

January 30, 2022

“Joseph Transmits Abraham’s Promise”
Lesson 4 of Unit

Genesis 50:15-26

Intro

Today’s lesson are the verses that finish the book of Genesis. Last week’s lesson left off in the second year of the famine that Joseph had prepared for. His father Jacob has come to Egypt at Joseph’s request, and we find that he is 130 years old. He lives in Egypt for 17 years before dying. By his request, he is taken back to Canaan to be buried in the same cave where the previous patriarchs are buried.

Now that Jacob is dead, Joseph’s brothers worry that Joseph will now take revenge on them. Today’s passage is about how the brothers choose to deal with that fear, and Joseph’s response to them, as well as the end of his life.

Read Genesis 50:15-26

1. vs. 15: The brothers express fear that Joseph will “get back” at them, now that Jacob has died
 - It’s been 17 years—they have been holding on to this fear for a long time
 - This says more about the brothers than about Joseph
 - They are still unable to accept Joseph’s forgiveness (45:5-8)
 - They don’t appear able to forgive themselves for what they have done
 - Joseph’s actions toward his brothers show he doesn’t hold grudges
 - The brothers thoughts here show that they have a hard time believing that

2. vs. 16: The brothers send some messenger to Joseph
 - They don’t go talk to him about their fears/concerns themselves
 - If they truly fear for their lives, this method does give them a chance to see how Joseph will react to the message
 - The “message” is about what Jacob (supposedly) said before he dies
 - This isn’t recorded anywhere, though it’s possible Jacob said this to them
 - Given what we have seen of the brothers’ actions, however, another possibility exists
 - They have made this “message” up
 - Since Scripture doesn’t tell us either way, we can’t know for sure
 - It would be wrong to accuse them of something that we don’t know is true

3. vs. 17: The “message” is for Joseph to forgive the brothers of the wrongs they have done him
 - Joseph’s response is to weep
 - likely this is because he is hurt that they could think they are still unforgiven
 - Joseph has taken care of them and their families for years
 - That in itself is a kind of forgiveness
 - This request for forgiveness shows that the brothers’ sense of guilt and remorse are strong

4. vs. 18: The brothers fulfill Joseph’s prophecy.
 - He predicted in Gen. 37 that his brothers and father would bow down to him
 - They also call themselves Joseph’s slaves, who sold him into slavery

5. vs. 19: Joseph both tried to assure them, but also tells why
He won't hurt them because he is not God
Joseph understands that vengeance and judgment belong to God, not to man
Moses says this same thing over 400 years later in Deut. 32:35
This verse is also quoted twice in the NT (Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30)
6. vs. 20: Joseph sees the big picture; his brothers see only themselves
The brothers are concerned for their lives
Joseph sees that what happened was used by God to benefit many
Thousands of Egyptians and Israelites were saved from famine
God will use even negative situations to accomplish His will
7. vs. 21: Joseph repeats "Don't be afraid" from vs. 19
The repetition must help the brothers know Joseph is not going to hurt them
He also promises to provide for them and their families
He's been doing this for the last 17 years
He's not going to stop now
8. vs. 22: Joseph's life comes to an end in these last 4 verses
This verse tells us that he stayed in Egypt until his death
There was no reason to leave
The famine was past, and they are living in a good fertile area
Joseph dies at age 110
He was 39 when Jacob was brought to Egypt from Canaan
Jacob died 17 years later, so Jacob was 56
It's been another 54 years since Jacob died
This shows that Joseph has kept his word to his brothers
They didn't need to fear—he would care for the families
9. vs. 23: Joseph has lived long enough to see his great-grandchildren
The grandchildren of his son Manasseh appear to get a special honor
They are placed "at birth on Joseph's knees"
This indicates they are being treated as being "adopted" / specially honored
Joseph may be doing this because of Jacob's blessings on his sons
Jacob blessed Ephraim, the younger, with the greater blessing
Joseph may be trying to honor / bless his older son and his children
10. vs. 24: Joseph reminds his brothers of God's promise
Abraham's descendants will receive the land of Canaan
Abraham died about 75 years before Joseph was born; he never saw him
But the promise has been passed on faithfully to all since that time
The promise was also given to Isaac (Gen. 26:3) and to Jacob (35:12, 48:3-4)

11. vs. 25: Joseph wants his bones taken back to Canaan when the Israelites leave Egypt
This shows that Joseph knows they will be going back at some point
It also shows that he identifies with the Israelites, in wanting to be buried in that land
It's so important that he makes them swear an oath!
Moses does take Joseph's bones as the Exodus begins
Joseph is buried at Shechem (Josh. 24:32), part of Manasseh's assigned land
12. vs. 26: The usual procedures are done after Joseph dies
He is embalmed and put into a coffin

Application: Two things stand out from this passage.

- 1) Joseph's character is godly from start to finish. He lives "above" the ugliness of life, so to speak. He devotes himself to following God and doing his best in all situations. Because of his devotion, he is able to forgive his brothers for a really terrible thing that they do to him. His devotion also adds weight to the oath that he makes his brothers swear to, to bring his bones back to Canaan. How can one reject the wishes of such a godly person? Joseph's actions are the best example of what we are called to be like as we live our Christian lives.
- 2) God keeps his promises. Some that have been made have already been fulfilled, like the promise of a Messiah who would save His people from their sins. Some that have been made have not come to be yet, like the second coming of Christ and the eternal establishment of His kingdom. If God makes a promise, He will do what He says. Peter reminds us of that in 2 Peter 3. God always keeps his promises.

Prayer: Father God, thank you that You are a faithful God who keeps Your promises. We are faulty humans who struggle, and yet You love us anyway. Thank you for your forgiveness; help us to forgive others likewise. In Jesus' name, Amen.