

Genesis (2011) 43A

- Joseph has devised a plan to reunite and reconcile his family through a test of their hearts
 - Years earlier, the brothers had heartlessly sold Joseph into slavery
 - They showed no pity on Joseph when he asked for it
 - They have continued to go astray, as Judah showed in Chapter 38
 - Now they face a true test of their love for one another
 - Joseph sends them home to get Benjamin and bring him back to save Simeon
 - He also puts their money back in their sacks making their return all the more difficult
 - Joseph's test is also going to place his father in the spotlight
 - Jacob's favoritism for the sons of Rachel over the sons of Leah has been a source of tremendous strife in the family for many decades
 - This family is destined to become a nation of people, so it's essential the family remain united and strong
- Now the test Joseph has devised is going to hit both the brothers and their father in their weakest places
 - The brothers are returning to confront their past hatred for the sons of Rachel by facing their own deaths for the sake of Benjamin and Simeon
 - Jacob will come face to face with his favoritism and selfishness by being forced to allow his favorite son to leave & perhaps never to return
 - And yet despite these pressures, neither Jacob nor the brothers are truly ready to repent and yield to God
 - In fact, Jacob's heart is so hardened that it requires God to bring a worsening of the famine to drive the family back into Egypt
 - And these worsening conditions provide a reminder to us of the beautiful picture developing in our story of Joseph

- The prophetic picture is of the last days of Tribulation, when the world will be suffering under God's judgment
- And that judgment is merely a backdrop to an even greater work the Lord will be doing in that day
- A work to bring stubborn unbelieving Israel to its knees and to a reconciliation with the One Joseph pictures, that is Christ

[Gen. 43:1](#) Now the famine was severe in the land.

[Gen. 43:2](#) So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

[Gen. 43:3](#) Judah spoke to him, however, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'

[Gen. 43:4](#) "If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

[Gen. 43:5](#) "But if you do not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'"

[Gen. 43:6](#) Then Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had another brother?"

[Gen. 43:7](#) But they said, "The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'"

- After Jacob refused the brothers' request to return for Simeon, they begin to live off the grain they received in Egypt
 - The grain they bought only lasts so long
 - Naturally Jacob hopes that the grain will bring them through the drought
 - So they will never have to go back to Egypt and risk Benjamin's life
 - But the Lord brought this famine for a reason
 - And until that purpose has been met, the famine isn't going to stop
 - In fact, this is only the second year of a seven year famine, but of course Jacob doesn't know that yet
- When the grain runs out, Jacob tells his sons to go back to Egypt for more
 - But his fourth son, Judah, tells Jacob it's not that simple

- The man (Joseph) said they could not return until all the brothers were present
 - If they don't return with every member of the family, they will not see Joseph's face
 - The point being that they won't even get an audience with Joseph much less be able to buy grain
- So Judah tells dad if you don't give us Benjamin, there will be no point in going back, so they won't even bother going
 - To this Jacob utters one of the most revealing, self-centered comments in all scripture
 - It's right up there with "...this woman You gave me" and "...am I my brother's keeper?"
- Jacob's comment reveals his focus and perspective
 - First, it's a ridiculous statement
 - As Judah points out in v.7, how did he expect the brothers to anticipate that a mention of the number of brothers in the family would have resulted in Joseph's demands?
 - They couldn't have seen that coming
 - Secondly, even if they could have seen that, how could Jacob have expected his sons to perpetuate their father's favoritism for Benjamin?
 - He had no reason to expect that
 - They are the ones hurt by his unfair preference for Rachel's children, so they can hardly be expected to make it easier for dad to continue in this pattern
 - This is the problem that Joseph is working to correct
 - To put an end to the brothers' rivalry created by his father's selfish behavior
 - And this is God's desire as well
- Notice in v.6 Jacob is being called Israel again

