseph Preserved the People from the Famine

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Joseph used his leadership to serve others and keep many people alive during the time of the seven year famine. In this topic, we will learn more about the details of how the people lived even during the famine.

We see what happened during the last several years of the famine in Egypt. Genesis 47:15-19 says, “So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, ‘Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed.’ Then Joseph said, ‘Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone.’ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year. When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, ‘We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.’” The Egyptians continued to buy grain for bread until their money was gone. However, the famine still continued.

Joseph had no intention of letting the people starve. Instead God had given him this position of leadership so that he could save many people alive. The people came to Joseph when they no longer had money to buy grain for bread. That was when Joseph offered to buy their animals in exchange for food. The people willingly brought their animals to Joseph because they realized his concern to help them remain alive. During that year Joseph exchanged grain for their animals. The people were eager to exchange their horses, flocks, cattle and donkeys in exchange for food. That exchange made it possible for them to live through another year. However, that still meant that there was going to be four more years of famine.

This time, the people came with their suggestion about how to survive through the rest of the famine. The people said that they only had two things that they could exchange for grain to make bread and offered those two things in exchange for grain to get them through the rest of the famine. They said that they would gladly exchange their bodies and their lands in exchange for grain. Then they asked Joseph to buy their bodies and their lands for Pharaoh so that they would have food to eat during the rest of the famine. Here we have an example of what happens when people become desperate for food. Their statement shows that their only thought was survival. The people were willing to do whatever Joseph would require in order to receive enough food to survive until the end of the famine.

Genesis 47:20-26 says, “Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh’s. And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations allotted to them by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands. Then Joseph said to the people, ‘Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your

little ones.’ So they said, ‘You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants.’ And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, which did not become Pharaoh’s.” We see that Joseph followed the suggestion of the people and bought their land for Pharaoh.

By this time, none of the people had any grain left to provide food for them through the rest of the famine because it was so severe. This meant major changes in the land of Egypt. Now all of the land belonged to Pharaoh. The only lands that did not belong to Pharaoh were the lands of the priests of the Egyptian religion. The reason for this exception was due to the fact that the priests had long received rations of food from the Pharaohs because they were the leaders of their religion. As a result, they continued to receive the rations of food that Pharaoh gave to the priests so that it did not become necessary for the priests to sell their land to Pharaoh.

Meanwhile, Joseph moved the rest of the people into the cities. This meant that all of the people were near the places where the grain was stored so that it would be much easier to distribute the grain to the people. The word translated “cities” does not mean that the cities had to be large. Many times when a city is mentioned we see that the leaders gathered at the gate of the city. This meant that cities had wall for protection from enemies while unwalled towns and villages did not have a wall for protection.

Joseph also changed the way that the people lived both during and after the famine. They became sharecroppers instead of owners. Pharaoh would provide the grain to sow the crops for the following year at the end of the famine and the people would plant and raise the crops until the time of harvest. As sharecroppers, the people were to then give one-fifth of their crops to Pharaoh and keep the other four-fifths of the crop for themselves. Once the famine was over the people were to use some of their four-fifths for seed to replant the next year and the rest would be for their own food. In this way, most of that four-fifths of the grain of the people would be for their own food.

The people were filled with joy when they heard the words of Joseph. It meant that they would have food until the famine was completed at the end of the seven years. As a result, the people said, “‘You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants.’” The people were very willing to sell their land and serve Pharaoh in exchange for food to survive. Then Joseph made the plan for the people to become sharecroppers by giving one-fifth to Pharaoh as the law of the land. That way, the people knew what they could expect in the future. At the same time, Joseph explained that the law would not apply to the priests of Egypt because their land was not sold to Pharaoh like the land of the rest of the people.

Genesis 47:27-31 says, “So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob’s life was one hundred and forty-seven years. When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, ‘Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.’ And he said, ‘I will do as you have said.’ Then he said, ‘Swear to me.’ And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.” Once the descendants of Israel were in the land of Egypt they started to multiply from a large family to a great nation of people. Their possessions increased and the number of people also greatly increased.

We see that Jacob lived for a total of seventeen years after he reached the land of Egypt. That meant that he had the opportunity to see the beginning of the growth of his descendants toward

the point when they would become a great nation. Jacob was also able to enjoy those last years because he knew that Joseph was alive and was able to come and see him from time to time. As he came close to the end of his life those seventeen additional years meant that Jacob lived a total of 147 years. However, the time came when Jacob realized that he would soon die. Since Jacob did not know the exact time when he would die, he asked for Joseph to come and see him because he had one request to make of Joseph before he died.

When Joseph arrived at the house where Jacob was living, the first thing that Jacob did was to ask Joseph to make him a promise. In that day, the way that the people would make a promise was to place their hand under the thigh of the person who was requesting the promise. Jacob asked Joseph to deal kindly and truly with him. By that he meant that he wanted Joseph to make a promise that Joseph would keep after the death of his father. Then Jacob made his request. Jacob said, “Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.” Here we see that Jacob did not want to be buried in the land of Egypt. Instead, he wanted to be buried in the land that God had promised would one day belong to his descendants. This was an important request because it showed that he expected the Lord to fulfill that promise about the land in the future.

