

GENESIS 46:28-34 (A GLORIOUS REUNION)

Introduction: There is a famine in the world during Jacob's time which will continue on for about five years. In order to protect and feed Israel, Joseph called them down to Egypt. Jesus speaks of the time of Great Tribulation coming on the world as well.

He warned them that the time would come when they would have to pick up and leave on a moment's notice. But those people will be kept, nourished, and carried through that terrible time and they will come out of it in the end.

Joseph is taking steps to ensure his family will be cared for during the continued famine and he will keep them from the corruption of the Egyptians in the process by sending them to an area separate from them.

Sometimes we get our own periods of personal tribulation and we might feel like the world is falling apart around us. It may be so bad that we might wonder if there is any safety or sure foothold left at all. But there is.

As followers of Christ, we have to remind ourselves during the times of trouble that He is there and He will carry us through these things. It might not always be the way we expect, but it is always the way that is the absolute best.

That's hard to see from the low spots in life, but it is what we must trust is true. In a great song of salvation, Isaiah chapter 26 gives hope to the people. Even in death the Lord promises victory. At one point of the chapter, He gives advice to His people who are facing a world of trouble and horror.

He tells them to go into hiding while He handles what needs to be done. This is something we can do as well. When we're overwhelmed with the events of life, we can hide away and let Him handle the problems that swirl around us. There, separate from the outside world, we can commune with Him, read His word, and wait on His curing treatment for our woes.

Text Verse: Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past. Isaiah 26:20

The famine in the world at Joseph's time was immense, but God gave him wisdom to prepare for it. And with his family now coming to Egypt, he will ensure that they are kept in an area isolated from everything else that will happen.

God gave them a savior *from within* Israel and He prepared a safe haven *for* Israel. He has done the same for us too. He has given us a Savior from *within* humanity and a safe haven *in* Christ Jesus. He can empathize with us, understand our cares and troubles, and he has given us a place of refuge during our times of trial.

And above all, He has given us food enough to make it through any famine. That food is found in His word. It is what instructs us, comforts us, and nourishes us. Of all the things we could read to have better life and a fuller relationship with Him, His superior word is the very best.

Too often we read book after book about the Bible and we fail to devote that same amount of time to actually reading the Bible. Let's not make that error, but let's get into His word every day of our life. And let's get into His word now too, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Son Appears to Jacob (verses 28, 29)

²⁸ Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way to Goshen.*

The family has departed Canaan, having left Beersheba after Jacob made sacrifices to the Lord. On the journey, Judah is selected to point out the way before him to Goshen. There are probably a few reasons why Jacob would have done this.

The first is that they have a very large company coming into the land. There were the 70 mentioned in this chapter, but there were other family members and certainly a huge number of servants as well. Even though they had royal carts, soldiers of Egypt at the border may think they were an attacking force.

Secondly, if Judah arrived to tell Joseph they were coming, he could send someone to pinpoint exactly where in Goshen they were to settle. Judah was selected because his three older brothers fell from favor over things they had done in the past. He was, for all intents and purposes, the trusted leader of the brothers.

Also, he is the one who spoke for the whole when appealing to Joseph before they knew who he was. It was his speech which finally convinced Joseph to reveal himself. Because of this, he would be the most obvious choice to meet with him again.

What is a bit more than ironic is that it was Judah who had suggested selling Joseph off as a slave many years earlier. Now Joseph is the one who is dealing with him to find them a home to settle in. Matthew Henry says, "This is rendering good for evil."

Two interesting pictures then come out of this. The first is that Judah represents all of the Jews. The term "Jew" comes directly from the name Judah. Secondly, as happens several times in the Bible, Judah is sent forth first.

As Judah means "praise," it is giving us a picture of our responsibilities before the Lord - "Let praise go first before the Lord." Judah will be the first to march before the tabernacle each time it is moved in the wilderness. Also, Judah will be selected several times to march first into battle.

In all things, let the praise of the Lord go first. It is an eternal picture for us to see and to act upon - in our prayers, in our lives, and in our hopes. Let praise go first.

