

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 attitudes of all 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 twenty-two 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 the first thing 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 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 he made himself known to them. Once everyone, except his brothers, were out of the room, 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 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, as 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 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 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 came close to him. Joseph went on to say several additional things after they came close to him. Joseph told them he was their brother they had sold into Egypt. Then, he said something that probably came as a real shock to them. 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 him ahead of them to Egypt in order 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.

Joseph went on to explain why God had sent him to Egypt ahead of his brothers. Joseph explained that the famine had lasted two years so far and 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 on the earth for the sons of Jacob. 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, ““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.”” 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, 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 it was Joseph. However, this trip was the first time Benjamin had seen him since he had been sold as a slave twenty-two years earlier. They now knew that he was Joseph and had spoken to them with his own mouth.

Joseph went on to tell his brothers what to do. He told them to tell his father about all of the glory he 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 seventeen when he was sold as a slave. Now, he was thirty-nine years old and had not seen his father for twenty-two years. Joseph told 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 began to talk with Joseph. They realized 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.