



Genesis – 43:1 - 44:34
(43:26-44:13)
The Second Test
(Lesson #54)

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Joseph's Timeline

Event	Joseph's Age	Genesis
Joseph's father moves family from Haran	6	31:17-21
Joseph is sold into slavery	<u>17</u> / Jac 108	37:12-36
Joseph interprets the dreams of cupbearer and baker while in prison	28	41:1
Joseph's grandfather Isaac dies	29 / Jac 120	35:28-29
Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is released from prison	<u>30</u>	41:46
Seven years of plenty, Manasseh and Ephraim born during this time	30-37	41:47-52
Seven years of famine	37-44	41:47-52
Joseph and Jacob reunite (2 years into famine), and family moves family to Egypt	39 / Jac 130	45:6, 47:9, 28
Jacob dies	56 / Jac 147	47:28
Joseph dies	<u>110</u>	50:22-26

Twenty-Seven Point Outline for chapters 43-44:

11. Joseph comes home at noon, the brothers bow before him, present their gift, and discuss the wellbeing of their father (43:26-28)
12. Joseph engages with Benjamin and is momentarily overcome with emotion (43:29-30)
13. At Joseph's direction the food is served to the entire group (43:31-34)
14. Joseph then directs his steward to fill each man's sack with grain, restore their money in their sacks, and put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack (44:1-2)
15. The eleven brothers leave for Canaan early the following morning (44:3)
16. Joseph directs his steward to overtake them and accuse them of stealing his cup (44:4-5)
17. The steward overtakes them and makes the accusation of theft of the cup (44:6)
18. The brothers deny that they stole the cup (44:7-8)
19. The brothers declare that if any of them have the cup that person shall die, and they will all become slaves (44:9)
20. The steward says, no the one who has the cup shall become a slave, the rest will be free to go (44:10)
21. The steward searched their bags and the cup was found in Benjamin's bag (44:11-12)
22. They tore their clothes and returned to the city (44:13)
23. They arrive back at the Lord of the land's home and fall to the ground before him (44:14)
24. Joseph feigns amazement at their crime (44:15)
25. Judah accepts responsibility and declares that they are all the Lord of the land's servants (44:16)
26. The Lord of the land declares no, only the guilty party will be punished, the rest are free to go (44:17)
27. Judah explains how devastating this will be for his father and offers himself in place of Benjamin (18-34)

43:26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. **27** And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" **28** They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves. **29** And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!"

Vs 26 - Then Joseph comes home. I do not suppose this is like when I come home from work, but I suspect it was accompanied by much more pomp and circumstance.

The eleven brothers are ready. They **brought the gift** into the house that they had **prepared in Canaan**, and **assembled a few moments ago**. They bring it into the house and present it to Joseph.

Then all eleven of them **bowed down to him to the ground**. Here is the **second time** we are told, in fulfillment of the dreams that God had given Joseph 22 years earlier the brothers bow down to Joseph.

The first dream:

"Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." (Ge 37:7 ESV)

The second dream:

"Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." (Ge 37:9 ESV)

APPLICATION: You remember what I said two weeks ago. When it comes to prophetic utterances and fulfillment, God's batting average is 100%. If God says it we can rest assured it will come to pass!

That means we can claim promises yet in our future with absolutely certainty. Paul said this to **church in Corinth:**

"51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1Co 15:51-54 ESV)

This day, the day when death is swallowed up in victory is a certainty for God's people. The God who cannot lie and has never failed on fulfilling a prophecy will keep his word.

Vs 27 - As you **consider what happens next**. Put yourself in Joseph's shoes.

The **main thing you have been** concerned about, Benjamin, is no longer a concern. Benjamin is here, Benjamin appears to be doing well.

For a moment, Joseph shifts his concern to his father, he shifts his concern to Jacob. He asks the brothers, is your father well, the old man. **Is he still alive?**

What in the world are these brothers to make of all this **hospitality**? This is so out of the norm. Why in the world is the **Lord of the land** so interested in the welfare of their father.

Why is he hosting this massive lunch? I have no idea what was going through their minds.

APPLICATION: In any event, we have a beautiful picture of familial love and hospitality.

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling (1 Pet 4:7-9, ESV).