The name Goshen means "drawing near" or "approaching."

As I said in a previous sermon, I'm certain that this is asking us to consider the name. Two things which are drawing near of the future are being pictured here.

The first is that the Jews are to flee from the land of Israel because of the Great Tribulation. The second half of the seven years of tribulation is drawing near. The second is the literal return of Christ to earth to rule for 1000 years.

The name Goshen is being used to show that the end times are truly drawing near. Goshen is also called the land of Rameses in Chapter 47 and the name Goshen is never mentioned in any documents outside the Bible. And so this name is certainly given specifically for us to see the approach of the Great Tribulation.

28 (con't) And they came to the land of Goshen.

This is where Israel will be kept safe during the time of famine and separation from their home land. They will remain here for the next 215 years, but the story will skip over almost all of that time. It will go from this early period of their time in Goshen at the end of Genesis right into the time of their departure there in Exodus.

The time frames are different, but the pictures are the same. Israel is kept safe until they are brought back to their homeland. The Bible tells us specifically and also demonstrates time and time again, "that which is will be again and that which has been done will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun."

We're given these patterns so we can accurately perceive the world around us and to have faith that God is in control of what is happening.

*They came to Goshen where they would be safely kept
During the famine and the time of tribulation
And for more than 200 years, there they slept
Until the Lord led them out of Egypt by a great salvation*

²⁹ So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel;

In the first 27 verses of this chapter, the name Jacob was used 15 times and the name Israel was used 4, but only two of those were applied to him as his name. Suddenly, in the last 7 verses, the name Jacob isn't used at all and the name Israel is used twice.

It is *the man* in the story, but *the collective group* of people in the picture. It is to his father Israel that Joseph makes his chariot ready as he goes up to Goshen. It is to His redeemed people, Israel, who Jesus will protect and defend during the tribulation.

In another ironic occurrence, it is Israel who was invited to come to Egypt by Pharaoh and who is being met and lovingly greeted by the chariot of the governor of the land under his authority. But yet, when Israel departs Egypt it will be as they are first expelled and then chased by Pharaoh and his chariots during the Exodus.

There is a famine in the land which made Pharaoh bring them here, and there will be destruction in the land which will cause Pharaoh to drive them out. There is Goshen which means "drawing near" and there will be Moses which means "drawing out."

And it is Joseph who is coming to greet them as they arrive and it is Joseph whom they will carry out when they depart. This is shown to us in Exodus 13:19 -

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.'"

The continued parallels between the two events are certainly noteworthy and it shows immense care in the details.

²⁹ (con't) **and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.**

Joseph came to his father and in the most tender moment of either of their lives, they are reunited face to face and in tears of joy. In fact, it says that he fell on his neck and wept a good long while. Interestingly enough though, the Hebrew isn't specific enough to let us know who did the weeping on which neck.

The Greek Old Testament, the Latin Vulgate, John Calvin, and others think it was Joseph. But the Jewish scholar Maimonides says the verb refers to Jacob. I'd have to agree with him. Jacob has for many years been the grieving father.

This is the greatest moment of his life and one he never thought would come about. And it is reflective of the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. In that famous story we read -

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" (20, 21)

However, having said this, I think the reason the Hebrew is left uncertain is because it shows us exactly the opposite in what is being pictured. Jacob is picturing wayward Israel. Joseph is picturing Jesus. What is pictured is the mourning of the people at the knowledge of who Jesus is. This is seen in Zechariah 12:10 -

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."

And as an internal clue to this very thing, we see something unusual in this verse. The words "and he presented himself" is the Hebrew phrase *v'yira*. It

is used 20 times in the Bible in this exact construct which is known as the *niphal* form of the verb.

Every instance except one in Ezekiel is referring to the appearance of God to someone. The one in Ezekiel is speaking of Jerusalem in a metaphorical way. Because of the unusual term *v'yira*, it is certainly asking us to look at this in the context of the greater picture which is being presented.

Joseph is said to have "appeared" to Jacob using this special form of the verb because it is picturing the appearing of the Lord to Israel during the tribulation period. The picture is exact. When He does, they will mourn for Him exactly as Zechariah says.

