

February 24, 2019

Genesis 45:1-15: Reunited

Revealed (Gen. 45:1-4). Genesis 45 begins with an emotional scene. The text describes the moment this way, “Joseph could no longer keep his composure . . .” (Gen. 45:1). What has brought Joseph to this point? A review of the previous chapters in Genesis describes several events that have converged to bring Joseph to this moment of intense emotion. Two of those events are: 1) after being sold and transported to Egypt, Joseph sees his brothers for this first time in years (Gen. 42:6 ff.); and, 2) Joseph is moved by Judah’s plea for his brother, Benjamin (Gen. 44:18 ff.). The weight of these episodes causes Joseph to cry uncontrollably. It is at this point that Joseph reveals who he is. Up to this point, his brothers had no idea that their brother, Joseph, was still alive, much less that he was now the second in command in Egypt. They were so stunned at this discovery, in fact, when Joseph revealed who he was, they could not speak because they were afraid (Gen. 45:3). Perhaps they were concerned about what Joseph would do to them because of how they treated him previously.

Remnant (Gen. 45:5-8). One can certainly imagine that Joseph’s response stunned his brothers. Instead of anger or hatred or revenge, Joseph shared with them about God’s work in his situation. Two concepts stand out in these verses. First, Joseph shared with his brothers what he had come to understand: God had sent him to Egypt (Gen. 45:5, 7). This is a profound statement of Joseph’s recognition of the work of God. Second, Joseph also described what was coming in terms of the severity of the famine (Gen. 45:6). Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh’s dream. He knew that the famine would last for seven years. He could help his family survive.

Reunion (Gen. 45:9-13). Based on this information, Joseph encouraged his brothers to return to their home and tell this news to their father (Gen. 45:9). Furthermore, Joseph told his brothers to tell their father, Israel, that he should make plans to come to Egypt. He should bring all of his family and all of his livestock. Joseph had already identified an area where they could live and he would be able to watch out for them as the famine continued (Gen. 45:11).

Restored (Gen. 45:14-15). The final scene of the text for this week’s lesson shows a beautiful picture of restoration. After having shared everything he had gone through and how God had brought him to this place, Joseph hugged his brothers and wept (Gen. 45:14-15). This is quite a contrast to the last time Joseph and his brothers were together! Then, they were plotting his death before they decided to sell him to a group of Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:27). Now, Joseph is the second in command in the land of Egypt. Through all of this, Joseph recognized the hand of God.

Conclusion

The story of Joseph is the focus of the last portion of the book of Genesis. From Joseph’s life, believers today are reminded of two key spiritual truths. First, God really is with us in life’s ups and downs. Wherever Joseph went, God was present. Second, as Joseph himself explained, “Therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God” (Gen. 45:8). Joseph understood fully that God was in charge and that His plan was being fulfilled. Believers today can trust those same realities as they walk with God.