- We remember that whenever Jacob is beginning to turn in the direction of God and to live according to God's call upon his life, his name will shift
 - The name Jacob describes a man moving away from the Lord
 - While the name Israel, his new God-given name, indicates a heart change is taking place and Jacob is moving back toward God
- Wouldn't it be helpful if we had two names like Jacob?
 - One name could represent my life in obedience when I'm walking in God's will and hearing His voice
 - While the other name would represent my tendency to live according to my flesh, following my own desires rather than the Lord's
 - Then when I notice everyone calling me by my godly name, I know I'm on the right track with the Lord
 - But when I'm off track, everyone starts calling me by my worldly name
- The truth is we have something even better already
 - We have the Holy Spirit living in us, and He is always talking to us
 - He reveals God's desires and convicts us when we stray
 - And above all, we have the word of God providing us all the instruction we need to be obedient
 - The problem in our following God has never been our ability to discern God's will or know His desires
 - The problem has always been our willingness to listen and do what we hear
- Though Jacob's words still sound selfish and desperate, the use of the name Israel is our clue to know that his heart is softening
 - Jacob is beginning to move in the direction of God, and hence Moses begins calling him Israel
 - But notice, it's not a joyful turn...Jacob is being dragged by God kicking and screaming in the direction of obedience

- And the famine is the blunt instrument God is using to provoke that turn
- Jacob's unwillingness to allow Benjamin to join his brothers creates another part of the picture of Tribulation and end times contained in this story
 - Joseph has stated flatly that he will not show his face to the family of Israel until all of Israel has come before him according to Joseph's instructions
 - They must appear as one family, all of them present and willing to submit themselves to Joseph's authority
 - If even one is missing, then the family will never see Joseph
 - We know already that Joseph is a picture of Jesus, and the brothers collectively picture the Israel of the future in Tribulation
 - After Israel's leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus spoke to them in harsh terms
 - Jesus told Israel what would be required for them to ever see Jesus come to them again as their Lord
- Jesus spoke these words at a point in His earthly ministry, recorded at the very end of Luke 13

[Luke 13:34](#) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

[Luke 13:35](#) "Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

- Jesus declared to Israel that after He departed the Earth the Jewish nation would not see Jesus come to them again until they take a certain step
 - The nation must reverse their sin of rejecting Jesus as Messiah
 - Jesus is the Messiah sent to Israel as promised in the covenants
 - And though the nation was unfaithful, the Lord remains faithful to His promises

- And in accordance to the promises God gave Israel through Abraham, the nation will have their Messiah one day
- But that future day depends on the people of Israel coming to accept the Messiah they earlier rejected
- Notice in v.35 Jesus says He will not return for Israel again until they declare “Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!”
 - This is a quote from Psalm 118 (*incorrectly stated in the audio as Psalm 119*), a Messianic psalm that tells of Israel receiving their Messiah
 - Jesus says until Israel declares Jesus as their Messiah, Jesus will not return
- This truth is pictured by Jacob’s sons submitting to Joseph’s authority
 - The sons must stand before Jesus and seek him according to Joseph’s standards, or else they will never see Joseph’s face
 - But when that time comes, it must be the whole of Israel to make this declaration
 - It cannot be that only some of Israel come to this view
 - If all the brothers return to submit to Joseph’s authority, but even one brother is missing, the meeting will never happen
 - Likewise, Paul tells us that when the day comes for the Lord to show mercy on Israel, the entire nation on earth will be included in that work of mercy

Rom. 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Rom. 11:26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”

Rom. 11:27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”

- In a future day, when the plan of God for His Gentile church has run its appointed course, then the Lord will bring mercy to a disobedient and stubborn Israel

- On that future day, the hardening of Israel will be lifted
- And notice in v.26 Paul says “all Israel” will be saved by the return of their Deliverer, the Messiah
 - Every single member of the nation of Israel on earth in that day will be included in this rescue
 - As the Lord returns to the Earth, He brings salvation to all Israel
 - And if the Lord has returned, it means all Israel has called out for Jesus as Jesus required in Luke 13
 - What will bring about such a miraculous reversal of the Jewish nation?
 - Certainly today they are not moving in the direction of faith in Jesus?
 - As we move further through the story of Joseph and his brothers, we’ll see this picture develop even further
 - And the rest of the picture will fill in gaps for how and when the Lord brings Israel back to Himself in such a dramatic way
 - But already we know it begins with a worldwide distress so severe it pressures Israel just as this famine is pressuring Jacob to let Benjamin join his brothers

Gen. 43:8 Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones.

Gen. 43:9 “I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.

Gen. 43:10 “For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice.”

Gen. 43:11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Gen. 43:12 “Take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake.

