

Jacob Learns that Joseph is Still Alive

Genesis 45:16-28

Genesis 45:16-28 – *“Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying, ‘Joseph’s brothers have come.’ So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. ¹⁷ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. ¹⁸ Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. ¹⁹ Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. ²⁰ Do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”*

²¹ Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. ²² He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments. ²³ And he sent to his father these things: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. ²⁴ So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, “See that you do not become troubled [quarrel] along the way.”

²⁵ Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. ²⁶ And they told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.” And Jacob’s heart stood still, because he did not believe them. ²⁷ But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. ²⁸ Then Israel said, “It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Background Notes

Pharaoh was pleased when he heard that Joseph’s brothers had come to Egypt. Five more years of famine were yet to come, so he invited Joseph’s entire extended family to come and live in Egypt. As far as the record goes, Pharaoh knew nothing about how the brothers had mistreated Joseph. Joseph graciously concealed all that - it was between Joseph and his brothers alone. And God deals with us this way. When God forgives us, he doesn’t publicize our sins!

2 Corinthians 5:10 says that all believers will stand before the *bema* - the Judgment Seat of Christ, but there is no indication that it will be a public occasion. I believe the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a private session between God and the individual believer. It will be obvious to all if we have been faithful or not, because the Lord will reward faithful believers. But I think the review of our lives at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be between us and the Lord alone.

Verse 21 tells us that Joseph provided “carts” for his brothers, so they could bring their families to Egypt to live. The wagons would have been similar to the covered wagons, or “Conestoga wagons,” that were used by settlers as they

moved west in the early days of our country. In fact, models of this type of ancient wagon have been found in Egypt. And it wasn't until Jacob saw those carts coming that he was finally convinced that Joseph was indeed alive!

Verse 22 says that Joseph gave “changes of garments” his brothers. That doesn't seem like much of a gift to us today, but in those days having more than one outfit was very special. This was a sizable gift - especially for Benjamin, who received five outfits!

Doctrinal Points

1. The gospel is more than the forgiveness of sins.

As you know, the word gospel means “good news.” Joseph's brothers certainly heard and responded to the good news in Genesis 45 – to the “good news of Joseph.” In fact you could say the “gospel of Joseph.” And that is another beautiful parallel between Joseph and the Lord Jesus. The “good news of Joseph” is an illustration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice that the good news of Joseph was more than just forgiveness. That Joseph completely forgave his brothers after what they had done to him would have been grace enough, but there was so much more, over and above the forgiveness. Grace was **abounding**!

There are several ways in which the good news is more than forgiveness. “*He kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him*” (v15). Here we see reconciliation and fellowship. In the same way, when we respond to the gospel of the Lord Jesus, we are more than just forgiven of our sins. We are reconciled with God, and we can have joyful fellowship with Him!

Remember the story of the “prodigal son” in Luke 15? When the lost son returned home, his father not only forgave him, but he also restored him to his place as son. He didn't say, “OK, I forgive you, but you'd better not do it again. And you'll have to live with the servants or in the barn.” No! The son who had disrespected and abandoned his father, and wasted his father's money, was welcomed back as a son. He was given all the rights and privileges of a son - and there was feasting, reconciliation, and renewed fellowship with his father!

Joseph gave gifts to his brothers, and he provided for them – and this is what God does for us. He does **more** than forgive us for our sins against Him. He provides for us and gives us gifts – both material and spiritual blessings. Romans 8:32 says, “*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*”

Then Joseph prepared a new home for his family. They were to live in the **best** part of the land of Egypt (v18 & 20)! This reminds us of the wonderful place that the Lord Jesus Himself is preparing for us. In John 14:2-3 He said, “*In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*” The gospel of Christ is **more** than the forgiveness of sins.

The “gospel of Joseph” is certainly an illustration of the “gospel of our Lord Jesus” - not only of the way the Lord will deal with the nation of Israel in the future, but also of the way the Lord Jesus deals with us in grace. The gospel is more than the forgiveness of sins.