*I will pour on the house of David
And on the inhabitants of Jerusalem too
The Spirit of grace and supplication
In the future, this I shall do*

*Then they will look on Me
Yes on Me whom they have pierced and they will mourn
For Him as one mourns for his son - his only
And grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn*

II. Now I Have Seen (verse 30)

³⁰ And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive."

Another reason is here for me to think that Maimonides is correct about Jacob being the one to fall on Joseph's neck. He is the first to speak. In other words, when he had finishing balling his heart and tears out, he finally gathered himself enough to speak.

And his words echo throughout history. In fact, what he says here is almost parallel to what Simeon said when he beheld the baby Jesus in Luke 15. Let's read that passage -

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ²⁹ 'Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation ³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, ³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.'" Luke 15:25-32

It is a beautiful comparison between the two, but there is more than just two old men saying they can now die. One amazing parallel is that Jacob is looking at Joseph who is known to Egypt as *Zaphnath Paaneah* - the Savior of the World. He is saying to him that he is now ready to die.

And this is literally what happened to Simeon when he said, "For my eyes have seen Your salvation." Both Joseph and Jesus are the light to the Gentiles around them and both Joseph and Jesus are the glory of their people Israel. And both are God's mode of salvation for His people.

It is certain that Simeon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke his words to reflect this ancient passage from Genesis as a remarkable parallel to the picture. But in addition to the parallel is the picture itself. The NIV translates this verse as "now I am ready to die" rather than "now let me die."

This is certainly the intent of the words. Israel isn't *asking* to die, nor is he saying that he would *wish* to die. Rather he is saying that *he is now ready* to die. And it is the words on the lips of every true believer in Jesus Christ since He came. Without Christ, nobody is truly ready to die. In Christ, we are set and ready - our bags are packed for the great journey when the heavenly train arrives.

Jacob will in fact live 17 more years, but because of what has happened, anytime - whether a day, a week, a month, or many years... it no longer matters. And how blessed we are in Christ that the same is true for us. We have beheld the face of the Lord and this isn't really our home.

*Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace
According to Your word, I am ready to go
For my eyes have seen your salvation, in wonderful release
I have now a heavenly hope, this I know*

*Jesus is our salvation, prepared before the face of all peoples
A Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles as well
They will hail him under all church steeples
And He is the glory of Your people Israel*

III. You May Dwell in the Land of Goshen (verses 31-34)

³¹ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me.

After his intimate reunion with his father, he directs his words to his brothers and all the others. "I will go up and tell Pharaoh." In verse 29, it said that Joseph "went up" to Goshen. Now he says that he will "go up" and tell Pharaoh.

This has caused confusion for some. How can he "go up" in both directions. But this really isn't a problem. Goshen is on the way to Canaan from where Joseph is. When one goes towards Israel or towards Jerusalem, they are always said to "go up."

It is God's land and His city. One always ascends toward them regardless of elevation. In the case of Joseph going up to Pharaoh, he is going up in legal elevation, toward the royal throne. And so it is "going up" in a courtly sense.

It's good to remember that the brothers picture the individual leaders and the tribes of Israel. Joseph pictures the Lord, Pharaoh is "the Great House" picturing heaven. Israel will be brought into the wilderness during the tribulation where they will be cared for and nourished according to Revelation.

Joseph is going to Pharaoh to tell them his family has arrived. It is picturing those Jews who have recognized Christ and are reunited with Him. He will ensure that heaven itself tends to their needs.

³² And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.'

Here it literally says, they are "keepers of the flock." As shepherds, they are responsible for the flocks under them. The picture is consistent that the brothers picture the leaders of the tribes of Israel in the future.

The feeding of flocks is symbolically used throughout Scripture as tending to, and caring for, those under a spiritual head. One of many such verses is found in Isaiah 40 when speaking of the Lord caring for His people. Here are those beautiful words -

Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong *hand*,
And His arm shall rule for Him;
Behold, His reward *is* with Him,
And His work before Him.

