

Genesis (2011) 42B

- Joseph is on a mission to bring reconciliation with his brothers
 - Last week he met them for the first time in 20 years
 - When they bowed down before him, Joseph immediately recognized what he had to do
 - He was to rule over his family
 - But he determined to rule over them as a brother deserving of their love and devotion
 - Not as a despot commanding their obedience
 - Under even normal circumstances, it would be difficult for one brother among 12 to receive the love and devotion of his siblings
 - How much more difficult will it be for Joseph to manage this outcome
 - Especially given their history together
 - But as these brothers go, so goes the nation of Israel
 - If the nation is to survive as a single unit, Joseph must succeed in his task of reconciliation
 - There is a story of two brothers who reflect the importance of working together

The chief of staff of the US Army decided that he would personally intervene in the recruiting crisis affecting all of our armed services. He directed a nearby base to be opened and that all eligible young men and women be invited. As he and his staff were standing near a brand new M-1 Battle Tank, a pair of twin, well built, neatly kept brothers who looked like they had just stepped off an Army Corps recruiting poster walked up to them.

The chief of staff walked up to them, stuck out his hand and introduced himself. He looked at the first young man and asked, "Son, what skills can you bring to the best Army in the world?"

The young man looks at him and says, "I'm a pilot!" The general gets all excited, turns to his aide and says, "Get him in today, all the paper work done, everything, do it!"

The aide hustles the young man off. The general looks at the second young man and asked, "What skills to you bring to this man's Army?"

The young man says, "I chop wood!"

"Son," the general replies, "we don't need wood choppers in the Army, what do you now how to do?"

"I chop wood with my brother!"

"Young man," huffs the general, "you are not listening to me, we don't need wood choppers, this is the 21st century and our battles are fought with our minds as much as with our bodies!" Your brother is going to be a pilot."

The young man rolls his eyes and says, "Well, I have to 'chop it' before he can 'pile it'!"

- So Joseph has accused his brothers of being spies and put them in prison for three days
 - Joseph has done this to bring them under pressure and stress while giving himself time to consider his next steps
 - Building this pressure against his brothers is an important part of Joseph's plan
 - By this trial and tribulation, Joseph's brothers will have added reason to consider their past mistakes and repent of their sins
 - We also noted last week that this story teaches a beautiful picture of the last days of another time of stress for Israel, the Tribulation of the last days
 - In that future time, the nation will experience great tribulation precisely for the same reason we see the brothers suffering in the story of Joseph
 - So that Israel might repent of past sins toward Christ
 - And by that repentance, they will become reconciled to Christ
 - So as we moved forward in the story, we'll continue to look for those parallels

[Gen. 42:18](#) Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God: **[Gen. 42:19](#)** if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for the rest of you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, **[Gen. 42:20](#)** and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die." And they did so.

[Gen. 42:21](#) Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

[Gen. 42:22](#) Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.”

[Gen. 42:23](#) They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.

[Gen. 42:24](#) He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

- Joseph devises a plan to bring all the brothers together
 - Benjamin is still back at home with Jacob because Jacob wanted to protect his favored son
 - But Joseph is intent on reconciling with all his brothers
 - As we discussed last week, Joseph must conceal his identity if he hopes to know their hearts truly
 - And so he must have all brothers present for that moment
 - His plan to bring Benjamin is to test their claims by demanding they produce the missing brother they claim to have at home
 - Previously, Joseph said he would hold all the brothers while sending one back to claim Benjamin
 - After leaving the brothers in jail for three days, Joseph has changed his approach
 - He will hold only one son while sending the rest back to Jacob to claim Benjamin
 - Joseph gives his reason for the change in plans in vs.20
 - First, by sending back multiple brothers, the story they tell Jacob can be verified by the voice of multiple brothers
 - If only one brother were sent back, Jacob might not believe the story
 - Also, Joseph knows these brothers have a history of coming back to their father with bad news in the form of a lie

- Joseph wants Jacob to believe the story and allow Benjamin to leave
- Secondly, Joseph says that this will ensure they do not die
 - Sending a single brother alone was a dangerous trip
 - He could easily fall prey to robbers and fail to make it back safely
 - And his return trip with Benjamin would be less likely to succeed as well
- Upon hearing Joseph's command, the brothers immediately begin to lament to one another over their misfortune
 - The boys begin to associate this situation with the one they put their brother Joseph through years earlier
 - They conclude in v.21 that this is "payback" for their earlier misdeeds
 - Reuben takes the opportunity to remind them that he hadn't agreed with the plot
 - He reminds the brothers that he warned them against taking action against Joseph
 - Though Reuben has participated in the cover up
 - Joseph can understand the conversation, though the brothers don't realize this
 - So Joseph learns, perhaps for the first time, that Reuben was not in favor of the plot
 - This knowledge will influence which brother Joseph holds ransom
 - Upon hearing the boys lamenting their fate, Joseph turns to weep, feeling their pain and perhaps re-living his own distress from those years ago
 - The boy's are lamenting their situation, but this is worldly sorrow, not repentance
 - They are sorry that they are experiencing these circumstances, though they see them as connected to their earlier misdeeds