Vs 28 - The brothers respond, Yes, your servant our father is well, and yes he is still alive.

Again, the third time: *they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves.*

Joseph would have **never imagined the path** that was going to bring this to **fulfillment**, but none the less, here we are, the brothers bow down to Joseph! Again!

Vs 29 - Then it seems, for the first time, he **focuses his attention** on his blood brother, born of Rachel, Benjamin. He then asks, *"Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?"*

And adds: *God (Elohim) be gracious to you my son!*

These are the first words between these two blood brothers in 22 years, and here Joseph addresses his little brother.

Joseph was **17 years old when he was sold into slavery**, there is likely **8-10 years** between Joseph and Benjamin. When he last saw his **blood brother**, Benjamin was likely **around 7-9 years old!**

Surely the brothers are wondering what is all the talk about **Elohim** out of these Egyptians?

APPLICATION: Because the text has focused our attention on grace. I want to say just a couple of things.

Grace is one of the main themes of the New Testament and of the Gospel. Grace has been defined as unmerited, unearned favor. It is different from mercy. Mercy means we do not get what we deserve (thank God for His mercy). Grace means we get what we do not deserve.

Some, to help remember what the word grace really means, have turned the word into an acrostic:

G – God’s

R - Riches

A - At

C - Christ

E – Expense

The acrostic reminds us that grace is not free, although we receive it freely, it cost Christ his life to offer it.

Two verses about grace:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God," (Eph 2:8 ESV)

"and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Ro 3:24 ESV)

Back to our text...

30 Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there. 31 Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food." 32 They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.

Vs 30 – This whole event draws out a great deal of love and compassion for his younger brother (Benjamin) and for the second time, Joseph is overcome with emotions and he begins to weep.

Once again, he quickly leaves the presence of his brothers and finds a place to weep in solitude. In Genesis, it is recorded on five separate occasions that Joseph wept (42:24, 43:30, 45:1-2, 45:14-15, 50:17).

Vs 31 - So Joseph gathers himself, he pulls himself together, he gets himself under control, he washes his face, no doubt attempting to carefully control his emotions and he orders: **"Serve the food!"**

You can imagine that this is likely **quite a production**.

Vs 32 - records three separations and even explains why.

- The second most powerful man in Egypt ate by himself.
- The 11 brothers ate by themselves.
- The Egyptian servants ate by themselves. For they would not eat with the Hebrews for it was an abomination to the Egyptians.

Look at all that is happening here:

- 1) The Egyptian slaves will not eat with Joseph's brothers because they are Hebrews, it is an abomination for them to eat with the Hebrews.
- 2) The Egyptian servants will not eat with Joseph for the very same reason (although the brothers likely assumed it was Joseph's rank that prevented them from eating with him).
- 3) Joseph chooses not to eat with his brothers, for he is still playing a role. As we will see, he has two more tests that he plans to administer:
 - A. As you think about it being an abomination for the Egyptians to eat with Hebrews. This is **at least one of the reasons** God is sending the nation of Israel to Egypt, **here they can grow into a mighty nation**, protected by, yet unaffected by, the pagan nation around them.
 - B. There is some irony here, for the **Jews would make it an abomination to eat with gentiles**, visit in the **homes of gentiles**, or even **associate with gentiles**.

This command is not found in the Old Testament, yet it was a practice in Jesus' day. Here is how Peter described it to Cornelius:

"And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean." (Ac 10:28 ESV)

The Samaritan woman said this to Jesus:

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)" (Joh 4:9 ESV)

If you and I are to be the **light of the world**, we must be in the world, but we should never be of the world. We should not see people as an abomination but lost and in need of a savior. **The Jews missed this completely!**

But back to our story...

33 *And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement.* **34** *Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him."*

Vs 33 - Then we are told that the eleven brothers sat before Joseph. They were seated by the Egyptian stewards in this order.

The firstborn (according to his birthright) (Reuben) all the way to Benjamin (according to his youth).

The brothers, taking all of this in, **looked at one another in amazement**.

How could they have been placed **in birth order**, they looked at each other and were **amazed**, they were **stunned**, they were **astounded**, they were **dumbfounded**!