Jacob wanted to be buried in the same place that his father and grandfather were buried in the land of Canaan. He asked Joseph to promise to take his body to the land of Canaan and bury it in the burial place of his fathers. Joseph promised his father that he would do exactly as his father had requested. Jacob was so concerned that he be buried in Canaan, that he asked Joseph to take an oath that he would do exactly as he had said. Joseph had that same confidence as his father that God would return their people to the land of Canaan. Genesis 50:25 says, “Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why these actions by Jacob and Joseph showed that they looked forward to the fact that God would keep His promises. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Israel Wanted to Bless Both Sons of Joseph

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that both Jacob and Joseph showed by their actions that they had their hope and confidence in the promises of God that He would one day bring Israel out of Egypt and take them to the land of Canaan. In this topic, we see that Joseph took his sons with him and went to visit his father.

Genesis 48:1-4 says, “Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, ‘Indeed your father is sick’; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And Jacob was told, ‘Look, your son Joseph is coming to you’; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. Then Jacob said to Joseph: ‘God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, “Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.”’” One day Joseph received word that his father was sick. Joseph knew that his father could die and so he took his two sons with him and went to visit his father. These two sons would have been in their late teens or early twenties since they were born before the famine began. Manasseh was the older of the two and Ephraim was the younger.

Jacob was told when Joseph arrived at his house that Joseph was coming to visit him. Although Jacob was weak, he strengthened himself so that he was sitting up in his bed by the time Joseph came into the room. The word translated “strengthened” means to *be strong or to make strong*. Just the news that Joseph would be there in a few minutes made it possible for Jacob to strengthen himself. This is an important lesson. Many times when people are sick and very weak they just lay in bed. However, when they hear that someone is coming to visit them they are able to strengthen themselves. This shows us that visits to those who are weak and may be facing death provides encouragement to them even though they are very weak. That was what happened when Jacob heard that Joseph was coming to visit him.

Jacob wanted to remind Joseph of the promise that God had given to Abraham and Isaac that the Lord had repeated to him when he was fleeing from his brother and was on his way to the house of Laban. At that time, the Lord had spoken to Jacob through a dream. First, God had given Jacob a personal blessing. Jacob remembered that personal blessing as he said, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me...” After God spoke to him Jacob changed the name of that place from Luz to Bethel which means “house of God.” Second, God promised that his descendants would be blessed and told Jacob, “Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people...” Jacob was beginning to see the start of the fulfillment of that promise. However, most of that development into a great nation happened after the death of Jacob. Third, God had promised his descendants would be given the land of Canaan as God told Jacob that He would, “...give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.” That promise is still in effect because God said that the land that would be given to he and his descendants would be an everlasting possession.

Genesis 48:5-9 says, “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when *there* was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).” Then Israel saw

Joseph's sons, and said, 'Who are these?' And Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.' And he said, 'Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.'" Here we see that Israel gave the double portion or double blessing to Joseph by telling him that both of his sons would be considered as the sons of Israel. Notice that once Jacob changed the status of the two sons of Joseph that Jacob is called Israel in the rest of this chapter because those called his sons now included two grandsons.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see that the Levites served and assisted the priests. To do this they were scattered in cities throughout the land of Israel. The priests all came from the family of Aaron as he was from the tribe of Levi. That meant that the tribe of Levi was not counted as one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Lord chose to have Israel give the blessing to Joseph so that he would have the double blessing. This meant that two tribes came from Joseph and were named after these two sons of Joseph. Each of the two sons became a separate tribe so that when you read the names of the twelve tribes of Israel the list contains the names of both Manasseh and Ephraim but does not include the tribe of Levi. Israel also told Joseph that if Joseph had any additional sons in the future that their descendants would be included within the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. In this way, the nation of Israel would remain a nation of twelve tribes.

Israel also talked about the mother of Joseph. When Jacob and his family were moving from Padan Aram to the land of Canaan, Rachel died in childbirth as she was giving birth to Benjamin. That death happened just before they arrived at Ephrath. The place called Ephrath later had its name changed to Bethlehem. Of course, that is the town where Christ was born and was only about five miles from the city of Jerusalem. Genesis 35:19-20 says, "So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem). And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day." From this statement we see that Rachel was buried in the place where she died and that this place later became a part of the land given to the tribe of Judah.

Joseph had also taken his two sons with him when he went to see his father. As a result, Israel saw that his two sons were with Joseph. Israel then asked Joseph who they were. Joseph replied that they were his two sons. Joseph went on to tell his father that God had given him these two sons while he was in the land of Egypt. Here we see that Joseph was faithful in giving all of the glory to God for the sons that God had given him. This shows that Joseph recognized that God had guided in everything that happened in his life. These sons had both been born during the seven years of plenty before the famine had started. Genesis 41:50 says, "And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him." The famine had already been going for two years when the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt. Then Israel had lived seventeen years in Egypt. As a result, these sons were either in their late teens or early twenties at this time. Israel immediately said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them." Here we see that Israel was going to give that blessing to complete the promise that he had just made to Joseph.

Genesis 48:10-13 says, "Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, 'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!' So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him." Here we see that the eyes of Israel were dim with age so that he could not see clearly. This meant that he could not recognize the faces of Manasseh and Ephraim. Joseph brought his sons close to his father and Israel kissed them and embraced them.

