



Chapters 44&45 - Answers

Joseph's 11 brothers (including Benjamin this time) are in Egypt. 10 of the brothers have brought back their brother, Benjamin, and when they arrived, their brother, Simeon, was released from jail, where he had been held until they returned.

And now they have all been taken to Joseph's house - where a huge feast is waiting for them. The brothers all bow down to Joseph as he arrives...and Joseph is overwhelmed as he sees his brother, Benjamin. Joseph leaves to weep in private, then returns to eat, drink and have fun at a feast with 11 men who still have no idea who he is.

Chapter 44

1. :1 Joseph is now sending the 11 brothers back to Egypt. What is he sending with them?

He's sending them back with the food they had come to purchase. And he's putting their purchase money back in their sacks. (they don't know about the money). Are the brothers relieved that their perilous journey to Egypt has turned out so well? Probably. But I imagine there are at least a couple of them who are wary of what might come next. This head guy in Egypt was a little weird.... And their own consciences are still actively reminding them of a brother they had wronged 13 years ago.

2. :2 What does Joseph secretly also have put in Benjamin's sack?

In addition, Joseph makes sure that his own silver cup is placed in Benjamin's sack.

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3. :3-5 After the 11 brothers leave, not knowing all that has been put in their sacks, Who pursues them?

Joseph sends his own personal steward after them, and instructs him to accuse the men of stealing the silver cup.

4. :6-9 What are they accused of, and how do they respond?

They are horrified at the accusation, of course, because they know they did not do this thing. They emphatically tell the steward to search all their stuff, and that if the silver cup is found, the man in whose sack it is found should be killed and the rest of them should become slaves of Egypt!

5. :10-13 What was found in Benjamin's sack?

The steward does not accept their extreme offer of potential results if the cup is found...but he does state that if the cup is found the person in whose sack it is found will be his own personal slave forever. The cup is found in Benjamin's sack.

6. :14&15 As the brothers return to Joseph's house, Joseph says to them..."didn't you know that I can practice divination?" What did he mean by that?

He was scaring them again. He is telling them he is magic. That he can see everything that happens. Of course he's not magic. But he is definitely scaring the wits out of them.

What is he trying to accomplish?

7. :16 Which brother speaks first? What does he say?

Judah speaks. He takes the blame. He says that all of them are to blame. I wonder what he is referring to...he knows that none of them stole this cup. I

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wonder if he is referring to the blame they all deserve for a crime committed 13 years ago? I wonder if this is Judah's moment of repentance?

8. :17 But Joseph, what does he insist on?

Joseph refuses to accept a guilty plea from all of them. He declares that Benjamin will stay in Egypt as his personal slave, but the rest can go home.

Is he thinking at this point that at least he will have his own full brother with him for the rest of his life....but what about his father? Surely he does not want his father to suffer any more grief?

9. :18-34 What is Judah's story to Joseph, and what does Judah offer in exchange for Benjamin's freedom?

Judah clearly tells the story of the loss of Joseph and the grief of their father. He tells this supreme ruler in Egypt of the damage the loss of Benjamin will do - and that it will probably kill their father. He pleads that he, himself, might remain and Benjamin go home. He is laying his life on the line for Benjamin and for their father.

Judah has reached the point where nothing else matters besides making this thing as right as he can. He has lost all pride, all sense of personally trying to salvage his own reputation, all sense of insisting on his own rights...he is a broken man who is throwing himself down in front of certain death in order to straighten out a mess he has made.

He is repenting. Is it enough?

10. Does this pleading of Judah seem to be a picture of something in the future which One of the descendants of Judah will do...for the freedom of the whole world?

To me this is a picture of Jesus, a much future descendant of Judah, who will lay down His life for the redemption of the world. Now, this isn't a

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completely perfect picture, for Judah had real guilt on his shoulders, and Jesus did not. Jesus took on the guilt of everyone else and then paid the price necessary to free everyone else. But the picture is quite similar in every other respect.

Chapter 45

11. :1-2 How loud was Joseph weeping?