Gen. 43:13 “Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man;

Gen. 43:14 and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

Gen. 43:15 So the men took this present, and they took double the money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

- After sensing his father's heart softening to the prospect of sending Benjamin, Judah puts an offer on the table
 - He declares that he will take personal responsibility for Benjamin's safety
 - Judah doesn't make the foolish offer to allow Jacob to kill his own children as Reuben had done earlier
 - Instead, Judah puts his honor on the line, which means he is offering to forgo his right to any inheritance in the family
 - And in that culture, this was the greatest thing Judah could offer his father
 - And it's only appropriate that Judah should be the one to lead Israel in reconciling with Joseph
 - First, Judah was the instigator of Joseph's slavery
 - He suggested that the brothers sell Joseph
 - So Judah redeems himself to a degree by taking responsibility to bring the other favored brother back safely
 - Quite a turn around for Judah
 - Secondly, it's very important symbolically that Judah be the one to lead the delegation back to Joseph
 - Remember that Judah was fourth in line in this family
 - But he had become the leader by virtue of his three older brothers disqualifying themselves in various sins
 - Reuben slept with one of the concubines
 - Simeon and Levi destroyed Shechem against their father's will
 - So Judah was the most favored of Leah's sons
 - And Joseph is the one holding the birthright, and with it the double portion of the inheritance and authority in the family
 - So reconciling the seed promise holder and the birthright holder is critical to family unity

- The seed will come from Israel and Israel will be a single nation at that time
- What is also interesting about Judah's insistence that the brothers return is the complete lack of concern about finding the money in their packs
 - It seems the brothers have set that fear aside in consideration of their brother
 - Despite the possibility they might be accused of stealing from Pharaoh, they are determined to return for their brother
 - This is another good sign for the family
- So Judah tells Jacob we could have been there and back twice in the time we've delayed
 - A journey from Canaan to Egypt's capital was about two weeks in each direction
 - So assuming Judah isn't exaggerating, the time since they returned from Egypt has been about 2 months
 - For 2 months Simeon has been languishing in prison in Egypt
 - In v.11, Israel moves in God's direction, agreeing to allow the sons to go with Benjamin
 - And he tells the boys to take the best the land has to offer as a gift to the Pharaoh's representative
 - What's noticeable about this list is the relative low value of these items as produce of the field
 - If this is the best the land has to offer in this day, it is truly a devastating famine
 - No grains, no succulent fruits, no dairy products, just some nuts, a little honey, and some simple spices
 - It was similar to the widow giving her mite
 - Then Jacob tries to address the issue of the money
 - He says take double what you took the first time
 - Plus, take the money that had been returned to you

- So the brothers are returning with three times the money they took the first time
- And Judah says perhaps the money was returned by mistake, a hopeful point of view on his part
- Remember, there were 10 brothers traveling the first time, and each returned with money in their sacks, so they returned with 10 sacks of money
 - Now again, there are ten brothers traveling, but this time with 2 times the money, or we could say 2 sacks of money each
 - It's fascinating how God brings our mistakes full circle to impress upon us how our wrong choices have consequences
 - While the brothers first sold off their brother to Egypt for 20 pieces of money, now they are returning to ransom a brother from Egypt with 20 sacks of money
 - The repayment for a sin that God requires will often exceed the value of the sin itself
- Then Israel allows Benjamin to travel with the brothers
 - He says take Benjamin and go to the man, that is Joseph
 - And then Jacob places the boy's welfare in the hands of God
 - Jacob appeals to the Lord for protection
 - He says may the Lord have compassion on his family
 - But if the sons are taken from him, then so be it
 - In other words, Jacob was willing to trust in God for the outcome, a step of faith
 - These tactics are similar to the ones Jacob tried during a previous crisis
 - Remember he tried to buy off Esau with gifts, which proved unnecessary in the end
 - And yet Jacob wrestled with God begging God for a blessing in the face of his approaching foe
 - It's as if Jacob wants to always cover his bets
 - Here Jacob does something similar

- He gives his sons something of value to appease the anger of the man
- But he also appeals to the Lord for mercy in case the appeasement doesn't work
- This is the story of Israel the nation
 - Resting in their works, but if that fails, resting in the Lord as their backup strategy
 - But the Lord isn't content to be our backup strategy
 - He is no strategy at all...He is the One Who saves by His mercy
 - The Lord stands ready to offer mercy, but only to those who humble themselves
 - To those who acknowledge their weakness and inadequacy to meet God's standard
 - Not only is Jacob moving in the right direction, so are the brothers showing positive signs
 - But Joseph isn't done testing them
 - A third test is coming