Israel was also very thankful for this day. For twenty-two years he thought that Joseph was dead. Then that day came when the brothers said that Joseph was alive and the ruler of the land of Egypt next to Pharaoh. Israel had come to Egypt and had seen his son, Joseph. However, God had also given him the opportunity to see the two sons of Joseph. Even though Israel was weak from his sickness, this was a great privilege for him to see and know that these were the two sons of Joseph. That was the reason that Israel said, “I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!” These final years of Israel in Egypt were probably some of the best years in the life of Israel because of the fact that he knew that the Lord had preserved the life of Joseph and brought him to the land of Egypt to preserve the lives of many people. In addition, the Lord gave Israel the privilege of seeing the sons of Joseph even though it may have been hard for him to see them clearly because of the poor eyesight that he was experiencing because of his age.

Israel had said that he wanted to bless both of the sons of Joseph. As a result, we see that Joseph brought his two sons close to Israel so that he could bless them. Since Israel was almost blind, Joseph guided his oldest son, Manasseh, toward the right hand of Israel. He guided the younger son, Ephraim, toward the left hand of Israel. It was the custom of the cultures of that area to give the greater blessing to the older son if two sons were blessed. That was done by laying the right hand on the head of the older son. Joseph was trying to make that easier for his father to do by guiding Manasseh toward the right hand of Israel and Ephraim toward the left hand of Israel. Since Jacob had stolen the blessing from his own father by deceiving him, he wanted to make sure that he did not get deceived as he blessed both of the sons of Joseph. We will see in the next topic that Israel knew which son to whom he wanted to give the greater blessing. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the family of Abraham did not always follow the culture of that day and bless the oldest son but rather the son whom the Lord chose to bless in a special way. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why God may choose in a different way than men.

Israel Gave the Greater Blessing to the Younger

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the family of Abraham did not always follow the culture of their day and give the blessing to the oldest son. In our topic today, we will see that Israel gave a greater blessing to the younger son of Joseph.

Genesis 48:14-16 says, “Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’” We mentioned in the last topic that Israel knew which of the two sons of Joseph he wanted to receive the greater blessing. Joseph was guiding his right hand toward the older son, Manasseh. Here we see that Israel crossed his hands and laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim who was the younger of the two sons. Then he placed his left hand on the head of Manasseh. The word translated “knowingly” means the *thinking through of a complex group of thoughts so that a wise decision is made*. Israel realized that Joseph was trying to guide his right hand to the oldest son so Israel based his decision to place his right hand on the head of Ephraim because God was going to make his descendants greater in the future.

With his hands on the heads of the two sons of Joseph, Israel then gave the blessing to Joseph. In that blessing, he blessed both Joseph and his two sons. This blessing came from the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. They had both faithfully walked before the Lord during their lives. Israel first spoke of the fact that God had met his physical needs throughout his life. He said that God had fed him throughout his life right down to the present day. Then Israel spoke of the fact that God had also met his spiritual needs. The word translated “Angel” means a *messenger*. It can be used to speak of a human messenger, a superhuman messenger or the Angel of the Lord (which was an Old Testament appearance of Christ). By this statement, Israel recognized that it was the Angel of the Lord who had redeemed him from all evil. The word translated “redeemed” is used in many places to speak of the Lord who redeems. Psalm 19:14 says, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.” Then Isaiah 63:16 says, “Doubtless You *are* our Father, though Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O LORD, *are* our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting *is* Your name.” This verse in Genesis is the first time in the Old Testament that we are told that God will be our Redeemer but it was mentioned many more times through the Old Testament.

Israel went on to say in his blessing, that his name, as well as the names of Abraham and Isaac would be upon the two sons of Joseph. This showed that Joseph was the one who received the double blessing because each of his sons would be a tribe in the nation of Israel. As a part of the blessing of Joseph and his sons, Israel said that they would grow into a multitude. Israel recognized that the One who redeemed him was also the One who would cause the descendants of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim to grow into a great multitude. The faithfulness of Joseph throughout his life would be blessed by the Lord who would cause his descendants to become a very large multitude.

Joseph had seen what his father had done when he crossed his hands to give the blessing. Genesis 48:17-19 says, “Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of

Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.' But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.'" We see that Joseph was grieved when he saw that Israel had placed his right hand on the head of Ephraim and tried to move his hand.

Joseph thought that Israel had done what he had done because of his poor eyesight. For that reason, he tried to move the right hand from the head of Ephraim to the head of Manasseh. While he was trying to move the right hand, he told his father that Ephraim was not the firstborn. The cultures of that day usually blessed the firstborn, but we see that many times in the history of Israel that God made it clear that God sees things differently than man sees them. The very fact that Israel was blessing Joseph and both of his sons was a clear departure from the customs of the nations in that area. However, we see that the Lord continued to place His blessing on others who were not the firstborn. In 1 Samuel 16:6-7 we read, "So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him!' But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" In this situation, the Lord chose the eighth and youngest son of Jesse to replace Saul and be the future king of Israel. David was chosen to be the future king because the Lord looks on the heart and David had a heart for God.