Joseph, the 2nd in Command of Egypt, stood in front of those 11 brothers from Canaan, ordered everyone else out of the room, and wept so loud that Egyptians in the whole palace could hear him.

12. :3 Do the brothers believe what they are hearing? Why not?

They were speechless. The total transformation of this great authority figure of Egypt into the brother they knew they had sold into slavery was just too much. They could not compute.

13. :4-8 Who actually was responsible for Joseph being sold into slavery? Why is Joseph OK with that?

Joseph has known for quite some time that God Himself was the One who sent him into slavery - with the ultimate goal that Joseph would indeed rule over his whole family (as his dreams had said) and then save their lives.

Was Joseph trying to get revenge all this time? I think probably not. He was trying to keep the relationship moving along so that at some point he could see repentance in the faces of his brothers for the awful deed they had done 13 years ago. I think Joseph knew that without repentance there would be no real reconciliation. And reconciliation is what he wanted, not revenge.

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14. :9-15 This is the moment of reconciliation. What do you notice?
What things are happening here?

There is weeping and kissing amongst them all. And Joseph has a plan for going forward. He wants them all to come live in Egypt where they will be sure to have food for the remaining years of the famine.

15. :16-24 What important person in Egypt is very pleased with what has happened?

The Pharaoh himself is happy with what has happened, and offers to bankroll the move of Joseph's family to Egypt, and then offers to give them the choicest land once they arrive.

16. :25-28 Does Jacob believe the 11 brothers when they arrive back in Canaan and tell him what has happened?

His heart stood still with an inability to take it all in.

17. :26 The decision is made to move the whole family to Egypt. Is this the happy ending....or is there more to come for our favorite dysfunctional family?

Of course they all end up going to Egypt. And yes, this is a happy ending for now. There is a sweet reunion to come for old Jacob and his son whom he loved so much. But there is more to come, too, for the whole family...they will not see perfect rest and peace in this life....but then none of us do.

Bonus Questions:

These chapters about Joseph and his brothers is a story of great wrong being done, and also one of reconciliation.

- Would it have been a complete reconciliation if Joseph had simply told his brothers, when he first saw them, that he forgave them for all they had done?

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No. Repentance had to come first in the hearts of the 10 brothers.

- What if the brothers had recognized Joseph at the very first and asked for his forgiveness simply because they knew they had to in order to survive?

That could have happened, but it wouldn't have made for any kind of future. The future could only be healthy if the sins of the past were completely dealt with.

- What still had to happen in their hearts even after they arrived in Egypt? Is this why Joseph was seemingly so "mean" in setting them up more than once?

When they arrived in Egypt initially, and even after a trip home and trip back to Egypt, they were subdued men, men not so proud any more, even men willing to make sacrifices for their families...they had all grown up. But they were not yet men who had gotten the past right with God...or right with each other...or right with Joseph. They had to go through much fear and horror in order to get to the point they were anxious to repent.

- What are the parts which are necessary in reconciliation?

Admission of guilt

Repentance

The ask for forgiveness

The giving of forgiveness

The restoral of a relationship

- What if you or I want a reconciliation, but the one who wronged us is not willing to admit wrong and ask for forgiveness? Can we make that reconciliation happen simply by forgiving them?

We can admit our own wrong...and forgive others within ourselves...and then wait for repentance on their part so that the relationship can be reconciled.

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One person cannot make reconciliation happen. We can only do our part. And then wait for the Lord to bring the other parties to repentance.

- How does this help us understand what has to happen for our own reconciliation with God?

You see, God forgave us on the cross. He rose from the dead as perfect proof that He is able to forgive our sins and keep them forever forgiven. Forgiveness is offered.

And then it is up to us - will we fall to our knees and admit we have sinned against Him? Will we repent? Will we accept His offer of forgiveness? Will we allow Him to redeem us from our awful condition? Will we joyfully go forward in a relationship with Him, knowing always that we did not save ourselves?

He has done it all...the next step is ours.