Now the statistical probability of placing the eleven in the correct order is staggering, it is **1 in 39,916,800**, so let's just say **one in 40 million**. I doubt the brothers knew the **statistical probabilities**, but they were shocked that they were seated in birth order.

Vs 34 - Then portions were taken from Joseph's table and delivered to each of their seats.

But the portion that was delivered to the youngest, to Benjamin, was **(FIVE TIMES)** as **much as any of theirs**.

Have you ever been out to dinner, and you ordered something and the person you are dining with ordered the exact same thing? Then, the orders come out and you feel like one person's portion is larger than the others.

This is nothing like that, imagine each brother received a 12 oz. Prime Rib, Benjamin received a 60 oz. Prime Rib!

Why would Joseph do this? The ESV Study Bible says: "*Joseph's feelings for Benjamin result in his being given proportions that are five times those given to his brothers.*"

That explanation is possible, but I do not believe **that is principally** what is happening. **I believe this is another test**. Remember what **happened to Joseph?**

"3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. 4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him." (Ge 37:3-4 ESV)

So Joseph **sets up a condition** where he shows **extreme favoritism** to his blood brother, and now watches to **see how his other brothers will react**.

When his father showed **extreme favoritism**, his **brothers hated him** and could not even speak with him, culminating with the brothers, under the recommendation of Judah, selling Joseph into slavery.

I believe this is yet **another test** to see if these men have changed over the last 22 years, or if they are the same **mean, ugly, and bitter men** they were when **Joseph was 17**.

But they ate, they drank, they made merry, they had a fun filled time together. It did not even seem to bother the brothers! They did not respond in **jealously, anger, resentment, or hatred**.

44:1 Then he commanded the steward of his house, "*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, 2 and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain.*" And he did as Joseph told him.

Vs 44:1 - Then Joseph commanded the steward of his house, and here we find the **three commands**, that he issued:

- 1) "**Fill the men's sacks with food**, with as **much as they can carry**." This seems to imply he is giving them not what they paid for but as much as they can carry.
- 2) And put **each man's money** in the mouth of his sack,

So, it seems like they do not go back to the **granary**, but rather Joseph directs the steward to fill their sacks with **as much grain as they can hold**.

- 3) *Vs 2 - and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain.* And he did as Joseph told him.

Here Joseph now sets up his **third and final test**.

He directs the steward to place his silver cup, the cup he likely used at dinner. We can imagine this was a very beautiful cup, we do not know, but I suspect he used it on purpose that evening, so that all the brothers would see it. In my mind I am imagining something big, gaudy and beautiful, once you have seen it you will never forget it, that I believe is Joseph's goal.

3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. 4 They had gone only a short distance from the city. Now Joseph said to his steward, "Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? 5 Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.'"

Vs 3 - As soon as the sun rose, this would have been the "**crack of dawn**" in southern vernacular, the men were sent on their way.

It seems from the text that everything was **loaded for the brothers**, and they were simply sent on their way.

They had their donkeys, they were loaded up with grain and they are headed back home, headed to Canaan, headed back to Jacob.

You can imagine the **discussions that morning**, all about the prior day, all about the **Egyptian Lord of the land**, all about the **goodness of Yahweh** in how all of this has played out.

Things they likely discussed:

- Simeon had been returned.
- The amazing words from the steward including Shalom, do not fear, and God has given you your money.
- The massive lunch they shared together.
- The Lord of the land sat them in birth order. How did he know that? What amazing powers did he possess?
- And what to make of the five-fold serving Benjamin received.
- You can imagine they are rehearsing all that they will tell Jacob about the prior day.

They **have a lot to talk about** as they begin the 250-mile journey (at least 17 days) back to the Promised Land.

Vs 4-5 - Although the city they are leaving is **not named**, Moses tells us that they only got a **short distance from the city, the trip has just gotten started**.

Then Joseph looks at his steward and gives (**four commands**):

- 1) **Up go after the men and overtake them.**
 - a. Let's be honest they are traveling with donkeys; it will be easy to overtake them.
- 2) Once you catch up with them, **begin the inquisition.**
- 3) Ask them these two questions:
 - a. Why have you **repaid evil for good?**
 - b. Why **have you stolen** the Lord of the lands chalice that he **drinks from** and **practices divination?**

Now if you will allow me to paint between the lines, it would be reasonable to assume that by now, the brothers have heard about how the **Lord of the land** interpreted **Pharaoh's dreams** and what he said would happen ultimately came to pass.