Israel then told Joseph that he knew that Ephraim was not the oldest son. He said that Manasseh, the oldest son, would also become one of the tribes of Israel. In fact, he would experience great blessing as well because God would cause him to also become a great people. However, the younger son and his descendants would be greater than the older son and his descendants. The Lord led Israel to make this prophecy about the two sons of Joseph because the Lord looks at the hearts while the nations looked at the birth order. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "'For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" The Lord revealed His plan for the future of the tribe of Ephraim through this prophecy by Israel. God showed Israel that the descendants of Ephraim would become a multitude of nations.

Genesis 48:20-22 says, "So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.'" We see that this blessing included Joseph and both of his sons because they all were included in this blessing. Jacob said that the nation of Israel would use the names of the two sons of Joseph when they gave a blessing to others. He said that the emphasis would be on the way that the Lord was blessing the two sons of Joseph. However, the way that Jacob worded the statement, he placed Ephraim before Manasseh. That meant that Ephraim would become a leader among the tribes of Israel. In fact, the last prophecy in the Old Testament about Ephraim spoke about the way that the Lord will bless them in the future. Zechariah 10:6-7 says, "'I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I *am* the LORD their God, and I will hear them. *Those of* Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, their children shall see *it* and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD...'"

Israel then went on to tell Joseph what was going to happen and what had happened during the time that Joseph was in Egypt before his family came to Egypt. First, Israel said, “Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers...” Israel realized that he did not have long to live. However, that did not bring fear to his life because He had learned to trust God in all things. Instead of talking about his death, Israel gave a wonderful promise about the future. He told Joseph that the Lord was going to work in the nation of Israel and bring them back to the land of Canaan. The Lord had told Israel in Genesis 46:2-4, “Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, ‘Jacob, Jacob!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ So He said, ‘I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.’” Israel had been given a promise by God that the Lord would bring his descendants out of the land of Egypt. Israel could rejoice in that fact because he knew that the Lord would do exactly as He promised.

Israel then told Joseph that he would have the double inheritance in the land of Canaan when his descendants returned to the land of Canaan. Then Israel told Joseph about a victory that he had experienced during the time that Joseph was in the land of Egypt. Israel said that he had defeated the Amorites with his sword and bow during that time. This is not mentioned in any other place in the Bible but it does speak of the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise that God had made originally to Abraham. During the more than four hundred years that the descendants of Israel would be in Egypt the Amorites grew strong again and they had to be defeated again when the nation of Israel entered into the land. However, the Lord had earlier given Israel victory even though Israel and his family were very small in number. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the faith of Israel had grown after the Lord told him that his name would no longer be Jacob but he would be called Israel. The Lord spoke about what he would become and not what he was at that time. Israel provides a key example of the fact that our faith will grow as we learn to walk with the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this important lesson.

Israel Blessed the Sons of Leah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Israel grew as he learned to walk with the Lord. In this topic and the next, we will see that Israel gave a blessing to each of his sons during the last hours of his life before he died. We see that he began by blessing each of the sons of Leah.

Genesis 49:1-4 says, “And Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days: Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, and listen to Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it—He went up to my couch.’” Jacob began by telling all of his sons what would happen to them in the last days. As a result, God led Israel to tell his sons what would happen in the future in the various tribes that would develop among his sons. The Lord later fulfilled each of these prophecies.

Reuben was the oldest of all of his sons. Israel began by speaking about the things that were special regarding his life because of the fact that he was the oldest son. Because he was the oldest son, Israel said that Reuben was his might and the beginning of his strength. The word translated “might” means *to be firm* and is usually translated by strength or power. Nearly half of the uses of the word “strength” are used to speak of the firstborn and that is how it is used here. In contrast, in Isaiah 26-27, it speaks of the creative power of God. Israel said that as the oldest son that the firstborn status could have resulted in both dignity and power.

However, Israel said that the sinful choice of Reuben would prevent Reuben and also his descendants from excelling. In fact, the choice that he made showed that he was as unstable as water. Genesis 35:22 says, “And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard *about it*.” Here we see that he made the choice to have a sexual relationship with the concubine of his father. In 1 Chronicles 5:1 we read, “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he *was* indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright...” This verse points out the fact that Reuben was the firstborn, but he did not receive the birthright. Instead, the birthright was given to the sons of Joseph. Then we see that 1 Chronicles 5:2 points out a second consequence. That verse says, “...yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him *came* a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s...” David, Solomon and all of the kings of Judah came from Judah instead of Reuben. An even greater consequence was the fact that Christ was a descendant of Judah instead of being a descendant of Reuben. The choice of Reuben to defile the bed of his father had a serious consequence meant that Christ could not come from his family.

Genesis 49:5-9 says, “‘Simeon and Levi are brothers; Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?’” Here we see that Israel began to speak about the next three sons of Leah.

Simeon and Levi are mentioned together because of the choices that they had made when they took personal revenge on the men of Shechem for defiling their sister, Dinah. They lied to the men of Shechem and then took personal revenge on all of the men of the city instead of just the one who had defiled their sister. Genesis 34:25 says, “Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.” As a result, Israel made it clear that they had not asked him for advice about how they chose to deal with the men of Shechem. Israel did not want his honor to be united with their decision to kill all of the men because that was their own revenge. Israel particularly spoke about their anger and their self-will.