¹¹ He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry *them* in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young. Isaiah 40:11, 10

These shepherd brothers of Joseph and their flocks then would be the people of Israel under their leaders noted in Revelation. During the tribulation they will be tended to and cared for with Christ as their Chief Shepherd. And this is exactly what Peter speaks about in his first letter, addressed to the Jewish believers -

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4

³³ So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'

There was already at this time in Egyptian history a strict caste system in place. People were categorized and given their status based on their lineage and their work. Joseph is preparing them for their meeting with Pharaoh, knowing that he will ask them their occupation.

The cast system will only get worse in Egypt as the years go by and so this was a serious business. Joseph wanted them to be prepared in advance for the important meeting.

³⁴ that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,'

The instructions include the words "Your servants." They are subjecting themselves to the rule and authority of Pharaoh. The connection to the New Testament is clear. They have claimed Jesus as their brother and they have claimed devotion to God because of Him.

It is in this relationship that they are told to state that they are shepherds and this is what they have been all their lives. The reason for it is coming and it is what will keep them alive and yet separate from the rest of the Egyptians during the famine.

And even this picture is accurate of the leaders of Israel. They are, by default, shepherds of the people. They may not have been very good ones in the past, but they have been shepherds. The Bible is filled with such references like this one in Jeremiah 23, speaking of the shepherds of Israel -

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the LORD. ² Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the LORD. Jeremiah 23:1, 2

A shepherd can only be an effective one if he proclaims Christ, but a shepherd is a shepherd regardless of whether he does it well or not. This is why it's so important to have a proper shepherd or to be a proper shepherd. Souls really are at stake.

³⁴ (con't) **that you may dwell in the land of Goshen;**

There are several reasons for selecting Goshen. The first is that shepherds were a lower class than others. They weren't shaven, they did what might be considered menial work, and they were probably less educated. This is the perception that many people even today have of farmers and country folk.

The thought of being lower class also lends to the idea of people who are thieves and trouble-makers, whether that is true or not. Another thing that would bother the Egyptians is that they sacrificed and ate their animals, many of which were considered sacred by the Egyptians.

Because of these biases against them, Joseph was hoping to keep them separated and isolated so that the Egyptian people wouldn't come after them in the years ahead as they prospered. And being the covenant people, this is something they would surely do.

Another reason is that Goshen was on the way to Canaan and if they needed to leave, the flight and travel would be quicker and easier. Also, Goshen is called the "best of the land of Egypt" implying that it was an excellent area for pasturing flocks.

And finally, the isolation from the Egyptians would be a two-way street. Not only would they be kept *from the biases of* the Egyptians, but they would also be kept *from corruption by the* Egyptian's beliefs and practices.

All in all Goshen is the perfect spot for them to dwell. God surely had it ready in advance for their arrival.

*** 34 (fin) for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."**

Some scholars believe that these last words weren't actually spoken by Joseph, but were instead given by Moses as an explanation of the state of Egypt at the time of Joseph. Whichever is true, the words are corroborated by the famed historian Herodotus.

He said that shepherds were a part of the caste known as the swine-herds, one of the seven castes which the Egyptians were divided into. They were held in such low esteem that they weren't allowed to enter a temple. They also couldn't contract marriage with any others of their countrymen.

They were so disliked that existing monuments from the times of the Pharaohs frequently represent them as lame, deformed, dirty, and unshaven, and sometimes even having a stupidly ludicrous appearance.

It's funny how being a shepherd is considered so lowly and abominable to the people of the Bible, be it the Egyptians here, or even the Jews at Jesus' time, and yet it is considered the most noble of jobs in the Bible at the same time.

Both testaments use shepherds as the epitome of character and both testaments ascribe the job spiritually to the Lord. The sons of Israel, Moses, and David were all shepherds. And the Lord is called the Shepherd in both the Old and New Testaments.

