

SIGNED, SEALED, AND DELIVERED**Genesis 46-48**

Intro: Well, here we are at the end of this study from the life of Joseph. Back when we started this, we were transitioning from the poinsettias of Christmas to the wonderful visuals Sally made representing the coat of many colors. Beginning in Genesis 37 and arriving today at Genesis 48, we've learned the people God used here in the Bible were just like us as they went from an almost made for TV succession of Dreams, Deceptions, Disasters, Detours, and Deliverance. We've finally arrived at the deliverance part and it's been a hard fought and sometime excruciating battle to get here. Joseph was sold into slavery and experienced numerous setbacks and hardships but it was all for the deliverance of his people, and actually all of humanity. Jacob had his heart cruelly broken by the antics of his madly jealous sons. And his sons, in turn, had their actions turn around and bring extensive terror upon them as their treachery came home to roost. God used the actions of fallen people to bring the perfect solution that ultimately came in Jesus Christ.

But I get ahead of myself. We have three chapters to cover, so we best get going. Don't worry, I'm not going to even come close to reading all of the text – that's why I've been having your read ahead. Instead we'll take snippets from each chapter and draw some conclusions to these Lessons from Joseph. And one of the most powerful ones comes right away in the first verses of chapter 46. . .

Do not be afraid, God is with you

- Jacob had made many moves without God's blessing in his life – he didn't want this to be one of them. His grandfather, Abraham (Genesis 12:10-20) had gone to Egypt when famine hit Canaan and had seen Pharaoh requisition his wife Sarah. His father Isaac had considered going to Egypt when famine again hit Canaan but had been expressly prevented from going by God (Genesis 26:1-6). So, Jacob wanted to make sure it was the right move to go to see his long-lost son who was now regent of all of Egypt. So, he inquired of God. Here is how it reads:

So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."

Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. So Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt, taking with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan. Jacob brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring. Genesis 46:1-7 (NIV)

- The catalogue of names that make up most of the next 20 verses is a picture of the extent of Jacob's mass move. It was a huge undertaking and he moved forward in faith.
- Here's the point: God gave the go ahead and Jacob packed up everyone, and all his belongings, rounded up all his herds and flocks and made tracks for Egypt. He didn't make an exploratory run, just to make sure God knew what he was talking about – he jumped in with both feet. You can count on God's direction. He keeps his promises. Some of Jesus's final words to his disciples on the mountain top before he returned to his Heavenly Father were, *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* Matthew 28:20b. He meant that. When we go out, following his direction – we need to GO, without reservation.
- As the people of God, we have this rock-solid assurance ABC, do not be afraid, God is with us. We've seen it. The leaders who moved to this property in 1969 knew God would be with them – and he has been. Our building was here for years before most of the development grew around us. Now we are strategically in place to impact that community. We best not miss the opportunity. Three years ago, we took the steps to renovate this building to bring it up to where it should be. We stepped out in faith, knowing God was with us and he moved mightily. Now we have a beautiful facility ready for ministry. Practically every night this past week, something was happening here. God is with us and he's working. What else is he directing us to do? Keep your spiritual ears open for his plans for us.
- And then we see Joseph make no apologies for his family as he introduces them to the people of Egypt with something to the effect of . . .

They're a rough bunch, but they're my family

- Jacob sent Judah ahead to find the way and he assured that Joseph was waiting for his elderly dad and what a reunion it was! The words used here are poignant, *As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.* Genesis 46:29b. It was a sweet reunion, full of deep emotion. And then Joseph went about introducing his birth people to his adopted people.
- It is pointed out here that Egyptians detested shepherds (Genesis 46:34). Yet Joseph, here and in the opening of chapter 47 points out that his family are herdsmen and shepherds. He doesn't mince words. They're his family and this is what they do. Instead of despising Jacob and his huge family, Pharaoh gives them the best land in Egypt (the background I'm using for the PowerPoint slides is from the region of Egypt that was in Joseph's day the Land of Goshen—you can see it's beautiful). They are to take their livestock there and thrive. Not only that, but the very best among them will become the exclusive herdsmen for Pharaoh himself. Obviously, he's not at all put off by the occupation of Joseph's family. Joseph's wonderful reputation preceded him and his pride in his imperfect family was obvious, the result was a royal and effusive welcome for them.
- Be proud of your people. Be proud of your friends. Be proud of your parents. Be proud of your kids. Your pride in them will lift them up. As you do that, you'll see as Joseph and his family did that . . .