- Among the unbelieving world, the word used to describe this viewpoint is “karma”
 - Karma has its origins in Buddhism and other Eastern pagan religions
 - The concept has many variants and forms, including reincarnation, but the basic concept is simple
 - The choices a person makes will come back upon him in a similar way
 - Karma teaches that if a person does “good” things, then good things will be returned
 - Conversely, if a person does bad things in life, then they will see bad things returned to them
 - Believers in karma may or may not recognize the involvement of a deity in this cycle
 - Obviously, these teachings are man-made concepts lacking spiritual truth, but there is a Biblical parallel to this teaching
 - First, the Bible teaches that sin has consequences, which is similar to the notion of karma
 - If we live a life of sin, whether believers or unbelievers, then we can expect to see consequences sooner or later
 - As believers we are promised to see the discipline of the Lord as we walk with Him
 - Secondly, the covenant God made with Israel provided for cause-and-effect outcomes for the people of Israel
 - If the nation obeyed God’s commandments, they would see blessing
 - If the nation disobeyed the covenant, they would see His wrath
 - This was a national covenant, so these consequences played out over generations within the nation
 - Again, this is similar to the concept of karma
- But the key difference between karma and the Bible’s teaching is the involvement of the Creator God

- Karma and other new age notions attribute this cause and effect relationship to ambiguous, impersonal cosmic forces, not to a personal God
 - But the Bible teaches that the Lord always remains in control of all outcomes, not some cosmic role of the dice
 - And those outcomes will lead the world to an appointed end, while holding all guilty accountable
 - And yet the Lord makes a way of escape for those who accept the provision made available in Christ
- Those who believe in karma never stop to ask the obvious question: how did the “cosmic forces” arrive at their rule of “right” and “wrong?”
 - Where do these definitions come from?
 - If there is no Law-giver and no judgment, then what dictates the consequences of karma?
 - Karma as a concept can only work if there is some higher standard of right and wrong guiding the process
- Only the Bible offers an answer for the origin of right and wrong
 - It teaches that the holiness of God and the perfection of His law define good
 - And any departure from God’s law is by definition sin
 - Unless we equal God’s holiness, we are 100% bad

[Luke 18:19](#) And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me **good**? **No one is good** except God alone.

- This is the essential difference between the truth of scripture and the lies of the enemy found in false religions ideas like karma
 - Our outcomes are not determined by our works or cosmic law of chance
 - There is an eternal Creator Who will judge us according to His Law
- And we cannot stand that test by our own merit

- And the only hope we have to escape a certain judgment is to have the covering of Christ's blood
- So, Joseph presses forward with the plan, devising a clever scheme for testing the brothers' hearts
 - Their past failure was to forsake a brother in need, turning their backs on him
 - So their test would be whether they would come to the aid of a brother in need this time around
 - Simeon would be held back while the rest are released
 - Joseph wisely skipped over Reuben and held Simeon instead
 - By allowing Reuben to return, Joseph ensured that the oldest was able to represent the brothers in meeting with Jacob
 - So the test is whether they will forsake Simeon to save their own skin?
 - Or would they voluntarily return to Egypt with Benjamin to rescue Simeon?
 - They may weep over their past mistake with Joseph, but will they show true repentance by their actions?
 - As the boys depart, Joseph decides to increase the pressure on them even more
 - He wanted to be doubly sure that the sons' return would be motivated entirely by love and not merely by the need for grain or anything else
 - So Joseph gives his brothers even more incentive never to return to Egypt

[Gen. 42:25](#) Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.

[Gen. 42:26](#) So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there.

[Gen. 42:27](#) As one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack.