We might guess that the **Egyptians viewed him, at a minimum a mighty prophet of the God he serves, who has given him special powers.**

Still painting between the lines, I suspect this cup was **brought in last night** because of its **appearance.**

I doubt that Joseph had a **special ornate cup** that he normally used. I **suspect this whole cup thing** is part of this **elaborate test** (that we will see develop this week and it will come to its pinnacle next week).

So, I would say Joseph is being guided by the **hand of God** to set up a final test, whereby he will **test the hearts of his brothers.**

Also, as far as **divination** is concerned, I do not believe that Joseph practiced divination. Although some Egyptians might believe that is what is going on. More importantly, I suspect that Joseph is "in role" if you will, and this is all part of the **final test** that Joseph is going to administer to his brothers involving Benjamin.

- 4) Having asked them the two questions, then he declares to the steward to declare to the brothers that:
You have done evil in doing this!
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6 When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words. 7 They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! 8 Behold, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? 9 Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lord's servants."

Vs 6 - As we might imagine he quickly and easily overtook them and **spoke the words directed by Joseph.**

You can imagine the **shock of the accusations.** Well actually, we do not have to imagine, **let's read it.**

Vs 7-8 - They make a four-point response, a four-point declaration:

- 1) Why would (my Lord) even say something like this? **Far be it from us (your servants) to do such a thing.**
- 2) We are **honest men, as evidenced** by the fact that the money we found in our sacks the **first time we returned.** We brought it back, we did not steal it and when we found it, we returned it.
- 3) If we returned the money, then **why would we then steal silver or gold from the Lord of the land's home?**
- 4) Vs 9 - **Whoever has this cup** (because none of us do) let **that person die** and on top of that, the rest of us will become servants of the Lord of the land.

You sense that they are **certain that none of them stole the cup.** Of course they are correct, but it will turn out, as we already know, to be in **their possession.**

Notice: The brothers were certain they did not have the cup.

Notice: The brothers had an amazing trust in one another.

APPLICATION: Do you and I trust one another. Do we always assume the best of one another, our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?

May we, as God's family default to thinking the best of one another, assuming we are all working for the glory of God.

10 He said, "Let it be as you say: he who is found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent." 11 Then each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. 12 And he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.

Vs 10 - The servant says, **let it be as you say**: He with who it is found, let him become the slave. Moreover, the ones who did not steal the cup shall be set free!

But the one who has the cup will be taken, he will be imprisoned, and he will be made a **slave** of the Lord of the land for stealing his silver chalice.

Vs 11 - I love how Moses explains it, each man, quickly lowered his sack to the ground and each man opened his sack in front of the steward and whoever accompanied him.

You can imagine this, each is certain, each is confident, that the silver cup is not in their bag.

Vs 12a - Here we see the steward starts with the eldest and works his way to the youngest.

With each passing son you can imagine a **sigh of relief**. As he goes from brother to brother they are likely become more and more indignant at all that has happened.

Now by the way, they would have seen the money come out of each of their sacks. But this is not concerning to the steward, so they are not concerned, although we do wonder what they made of that.

Then finally - 10 down and only one to go...

Vs 12b - *And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.* We knew this was coming, but our hearts sink when we read these words.

This is the son that Jacob was worried about, and it was there in **Benjamin's sack** that **Joseph's silver cup** was **found**. Can you imagine the **sheer horror that came over the men**.

I wonder if anyone said anything.

Vs 13 - Showing their **deep sorrow** and **grief**, they **tore their clothes**.

Then each man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city. Can you even imagine what that trip back to the city was like?

They are going to **face the Lord of the land**, by their **own admission**, the **one with the cup should die**. If mercy is extended and they follow the plan of the steward then **Benjamin will simply be taken as a slave**.

Yesterday was the high point of their lives. This moment is likely the low.

Now that the favorite son is guilty of a capital crime, and is in danger, what will they do, how will they react?

Tune in next week to see the amazing direction this story goes!

APPLICATION: Does God bring things in our lives to test our love for Christ, to test our trust in Christ, to test our obedience to Christ?