Jacob said that their anger was fierce and their wrath was cruel. The word translated “anger” is used to speak of enemies when it is used of people. As a result, they treated all of the men of Shechem like enemies even though only one of the men had sinned and defiled their sister. When they poured out their anger against the men of Shechem, Israel said that their wrath was cruel. The word translated “cruel” means to *show stubbornness so that the actions are hard to bear*. The word is used in Exodus 1:14 to speak about how the suffering that Egypt caused Israel was hard to bear. That verse says, “And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.” Israel said that because of these things that their descendants would be scattered later when they lived in the land of Israel.

In contrast, Israel had a much different prophecy when he spoke to Judah. He said that the other brothers and their descendants would praise Judah and his descendants. Israel also said that the hand of Judah would be on the neck of their enemies. The word translated “neck” is most commonly translated *stiff-necked*. However, the word is also used to speak of *God giving victory over such enemies*. 2 Samuel 22:41 says, “You have also given me the necks of my enemies, so that I destroyed those who hated me.” That entire chapter is known as the song of David and how the Lord had worked in his life. David, Solomon and all of the kings of Judah were descendants of Judah. That is why in the next sentence Israel said that all of his descendants would bow down before Judah. The word translated “a lion’s whelp” is the word for the *young lions that are born to a lion*. Israel said that the kings who came from Judah would have the strength of a young lion. However, he also said that no other family would rule Judah.

Genesis 49:10-15 says, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, and his border shall adjoin Sidon. Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between two burdens; He saw that rest was good, and that the land was pleasant; He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, and became a band of slaves.” This last part of the prophecy about Judah goes far beyond the kings that ruled Israel and Judah in the Old Testament. The scepter was the rod that a king used as he ruled.

The word translated “Shiloh” means *He who is or the One who brings* and was recognized as a title for Messiah by the Jews. That is why Revelation 5:5 says, “But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’” Christ is the One who could open the seal and rule in the millennium (1000 years) as explained in Revelation 20. The rest of Revelation 5 then summarizes the complete ministry of Christ. Revelation 5:9b says, “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” Revelation 5:12b says, “Worthy

is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” Then Revelation 5:13b says, “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!” Verse 9 says Christ redeemed us to God, verse 12 says He is the one who deserves all things and verse 13 says Christ will reign forever. The eternal rule of Christ is the complete fulfillment of this prophecy.

Israel went on to talk about the future of the final two sons of Leah. Zebulun would benefit from the sea trade. The territory that was later given to Zebulun by the casting of lots in Joshua 19:10-16 placed the tribe of Zebulun on the important trade route that ran from the Mediterranean Sea to the places to the east of the nation of Israel. As a result, this prophecy meant that his descendants would continue to benefit from trade passing through the land that they inherited throughout the time that they were in the land in the future. For many years, the city of Sidon was a very important place for the trade of ships that traveled on the Mediterranean Sea. Since the trade route went from Sidon through the land of Zebulun, the people would benefit as the traders went through their land.

Then Israel spoke about Issachar. The name “Issachar” means *there is recompense or give a man wages*. As a result, we see that the prophecy about the descendants of Issachar talks about the way that they would work. A donkey was the common work animal that carried heavy loads so Israel called Issachar a strong donkey. Donkeys often carry their heavy loads so that the loads are balanced with about half of the weight on each side so that it is easier to carry a heavy load. As a result, this was a tribe that would become known as a tribe that had learned to be strong workers. Their inheritance was next to the inheritance of Zebulun. These prophecies are all important but we especially want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the prophecy given regarding the One who would come from Judah is so important because of what these verses teach about the ministry of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Israel Blessed the Rest of His Sons

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the prophecy given regarding Judah is so important because of what those verses teach us about the ministry of Christ. In this topic, we will see that Israel then continued his prophecies about his remaining sons.

In Genesis 49:16-21 we read, “Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your salvation, O Lord! Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last. Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties. Naphtali is a deer let loose; he uses beautiful words.” Dan was the first son of Bilhah, the maid of Rachel. The name “Dan” means a *judge*. In these verses, we see that Israel said that the time would come when some of the descendants of Dan would serve as judges in the land of Israel. The best known of those judges was a judge that ruled during the time of the book of Judges. Judges 13:2 says, “Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren and had no children.” This verse says that Manoah was from the tribe of Dan. The son that was born to Manoah and his wife was Samson and his service as a judge in Israel is covered in Judges 13-16.

Israel then went on to say that Dan would be like a snake that was along a road or path. The fact that Israel used both serpent and viper which are different words for snakes and refer to different kinds of snakes show that he was making an important point to his sons. The skin of many snakes blends with the ground so that they are not noticed along a path or a road. This makes it possible for a snake to strike without warning. However, if the snake is not expecting something to come along the path, the snake may strike because the horse was unexpected. If a man is riding a horse, the horse will react if it is bitten on the front heel and the rider may slide backward and fall off the horse. The same thing happens when a judge gives his judgment because his judgment is sudden. Even though Samson made wrong choices during his life, in his death the Lord did bring salvation to Israel. Judges 16:28-30 says, “Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, ‘O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!’ And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.”