God provides

- Listen, *So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children.* Genesis 47:11-12. Jacob's family not only got the best land in Egypt, but they became the royal herdsmen. And then they enjoyed the fruit of the land. They were set!
- I'm not going to read it, but in Genesis 47:13-25 we see that Joseph shrewdly stewarded the grain he had stockpiled all those years of plenty before the famine. I think it would take a lot more study of the culture of the day, and the economic practices of an ancient middle eastern kingdom to point out that Joseph wasn't actually pulling the entire populous into servitude. He was actually making sure there was adequate provision. In the end, there was grain for seed when the famine ended and harvests would resume. There was good reason Pharaoh had put Joseph in charge. This is what God does through the faithful servants he provides. We too can be like Joseph as we wisely steward the resources he puts at our disposal. The operative word is "wisely", because, the truth is, all we have is God's.
- We also see that . . .

God preserves

- We've already seen how God did this for Joseph's family and then for all of Egypt – by his provision, they were preserved. But in Genesis 48 Jacob testifies even more to God's preserving plan. Listen, *Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.'* Genesis 48:3-4.
- We've said it before – but it bears repeating lest we forget, God keeps his promises. God promised to make Jacob fruitful and he did. He made him fruitful and preserved his legacy. From Jacob's line would not only come the Children of Israel but the coming of a Savior for all of humanity. Salvation would be the possession of all who would avail themselves of it. That's because . . .

God redeems

- Joseph then brings his sons to Jacob for a blessing and Jacob's prayer of blessing begins with,
*"May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully,
the God who has been my shepherd
all my life to this day,
the Angel who has delivered me from all harm
—may he bless these boys.
May they be called by my name*

*and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,
and may they increase greatly
on the earth.” Genesis 48:15-16.*

- Jacob is proclaiming that these sons of the one he had thought lost decades before, were proof of the redemption of God that he enjoyed and would increase over all the earth. That’s what God does. His plan was unfolding centuries before the first Christmas and with the first Easter that redemption has blossomed for the next two centuries. God is still in the redemption business. Spread the word while there is still time!
- And finally . . .

The last shall be first

- Jacob’s blessing bears this out: *Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.” Then Joseph removed them from Israel’s knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel’s left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them close to him. But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim’s head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. . . . When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. Joseph said to him, “No, my father, 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 too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.” He blessed them that day and said, “In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’” So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. Genesis 48:10-14, 17-20.* Israel was one and the same with the Jacob who had stolen the blessing of the first born from his older brother Esau (Genesis 27). It was God’s plan. In this case Jacob knew that this blessing for the younger grandson over the older grandson was intentional.
- This sounds like something Jesus said in a couple of his teachings. One time he said, *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.* Matthew 19:29-30. Another time, he gave the parable of the workers who were hired throughout the day. The ones who began at daybreak were hired for a denarius. But at the end of the day when the workers were being paid, those who had worked an hour received the same denarius as the ones who worked 12. When they confronted him with the unfairness of the situation the landowner replied with *‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*” Matthew 20:13-16. It’s the way it is in the kingdom of God – those who are, in the eyes of the world, last, will be first.
- And Joseph should have known better. His entire life had born it out. He was youngest yet the favorite son, who had dreams that placed him firmly above his entire family. Then as a slave, he had risen to be the lord over all the land. Jacob’s reversal of blessing had to be Ah Ha! moment for him. And if it wasn’t, Jacob’s words at the end of the blessing should have made it clear as he received more inheritance of land back in the homeland of Canaan.
- The last shall be first. So, when you feel beaten down, or even persecuted for **whose** you are, remember, the last shall be first. We will be rewarded in heaven.

Conclusion: So that’s it, ABC. Lessons from Joseph – Signed, Sealed & Delivered on this last day of March, 2019. Let’s live on the promises we’ve found here. Amen.