Regardless of what the rest of the world thinks, whatever your job, whether it is good paying or not, whether it seems important to others or just menial and degrading, it is our obligation to do it to the best of our ability and so honor the Lord. Paul explains that to us in Colossians 3 -

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,
²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." Colossians 3:23, 24

As far as what this verse is picturing though, if the shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians and they along with their flocks are picturing Israel during the tribulation, then the picture is clear. Those faithful Jews of the tribulation period will be considered an abomination to the people of the world. And this is exactly what is expected in the future.

It shouldn't be missed that Herodotus says the Egyptians called shepherds "the swine-class" of people and this is what Muslims and others today call the Jews. The Koran actually makes references to this. It is common terminology which will only become more prevalent in the future.

The whole world will come against Israel and they will almost be annihilated before Christ returns to defend them, but He will come to defend them. This is the great thing about redemptive history. God makes promises and God keeps those promises. And He does it in a way that the underdog is cared for and protected.

On a more personal level though, this is how God regularly works with man. Paul, writing to the believers in Corinth told them about how God favors the underdog. There in his first letter, he writes these words to you and me -

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence.³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹ that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.'" 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Whether it is ancient Israel being brought into a foreign land to be safely kept and carried along, or them some years later being brought out and defended at the Exodus, God is there to protect the little guy. In fact, He told them that explicitly in Deuteronomy -

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸ but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Deuteronomy 7:7

Again, many years later, Israel was consigned to be destroyed by the wicked Haman during the time of the Persian Empire. But God turned his curse into a blessing upon the people. He has done it again for them in modern times by putting them back in their land, just as the Bible said would happen.

He is the Defender of the widow and the God who cares for orphans. He hears the cries of the oppressed and upholds the weak and broken. So, when you see disaster all around the world, when it seems like things are out of control and falling apart, don't let these things worry you.

Because of Jesus, we are included in the New Covenant, a covenant He sealed with His own blood. It is a promise and a guarantee from the Everlasting God that we belong to Him and that nothing can ever separate us from Him.

Israel is headed into the future in a foreign land, and we are heading into the future in a land which isn't our home. But God brought Israel out and planted them again in their own land and God has guaranteed that because of Jesus we will be planted for all eternity in the new heavens and the new earth.

This is our great hope and so let's hold onto that assurance as our lives go by. He is a great God and our magnificent Redeemer. He is Jesus.

Closing Verse: Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:11, 12

Next Week: Genesis 47:1-6 (Grace in the Land of Goshen) (116th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

He Appears to Israel

Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph at his command
To point out before him the way to Goshen
And they eventually came to Goshen the land

So Joseph made ready his chariot as the Bible does tell
And went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel

And he presented himself to him with a smile
And he fell on his neck and wept
On his neck there for a good while
Surely also his beating heart leapt

And Israel said to Joseph at that place
“Now let me die if it is God's will
Since I have now seen your face
Yes, because you are alive still

Then Joseph said to his brothers
And to his father's household too
“I will go up and tell Pharaoh my druthers
This is thing that I will now do

And say to him, ‘My brothers and also
Those of my father's house as well
Who were in the land of Canaan
Have come to me in Egypt to dwell
And the men are shepherds as they were taught
For feeding livestock has been their occupation

And their flocks they have also brought
Their herds, and all that they have for the famine's duration
So it shall be when Pharaoh calls you and says
What is your occupation?
That you shall say the following
This shall be your affirmation...

"Livestock has been your servants' occupation
From our youth even till now we say
Both we and also our fathers, this our vocation
We continue at it to this very day

That you may dwell in the land of Goshen
For every shepherd to the Egyptians is an abomination
All of the pains of Jacob's broken heart
Those many sad and anguished tears
They were really only a temporary part
Of God's plans which unveiled through the years

In the end there was a joyous reunion
As Joseph appeared to Jacob in flesh and blood
The beauty of the moment, the intimate communion
Was more beautiful than any blossoming bud

We in our hearts await a reunion as well
With loved ones in Christ since departed from us
But we shall see them again as the Bible does tell
This hope is sure because of the victory of Jesus

And with them together we shall see His face
And sing the song of His marvelous redemption and grace

All hail our king, yes our glorious Lord Jesus
Who has done such wondrous things for us

Hallelujah and Amen...