Next, Israel spoke about Gad. When Israel settled the land of Canaan, Gad was one of the tribes that was on the east side of the Jordan River. That meant that every time an army came from the east against Israel that Gad would be attacked before the enemy even crossed the Jordan River. This forced them to become strong fighters or get killed. We see some of the results in 1 Chronicles 12:8 where we read, “*Some* Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as gazelles on the mountains.” Then verse 14 adds, “These *were* from the sons of Gad, captains of the army; the least was over a hundred, and the greatest was over a thousand.” We see that some of the men of Gad became strong soldiers who were also able to lead many others in battle.

In contrast to the tribes that received their inheritance east of the Jordan River, the tribe of

Asher received their inheritance along the Mediterranean Sea. Since their land was close to the water, their crops were very plentiful. This meant that they were able to provide excellent food for the palace of the king because of their wonderful crops. The Lord gave the people of Naphtali a much different gift. The people of that tribe became known for the beautiful words that they spoke. An illustration of this gift can also be shown in the book of Judges. Deborah and Barak were two of the judges in Israel. After the Lord gave them victory over the king of Canaan who ruled in Hazor, Deborah and Barak wrote a beautiful song that is written in Judges 5. That city of Hazor was actually in the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali and they had brought part of the people of Israel under severe bondage for twenty years. The beautiful song in Judges 5 celebrated the victory that the Lord gave Israel over the army of Canaan defeating the army of Hazor after these many years of suffering.

The final two blessings that Israel gave were to Joseph and his two sons. In Genesis 49:22-27 we read, “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” Joseph had experienced much rejection by his brothers and others in Egypt yet the Lord had continued to bless him. Now his father said that the same thing would happen to his descendants in the future.

The word translated “bough” is used a total of 4906 times in the Old Testament. It is usually translated either *son* (2978 times) or *children* (1568 times). Most of the rest of the uses are related to those two words. Since this prophecy is given to both Joseph and his two sons and is a prophecy, this word is used to speak of Joseph and his two sons plus all of the generations to come. A bough is also one of the larger branches or a main branch of a tree. When a tree is planted by a spring of water, the tree is well watered and the main branches become strong branches. Psalm 1:3 says, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” As a result, a fruitful bough speaks of the blessing of the Lord that would come in the future. The descendants of Joseph would be strong, fruitful and a blessing to others.

Joseph had gone through much suffering during the early part of his life. Genesis 42:21 says, “Then they said to one another, ‘We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.’” This suffering was the result of the way the brothers treated Joseph. Genesis 37:4 and 37:24 say, “But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. . . Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was* no water in it.” Finally they sold Joseph as a slave and he was taken to Egypt and resold to Potiphar. Instead of turning to evil, Joseph had his faith and trust in the Lord. Joseph told the wife of Potiphar in Genesis 39:9, “‘*There is* no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’” Joseph did not yield to temptation but he remained strong because he depended on the strength that God provided.

Then Israel went on to speak of the future blessing that would come on Joseph and his family. This blessing would come on Joseph from the Mighty God of Jacob. He is the One who would

send the One who is the Shepherd and Stone of Israel as well as the foundation stone for all true believers. The Lord would continue to be the source of his help in the future. In fact, the Lord would bless Joseph and his descendants with great blessings. Israel said that would be the blessings that came from the heaven above which speaks of the fact that they would come from the Lord. The Lord would extend this blessing to the depths of the earth. He would also bless Joseph with many descendants some of whom would have a key part in delivering Israel from their enemies such as Gideon and Samuel. Israel said that the blessings that would be on the family of Joseph would be even greater than the blessings that had been passed down from his fathers to their descendants. In fact, they would stretch to the boundary of the eternal promises. Joseph had been separated from his brothers by their hatred and anger. However, the Lord would provide him with a special blessing instead.

In contrast, the descendants of Benjamin would be known for their power and military might here on this earth. Israel compared the descendants of Benjamin to a ravenous wolf. The word translated "ravenous" means to *seize, to tear the flesh and to consume it*. This tribe thought that they could defeat an enemy in the morning and then divide the spoils among themselves in the evening. In Judges 20:16 the tribe of Benjamin depended on military might, "Among all this people were seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss." They thought that they could depend on these men for military victory. Even though the tribe was almost completely destroyed, Saul was from that tribe and became the first king of Israel. Saul also depended on military strength and disobeyed the Lord. The Lord told Saul through Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:23, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the prophecies of Israel showed how the descendants of Benjamin would be judged for depending on their own strength while those of Joseph would be greatly blessed because he chose to be obedient to the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Israel Died and Was Buried

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the descendants of Joseph and Benjamin would have a very different worldly and eternal focus even though they were full brothers. Once Israel had finished telling his twelve sons what would happen in their futures, we see that he died and was buried by his sons. That will be the focus of this topic.

Genesis 49:28-33 says, “All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing. Then he charged them and said to them: ‘I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of Heth.’ And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.” Here we see that Israel finished giving a blessing to each of his twelve sons and he also gave prophecies about their individual futures as they were different for each tribe.

Then Israel told his children that it was time for him to die and gave instructions about his burial. He wanted his body to be buried in the same cave where Abraham, Isaac and their wives were buried. That was also the place where he had buried Leah. In death, Leah had received the thing that she had desired throughout their marriage. Israel recognized her right as the older sister and buried her where he wanted to be buried when he died. This burial place had been purchased from Ephron, the Hittite. This purchased possession had been witnessed by the sons of Heth and so it was recognized by the people of the area as the possession of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and included both the cave and the field which surrounded it.