2. The gospel is more than wishful thinking!

When the brothers returned home and gave their father the good news, Jacob didn't believe them! *“And they told him, ‘Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart stood still, because he did not believe them’ (v26).* Isn't it interesting that Jacob was quick to believe the bad news when the brothers brought him Joseph's bloodstained tunic, but here, when he heard the good news, he had a hard time believing it? However, *“when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him” – he believed!*

“When they told him all the words of Joseph” – this would have included these words: “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” (v4-5). Jacob may have suspected it before, but now he knew for sure that the brothers had not only betrayed Joseph, but they had also lied to him when they brought him Joseph's bloody coat. *“...when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. Then Israel said, ‘It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’”* The carts were positive evidence that the brothers were not making up their story. **Joseph really was alive!** This good news was not just wishful thinking. It was the **truth** - and Jacob believed. No wonder Jacob's new name, Israel, was used at this point in the narrative.

The basis of the good news of Jesus Christ is that Jesus is alive and exalted today. This good news is more than wishful thinking – **it's true! Jesus is alive!** And guess what? Plenty of evidence is available. There are “wagon-loads” of evidence available to back up the truth that Jesus is alive! Just as Joseph provided evidence for doubting Jacob, and just as the Lord Jesus provided evidence for doubting Thomas, so the Lord has provided evidence for doubters today. Some of you have listened to my recorded course on “Christian Evidences” [see * below]. In those recordings there is not only plenty of evidence for the resurrection of Christ. Take the empty tomb, for example. No one denies the fact of the empty tomb. Through 2000 years of history, no one who has really investigated the evidence (including scholars and skeptics) has ever denied the evidence of the empty tomb. They have tried to explain it away in many other ways, such as the “stolen body” theory, the “swoon” theory, the “wrong tomb” theory, and many other feeble attempts to explain away the empty tomb, but all these theories are filled with flaws in logic. There is only one explanation that fits all the evidence: **there really was a resurrection, just as the Bible says! Jesus is alive!** The Gospel is more than wishful thinking.

Practical Applications

1. Don't quarrel along the way!

As Joseph sent his brothers off to Canaan, his parting request was “Don't quarrel on the way home!” Joseph knew that even though his brothers were changed men and forgiven men, during the long journey home they might start to rehash

the whole betrayal incident. He knew they might start to point the finger and blame each other, and the resulting argument might boil up into a major quarrel! So Joseph said, **“Don’t quarrel along the way!”**

The Lord Jesus says the same to us. “Don’t quarrel along the way Home!” Do you know any Christians who need to hear this advice? We all do! Unfortunately some Christians have destroyed one another - and some have even destroyed entire church fellowships - because they quarreled along the way.

“If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (Galatians 5:15). As His forgiven followers, the Lord pleads with each one of us - “Please don’t quarrel along the way!”

2. Let’s never get too set in our ways!

Let’s never get too set in our ways! This lesson is particularly important for senior saints - but it’s certainly good for all believers. Jacob was 130 years old when he had to pull up his tent stakes and move to Egypt. Even though people lived longer in those days, 130 was pretty old! Jacob lived 17 more years in Egypt, and died at the age of 147 years.

Do you think Jacob wanted to move to Egypt? He certainly wanted to see Joseph again, but I doubt that he wanted to move away from his homeland - the land that God had given to his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. Especially at the age of 130! I’m sure he would rather have had Joseph come back home to him. But God had other plans for Jacob and his family.

And God had His reasons for moving Jacob. There was an on-going famine. Joseph had an important job to do in Egypt, a job that was essential for saving many lives throughout the affected area. Moreover, God had plans for forging the children of Israel into a nation in Egypt. God wanted Jacob and his family to relocate in Egypt in order to accomplish His good plans.

Especially as we get older, it’s not easy to stay flexible - but let’s **never** get too set in our ways! It’s not easy to adapt to changes – to new ideas or new people or new places - especially when we’re older. In Jacob’s senior years, he had to move out of his “comfort zone.” He had to leave his homeland and make a long journey. He had to adapt to life in a new country, among different people, in an alien culture. But this major change was part of God’s plan for Jacob - and major change may be part of God’s plan and purpose for your life and my life as well.

We may not welcome the changes. In fact, we may even dislike the changes God permits to come into our lives. But we can be sure that any new situation He brings to us will be part of His plan and His program for our lives. And He will give us the strength to adapt, if we’re willing to stay flexible and conform with joy to the changes He makes in our lives, whatever they may be! God may have some changes planned for us in the future, so - let’s never get too set in our ways!

*Dr. Dave’s course on “Christian Evidences” is available in RealAudio on this website, and may also be purchased on CD in the Growing Christians Ministries website store.