

Genesis 42-45
Psalm 80
Luke 1:26-56

“The Restoration of Judah”

December 20, 2009

We have seen repeatedly that Reuben’s leadership is futile.

In chapter 42 Reuben takes the lead.

Reuben reminds his brothers of their sin against Joseph –
but even as they did not listen to Reuben in chapter 37,
so also no one listens to Reuben in chapter 42.

Indeed, Reuben’s offer at the end of the chapter is empty:
he offers the lives of his sons in exchange for Benjamin.

Reuben has forfeited his position of leadership by going in to his father’s concubine.

As chapter 42 ends, the children of Rachel are imperiled.

Jacob believes that Joseph is dead,
and now he fears for Benjamin as well.

Psalm 80 reflects on the imperiled children of Rachel:

the only tribes mentioned in Psalm 80 are her children and grandchildren:
Joseph, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.

And Psalm 80 reflects on the Exodus from Egypt –

how God brought “a vine out of Egypt” and planted it in the land.

And the refrain of the Psalm pleads,

“Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.”

It is worth pointing out that Benjamin means “son of my right hand” –

and the conclusion of the Psalm is all about the “son” –
the “man of your right hand” –
who will turn Israel back to the LORD.

Psalm 80 never refers to Judah – or David –

but if Psalm 80 is reflecting on the original story of Joseph and Benjamin,
then it would not surprise Asaph (the author)
that Judah is the one who restores Joseph and Benjamin.

This is why we have put Psalm 80 to the tune of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”!

And we hear of the coming of this one in our NT reading:

Read Luke 1:26-56

I know that four chapters is a lot of material.

But given the detail of the narrative,
 there is, in a sense, less need for commentary.
The author slows down the tempo of the narrative
 and gives us far more information.
But we need to see these four chapters together,
 because Genesis 42-45 is a literary masterpiece.

Look at the outline in your bulletin.
 The two journeys to Egypt are set in parallel.
 The story of the first journey in chapter 42
 is paralleled exactly by the second journey in chapters 43-45.
It is fitting perhaps that the brothers are taken into custody twice –
 thrown into prison twice –
 in payment for what they did to Joseph.

But something bothered me about that.
 Because the Joseph narrative is *not* all about revenge.
 He certainly tests his brothers to see if they are trustworthy,
 but there is never any hint that Joseph is seeking revenge.
So it made no sense to me that Joseph’s “revenge” should be at the center of the narrative.

And so I kept reading.
 And I looked at *who* was speaking on behalf of the brothers.
 In the first journey, it is Reuben:
 he speaks at the second audience with Joseph,
 he speaks again when they return to Jacob, their father.
 In the second journey, it is Judah:
 he speaks when they prepare to depart from their father,
 he speaks again at the second audience with Joseph.

In other words, it is a double chiasm.
 If all you do is see the chiasm of chapter 42 in parallel with the chiasm of chapters 43-45,
 then you will miss the center of the story.
 Because the center of the story is *not* Joseph’s “testing” his brothers!
 The center of the story is the restoration of Judah –
 when Judah displaced Reuben as the spokesman for the family.

While we do not know for certain the exact chronology,
 we can be certain that the episode with Tamar happened before chapter 43
 (and given that there is not much room in the sequence,
 it is possible that it happened in between chapters 42 and 43).

Judah has repented of his Canaanite ways.
 Judah has been restored by his “righteous” daughter-in-law.
 And now Judah takes the lead among his brothers.

In any event, the Judah of Genesis 43-45 sounds *nothing* like the Judah of chapter 38.

1. (42:1-4)	1. Jacob's Sons Sent to Egypt	7'. (43:1-14) Judah speaks for the brothers
2. (42:5)	2. Arrival in Egypt	6'. (43:15-25)
3. (42:6-16)	3. First Audience with Joseph	5'. (43:26-34)
4. (42:17)	4. Brothers in Custody	4'. (44:1-13)
5. (42:18-24)	3'. Second Audience with Joseph	3'. (44:14-45:15) Judah speaks for the brothers
Reuben speaks for the brothers		
6. (42:25-28)	2'. Departure from Egypt	2'. (45:16-24)
7. (42:29-38)	1'. Sons Report to Jacob	1'. (45:25-28)
Reuben speaks for the brothers		

So what we'll do is go through chapters 43-45
reflecting on the parallels with chapter 42 where appropriate!
Because 42:37-43:10 is the center of our passage,
pivoting around Judah's dialogue with Jacob at the beginning of chapter 43.

It is only when Judah offers himself as surety for his brother
that Jacob relents.

7'. (43:1-14) 1. Jacob's Sons Sent to Egypt (Judah speaks for the brothers)
Now the famine was severe in the land. 2 And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little food." 3 But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' 4 If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'"

Why does Joseph insist upon them sending Benjamin?

Many have said that Joseph is afraid that they may have done something to Benjamin –
and that may be true.

But if you want the answer of the text, remember the dream:
there had been 11 sheaves bowing before him.