Then we see the way that Israel finished his life. He finished what he was saying to his sons. He had apparently been sitting on the bed with his feet on the floor as he talked to his sons. Once he finished talking, he put his feet back into the bed and breathed his last. His life on this earth was completed and he was gathered to his people. This word refers to death but also includes the fact that our lives continue beyond death and the reuniting with those who died at an earlier time. When the Lord later appeared to Moses, He said in Exodus 3:6, “Moreover He said, ‘I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” Christ fully explained this verse when He said in Matthew 22:32, “‘...I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”” All who have a strong belief in the resurrection can have peace when they face death and we see that in the life of Israel.

Genesis 50:1-6 says, “Then Joseph fell on his father’s face, and wept over him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days. Now when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, ‘If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying, “My father made me swear, saying, ‘Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.’ Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I

will come back.” And Pharaoh said, ‘Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.’” Here we see the love that Joseph had for his father. He showed that love by his actions. Joseph knew that he would miss his father even though he would see him again in the future.

Joseph also wanted to obey the instruction of his father to bury his body in the same cave where Abraham and Isaac were buried. We see that the Egyptians had specific things that they did to embalm the body of a person of importance to prepare the body for burial. That process was certainly needed in order to take the body of Israel back to the land of Canaan so that he could be buried in the burial place of his fathers. The Egyptian process to prepare a body that they wanted to preserve as a mummy took a period of forty days. They had to take the inner parts out of the body, dry the rest of the body and then wrap the body for burial. We see that Joseph gave his servants the command to have the physicians of Egypt do that preparation of the body of his father. The Egyptian custom was to have a period of seventy days of mourning for one who had died so the embalming of the body was completed and then additional time was allowed for the period of mourning to be complete.

Then, Joseph had to arrange with the men of the household of Pharaoh for him to be gone for the time that it took to travel from Egypt to Canaan, bury the body and then return to the land of Egypt. Joseph asked the men of the household of Pharaoh to make the arrangements with Pharaoh so that he would have official permission from Pharaoh to be gone for that length of time. Joseph had those who spoke tell Pharaoh what Israel had asked Joseph to promise when he said, “My father made me swear, saying, ‘Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.’” Here we see that Israel had made preparations for the burial of his body before he left the land of Canaan. He had dug the grave inside the cave that was in the field of Machpelah. That was where his father wanted to be buried and so the hole for the burial had already been dug. Pharaoh told Joseph that he had permission to do exactly as he had promised his father. There were five years more of the famine after Israel arrived in Egypt but he had lived in Egypt for a total of seventeen years so this was twelve years after the end of the famine.

Genesis 50:7-14 says, “So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father’s house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering. Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, ‘This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians.’ Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them. For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place. And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.” Here we see that a large group of people traveled with Joseph to bury Israel.

This group included all of the brothers of Joseph and the adult members of his family. The brothers of Joseph did not take their younger children, their flocks or their herds with them but left them in Egypt. We also see that Pharaoh sent a much larger group of people to mourn the death of Israel and bury him. This included all of the elders of the land of Egypt and all of the elders of the servants in his household. Pharaoh also sent chariots and horsemen with this group so that everyone would be protected. As a result, this was a very large group that traveled from Egypt to the land of Canaan for the burial.

This large group of people all arrived at the threshing floor of Atad. The threshing floor was the place where people would take their grain and separate the wheat from the small pieces of straw called chaff. This was located on the west side of the Jordan River between the Jordan and Jericho. The entire large group spent seven days at this location to mourn the death of Israel. This was a very sorrowful time for all of those who had come with Joseph and his brothers. Many Canaanites saw the family of Israel and the Egyptians mourning his death. As a result, they named the place, Abel Mizraim, which means meadow of Egypt. That was what Israel had requested and so his sons did exactly as he had requested.

Then the sons took the body of Israel and traveled to the field of Machpelah which was near the city of Hebron. This meant that the field and cave of Machpelah is about nineteen miles south of the city of Jerusalem. The fact that this large group spent seven days mourning the death of Israel in Abel Mizraim meant that they did not take the most direct route to the burial place but fulfilled the desire of Israel for his sons to have a time of mourning at Abel Mizraim. Because the Canaanites gave this name to this event shows that this death also had an impact on them even though Israel had lived in tents his entire time in the land of Canaan. This area was also called Mamre. Genesis 23:17-18 says, “So the field of Ephron which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field and the cave which *was* in it, and all the trees that *were* in the field, which *were* within all the surrounding borders, were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.” The people of Canaan recognized that this land belonged to the family of Abraham because there had been many witnesses of the purchase. This reminded the nation of Israel the entire time that they were in the land of Egypt of the land that God had promised to them. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the burial of Israel in Canaan was an important event in the history of the nation of Israel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why this gave hope to Israel even when they suffered greatly in Egypt.

Joseph Finished His Life and Expressed Hope About the Future

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the fact that Israel chose to be buried in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob gave Israel hope even when they later suffered in the land of Egypt. Joseph also made a choice to remind Israel of this hope. In this topic, we will see what happened after Joseph and his brothers returned from Canaan.