[Gen. 42:28](#) Then he said to his brothers, “My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack.” And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”

- Without the brothers knowing, Joseph orders that the brothers’ money be returned to them in their sacks
 - The brothers brought the money to pay for the grain they bought
 - The money would have been paid to Joseph’s attendants at the point when the grain was delivered
 - So obviously, the brothers never expected to see the money again
 - By returning the money, Joseph was giving the brothers additional reasons to never return to Egypt
 - It wasn’t merely a matter of the money itself
 - It was the implication that they had stolen the grain from Pharaoh
 - Notice in v.28 when the brothers discover their money returned their hearts sank
 - The point is they realize that if they return to Egypt, there is a good chance they will be accused of stealing the grain
 - And then they will be put to death
 - Now the question has become whether they are willing to risk their own lives to save Simeon?
 - Joseph has increased the pressure on these boys 100 fold
- This is the same pattern we will see in Israel during the waning days of Tribulation
 - The entire time of Tribulation is a pressure cooker designed to bring Israel to repentance and to acceptance of their Messiah
 - In fact, Daniel teaches that the last days of Tribulation are merely the final part of a long period of judgment reserved for Israel as penalty under the Old Covenant

[Dan. 9:24](#) "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- In Daniel 9:24 we're told that a period of seventy weeks, or seventy "sevens" are decreed for Israel
 - This period is intended to accomplish several goals in Israel
 - To finish the transgression of Israel under the Old Covenant
 - To put an end to sin in Israel
 - To make atonement for their sin under the Old Covenant
 - To bring in a period of everlasting righteousness
 - To bring an end to vision and prophecy
 - And to anoint a new temple
 - All of these events are accomplished through the chastisement of Israel, culminating in the events of Tribulation and the arrival of the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ on earth
 - These outcomes are the result of a period of great trial and stress upon the people of Israel
- Zechariah describes this coming period of trial

[Zech. 13:8](#) "It will come about in all the land,"

Declares the LORD,

"That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;

But the third will be left in it.

[Zech. 13:9](#) "And I will bring the third part through the fire,

Refine them as silver is refined,

And test them as gold is tested.

They will call on My name,

And I will answer them;

I will say, 'They are My people,'

And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

- Israel will feel the heat of the Lord refining His people

- Two thirds of the Jews on earth will not survive this period of trial
- But one third will survive
- And in the end, that remnant of Israel will call upon the name of Jesus, leading to their salvation
- We'll study this more in coming weeks as we see it play out in the picture created in the story of Joseph and his brothers

[Gen. 42:29](#) When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying,

[Gen. 42:30](#) "The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country.

[Gen. 42:31](#) "But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.

[Gen. 42:32](#) 'We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.'

[Gen. 42:33](#) "The man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take grain for the famine of your households, and go.

[Gen. 42:34](#) 'But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'"

[Gen. 42:35](#) Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed.

[Gen. 42:36](#) Their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me."

[Gen. 42:37](#) Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you."

[Gen. 42:38](#) But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."

- After the sons reach Jacob in Canaan, they relate all that happened to them
 - They explain of how they met the Lord of the land
 - But this powerful man claimed they were spies
 - And how they defended themselves by explaining they were 12 brothers

- And how one of the brothers was forced to remain as a ransom
- Furthermore they explained that they had discovered their money had been returned
- Then it was Jacob's turn to speak
 - He says his sons have bereaved him of first Joseph, now Simeon and now they would have him lose Benjamin as well
 - This is an interesting thing to say
 - It's even more interesting when you learn that Jacob's statement is phrased in the form of a question
 - It's as if Jacob suspects that his sons are responsible for Joseph's and now Simeon's loss
 - And they want to take Benjamin too
 - Why would Jacob suspect this?
 - Well, consider that every twice now the brothers have returned from long trips with one fewer brother but with more money than they had when they left
 - When they came back from Dothan, they lacked Joseph
 - But they had twenty pieces of silver from selling him
 - Now they return from Egypt
 - They have one less brother
 - But they have all the grain and they have all their money
 - It seems Jacob is beginning to doubt the brothers' stories, which is going to make it even more difficult to get the entire family to Egypt
- Jacob denies the brothers' request, leaving the family devastating
 - Reuben tries to convince his father to let him take Benjamin
 - He offers to let Jacob kill Reuben's own two children if Reuben fails to come back with Benjamin
 - This is a foolish and rash vow

- And it was unhelpful to Jacob, for certainly Jacob wouldn't want to kill his own grandchildren
- Reuben's point was to emphasize how seriously he took the responsibility to bring Benjamin back alive
- Predictably, Jacob refused Reuben's offer and leaves Simeon for dead
 - Jacob's favoritism for Rachel's sons is so strong he is willing to forsake another son to preserve Benjamin
 - But the famine is not over, and the pressure is only going to increase on Israel
 - Just as the Lord will increase the pressure in Tribulation until the Jews of that time are left with no alternative but to seek for Christ
 - Which we will see in the next several weeks of our study in Genesis