It may seem all wrong for Joseph to want his brothers to bow before him,
but it is also clear that Joseph is not doing this out of pride.

He does want to test his brothers –
but more importantly, he wants to save his brothers from death,
and he believes that even as the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker came true,
and even as Pharaoh's dreams are coming true,
so also his own dreams must come true.

And so Benjamin must come to Egypt –
and Jacob must bow to Joseph.

It would have been easier to do this if Joseph had not sent their money home with them.
In one sense *we know* that Joseph does this out of love for his brothers –

and yet also to test them:
it would be relatively easy to come to Egypt with Benjamin;
but will they be thought of as thieves?
Previously they have thought more of silver than of life.
What will they do now?

*6 Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?"
7 They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"
8 And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. 9 I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. 10 If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."*

Reuben had offered his sons in place of Benjamin.
But that misses the point.
Jacob does not want more of descendants to die!
Judah does not offer death in place of death –
he offers to bear the *guilt* forever.
If he does not bring Benjamin back,
then a curse will rest upon him and his house forever.
In one respect this is not as bloody an offer as Reuben's –
but in another sense it is a far more powerful offer.
Reuben would have lost his two sons –
but Judah places the reputation of his household forever on this.

Why?
Remember what the brothers had said in 42:21 –
"In truth we are guilty concerning our brother,
in that we saw the distress of his soul,
when he begged us and we did not listen.
That is why this distress has come upon us."

Judah had taken the lead in selling Joseph into slavery.
Now Judah owns his guilt,
and offers himself as the guilt-offering to his father.

11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. 12 Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight. 13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. 14 May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Here Jacob submits to Joseph.

He bows to the will of his son.

Also notice that while there is a famine in the land,
Jacob is sending a present of food!

6'. (43:15-25) 2. Arrival in Egypt

So the brothers return to Egypt to buy food.

And when they come bringing Benjamin,
Joseph prepares a feast.

15 So the men took this present, and they took double the money with them, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon." 17 The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house. 18 And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys."

The last time we heard about the brothers eating was when Joseph was in the pit.

Now Joseph will bring them to his house and they will eat food before him –
as he sits apart from them – but this time as their Master.

19 So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the door of the house, 20 and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. 21 And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us, 22 and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." 23 He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. 24 And when the man had brought the men into Joseph's house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, 25 they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there.

5'. (43:26-34) 3. First Audience with Joseph

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.

For a second time his brothers bow before him –
even as he had dreamed back in chapter 37.

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.

Now the brothers are saying that their father Jacob is Joseph's servant!

Not only are the 11 brothers bowing before him,
but through their lips Jacob himself is bowed before Joseph!

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!" 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. 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.

By now the brothers are in well into their 40s.

And given that they appear to have all been born in a period of six years
(except Benjamin)

it would be impossible to tell their birth order from their appearance.

And so they take their 11 seats, lined up in birth order.

This must have been a really spooky moment!

*34 Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table,
but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs.*

This is part of Joseph's testing of his brothers:

how will they respond to this favoritism?

When Jacob had shown favoritism to Joseph,

they responded by mistreating Joseph –

how will they now respond to Benjamin?

And they drank and were merry with him.

The word translated "were merry" is the same word used of Noah when Noah got drunk.

It is the word used by Eli of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1 when he accuses her of being drunk.

It is used 19 times in the Bible and it always means "drunk."

Many times the Bible speaks of people whose hearts were merry with drink

(literally, "their hearts were good" –

such as Boaz in Ruth 3).

But that is not what happens here.

It is entirely inappropriate to speak of this as the brothers being "merry" with him.

It is a good thing to be merry –
and in the proper circumstances, it is a good thing to be merry with wine,
as Psalm 104 says, “wine that gladdens the heart of man.”

But drunkenness is always associated with God’s curse.
It is always associated with judgment.

And especially here in the middle of the second chiasm
we are standing on the brink of judgment,
when Joseph’s brothers will be thrown into the pit for the second time –
even as Joseph had been thrown twice into the pit.

4’. (44:1-13) 4. Brothers in Custody

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. 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.’” 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.”

They think they are doing so well –
they have reformed their ways and they have done all that they are supposed to do!
So with a clear conscience, they step into the trap that Joseph has laid for them.

And so Joseph’s steward replies:

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.

The trap is sprung.

25 years ago Judah had taken the lead in selling Joseph into slavery.

Now, a quarter of a century later, he has the opportunity to do the same thing to Benjamin.

What will Judah do?

13 Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.

3’. (44:14-45:15) 3’. Second Audience with Joseph (Judah speaks for the brothers)

Notice how the brothers are described in verse 14.

14 When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. 15 Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?" 16 And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found."

Note that Judah speaks on behalf of the brothers.

And notice that he does not try to escape the charge.

The cup has been found with them – and so they are guilty!

But he does try to extend the guilt to all the brothers.

But Joseph will not let him get away with this.

17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father."

Joseph is giving them every reason to abandon their brother.

But Judah will not.

And so he takes Joseph aside:

18 Then Judah went up to him and said, "Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?' 20 And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'

Notice that Judah accepts the virtual disinheritance of Leah's sons.