Genesis 50:15-18 says, “When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.’ So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, ‘Before your father died he commanded, saying, “Thus you shall say to Joseph: ‘I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.’” Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, ‘Behold, we are your servants.’” In these verses we see a very important lesson about the way that fear can affect the lives of people for many years. Joseph had been in Egypt for twenty-two years before his father and brothers moved to Egypt. Then Israel had lived an additional seventeen years in Egypt. That meant that Joseph was now fifty-six years old and it had been thirty-nine years since the brothers had sold him as a slave.

In these verses, we see that the brothers had been living in fear from the time that they had found out that Joseph was the ruler in Egypt because they did not know what Joseph would do when their father died. We see that throughout that time the brothers thought that Joseph might hate them and only be waiting until after their father died in order to take revenge on them for their mistreatment and sale of him into slavery. They had apparently mentioned this fear to their father as well because they said that their father had given them a command to ask Joseph to forgive them. They came and told Joseph what their father had said and then asked Joseph to forgive them. Joseph had told them in Genesis 45:5-8, ““But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”” Joseph had his faith in God and was so shocked at the fear of his brothers that he cried when they made this request.

The brothers did not understand the fact that he was crying because of their fear. Instead they reacted and came and fell down in front of him. Then they said, “Behold, we are your servants.”” Here we see the full power of guilt and fear in the hearts of people. His brothers could not accept the forgiveness given by Joseph seventeen years earlier but had continued to live in fear and guilt throughout that time. Joseph had told them that God was the One who had sent him to Egypt so that he could preserve their lives. He had provided them with food throughout the famine. He had preserved their lives but their lives were still controlled by fear and guilt. This is a good illustration of the fact that many people continue to live in guilt long after they have come to God through Christ in repentance and faith and have been forgiven. They are unable to enjoy the peace that God wants them to experience.

Then Joseph said in Genesis 50:19-21, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to

bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” Joseph had wept in sorrow because he was saddened by the fact that his brothers had lived in fear and guilt throughout all those years. As a result, he wanted to give them words of comfort and peace so that they would not need to live in fear and guilt any longer. The very first thing Joseph told them was, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?” Here we see that Joseph wanted them to be able to let go of their fear and guilt. He wanted them to understand genuine forgiveness. True forgiveness has its source in the love of God. The Father showed that forgiveness when He sent His Son to die in our place and for our sin so that when we come to Him through Christ we can have our sins blotted out and He can choose to remember them no more.

Joseph went on to say that what they had meant for evil that God had meant it for good because His plan was to save many alive. Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Although these verses were written about 1900 years later, they also explain what the Lord was doing in the life of Joseph during those first thirteen years to prepare him to save many people alive. The Lord was allowing those things to happen in the life of Joseph to develop his godly character and prepare him to depend on the wisdom of the Lord instead of his own strength. Joseph would not have been an effective leader in his own strength. The anger resulting from the ways that Joseph was mistreated both by his brothers and then in Egypt would have controlled his heart and that would have affected his ability to follow the Lord in humility and allow the Lord to work through his life.

Joseph understood that his brothers needed personal encouragement from him as he saw how fear was still controlling their lives. He began by telling them that God was the One who was working the entire time. God had sent him to Egypt to save many people alive. Then Joseph began to talk about their fear. He told his brothers that they did not need to be afraid. Fear is the result of depending on self instead of the Lord. Joseph had learned to trust the Lord and so he wanted his brothers to know that they did not need to have fear. He went on to tell his brothers that he would provide for them and their children. His actions and his words were in agreement. The word translated “comforted” is used by David in Psalm 23:4 where we read, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” In addition, we read that Joseph spoke kindly to his brothers. The word translated “kindly” is translated *heart* 508 times of the 592 times the word is used. A few times it speaks of the heart that pumps the blood throughout our body but most of the uses speak about the whole inner man. The very first use is in Genesis 6:5 where we read, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” In many verses the word is used to speak of the total inner man. In this verse, we see that Joseph spoke with such kindness that it touched the inner man of his brothers and they felt peace.

Genesis 50:22-26 concludes the book of Genesis by saying, “So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father’s household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Joseph saw Ephraim’s children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph’s knees. And Joseph said to his brethren, ‘I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.’ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.’ So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Joseph lived a total of one hundred and ten years and even had the privilege of enjoying his great-grandchildren as they

grew.

We see that Joseph concluded his life by reminding his family about the promises of God as they looked toward the future. He realized that he was coming to the end of his life and so he reminded his family about the promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God had told Abraham in Genesis 15:13, “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years...’” God added in Genesis 15:16, “...But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” God then said in Genesis 15:18, “On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...’” Joseph wanted his family to remember that God had promised them the land of Canaan and that they would only be in Egypt for about four hundred years before God would take them back to that land He had promised them.

Joseph then showed his confidence in the promise of God by having the leaders of the developing nation of Israel take an oath and make a promise to him. That oath was made after Joseph said, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” Here we see that Joseph showed by his example that he knew God would carry out the promise that had been made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Exodus 13:19 says, “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, ‘God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.’” Then Joshua 24:32 says, “The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.” This promise to Joseph was certainly an encouragement to Israel even during their time of suffering in Egypt. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Joseph gave hope to the people of Israel that would continue to comfort and encourage them until the time when God brought them out of the land of Egypt and took them to the land of Canaan. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why the words of Joseph were so important to Israel.