21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' 22 We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' 23 Then you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.' 24 When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25 And when our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food,' 26 we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' 27 Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. 28 One left me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to pieces, and I have never seen him since. 29 If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.'

What was Leah?

Judah's mother has been spurned by Jacob,

and yet Judah accepts his father's word –

he cares more for his father, and his father's word,

than he cares for himself.

As Judah's greater son would say,
"not my will, but thine be done."

30 Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, 31 as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. 32 For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.' 33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. 34 For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

This is the longest speech in Genesis.

And in it, Judah reveals that he is more concerned about his father than about himself.
He refers to his father 14 times in his speech –
and 4 times declares that his father will die if Benjamin does not come home.
And so Judah offers to take the penalty in place of Benjamin.
25 years ago, no one of the brothers thought that way about Joseph.
But now Judah will offer himself as the substitute for his brother.

And remember this is the Judah who had joined himself to the Canaanites –
the Judah whose sons were "evil" (the same word used here
to speak of the "evil" that he feared would find his father).

But Judah no longer wishes to see evil in his family.
Judah will now lead his family in self-sacrificing love.

Indeed, though we have focused on the restoration of Judah,
we should also see that Judah's actions are crucial for the restoration of *Joseph*.

After all, if the brothers had fled and abandoned Simeon first, or Benjamin now, here in Egypt,
then Joseph would not have been restored to his family.
If the brothers fail the test,
then Joseph remains alone in Egypt.

But now Judah passes the test.

He who had fathered wickedness
(remember that the name of son, Er, is "evil" spelled backwards!)
is now prepared to be father of kings.
Christmas morning we will continue exploring this theme in the book of Judges
as we look for a king from Bethlehem in Judah!

45:1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his

brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 3 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. 4 So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God.

God is sovereign over all the affairs of life.

Yes, you sold me into Egypt (v4),

but this was God's purpose and plan.

Through your wicked deed (and Joseph does not excuse their wickedness)

but through that wicked deed God has brought great good to Israel –
and to all the nations.

And so in another sense "it was *not* you who sent me here, but God." (v8).

Not only does Joseph affirm the providence of God in this –
but he also sees that he is like the Noah of his family.

The rescue of Jacob's family from the famine

echoes themes from the rescue of Noah's family from the flood.

And even as the remnant of humanity was saved through the flood,

so now the remnant of Abraham will be saved through the famine.

He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 9 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. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' 12 And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. 13 You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." 14 Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

2'. (45:16-24) 2'. Departure from Egypt

16 When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. 17 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan, 18 and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.' 19 And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt

for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

21 The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. 22 To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes.

Throughout the Joseph narrative you must watch what Joseph is wearing.

His brothers had stripped Joseph of his royal robe in chapter 37.

Now Joseph clothes his brothers.

They are now dressed in his garments.

23 To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. 24 Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the way.”

1'. (45:25-28) 1'. Sons Report to Jacob

25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. 26 And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them.

Some have wondered if Jacob had a stroke!

27 But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

In 37:35 Jacob had said, “I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning” –

but now Israel will go down to Egypt to see his son.

All through this passage Genesis has referred to him as Jacob,

but now *Israel* will go down to Egypt.

Israel is Jacob’s new name – the name that points to his future and new hope.

There is a certain irony there – given how closely Egypt is associated with Sheol.

But as we have seen, when the Seed of Abraham rules over the land even the land of death becomes a land of life.

Conclusion:

Some would say that the point of the text is that Joseph tests his brothers – and they pass the test.

Indeed, if all you see are the parallel chiasms of the two journeys, then that would likely be your conclusion.

And it is true – but it is not the *point* of the text.

Others have suggested that the point is found in Joseph’s conclusion:

God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant.

This also is true – but it is not the *point* of the text.

At the heart of the double chiasm –
as well as at the crucial moment that brings resolution to the whole story –
Judah offers himself as the guilt-bearer.

Now it is true that Judah doesn't *really* die –
indeed everything turns out well!
But then again, in Genesis 22 when Isaac was offered on the altar,
he didn't *really* die.

But that is not the point.
Judah takes the story of Isaac a step further.
Isaac was offered on the altar by his father
(we have no knowledge of Isaac's own attitude toward this).
But Judah "is the first person in Scripture who willingly offers his own life for another."
(Waltke, 567)

Jesus says in John 15:13
"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."
And Paul comments on this in Romans 5:6-8
6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—
though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—
8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Through the transformation of Judah God is beginning to show us what the Christ must do.

And also, through the reign of Joseph God will deliver his people from famine –
even as our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who delivers us from the famine of sin and death.

And so the point of our text can be only this:
in whatever situation you face –
even if you are oppressed by others,
even if you are falsely accused by those who hate you,
no matter what situation you may face in life,
remember Jesus:

remember the one who died for the ungodly –
the one who demonstrated God's love for us – while we were still sinners.

The point of our text is not that *we* can be so good –
the point of our text is that *Jesus* is so good.