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A FAMILY REUNION: A TASTE OF WHAT IS AHEAD (Genesis 46:26-47:12)

Throughout this series of lessons from the life of Joseph, we've encountered so many situations – some painful, some frustrating, some encouraging, and some exciting. The story of Joseph's life ends with a joyful reunion with his family, from whom he had been separated for so many years.

As I read through the account of this reconciliation, many parallels come to mind between this reunion and the future that all believers can look forward to in heaven. The Scriptures give us some details about what heaven will be like, so we're not left to only conjecture. At the same time, we have to fight against many false ideas that we've heard from others who may not have gotten their views from the Bible or misinterpreted what has been revealed. To make sure we stay on track, we will include verses with each of these parallels.

JOSEPH'S REUNION WAS FOR HIS FAMILY

The Bible teaches that heaven is a real place (and so is hell.) God, who is self-existent and has always existed, will be there but who will join him? As we look at Joseph's family coming together again in Egypt, it's interesting that those who have a future in heaven are also referred to as a family, with God described as the Father, a title he holds through all of Scripture.

God is our Father in the sense that he has created all of us in his image, but he is also our Father in a spiritual sense. Consider these two verses that show both of these realities.

Isaiah 64:8 – But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

John 1:12, 13 - But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of

blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

So the Bible makes clear that all people have been made by God, so we are his creation, but only those who will respond to the knowledge of him and receive him by believing in faith will be the ones in his spiritual family. Heaven is for those who are the spiritual children of God, those who have believed and followed him.

The presence of God will be the ultimate pleasure of heaven, but believers will also experience a happy reunion with believing friends and family who have died before us.

JOSEPH'S REUNION REQUIRED A JOURNEY

Genesis 46:29a - Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel (Jacob) his father in Goshen.

John 14:2, 3 - In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Just as Joseph traveled to see his father, Jacob, those who are in God's family will take a journey to a new destination to be with their heavenly father. In this passage from John 14, Jesus is describing an actual place and his followers will someday be with him there.

JOSEPH'S REUNION WAS JOYOUS

Genesis 46:29b - As soon as Joseph appeared before (Jacob), he threw his arms around his father and wept a long time.

Matthew 25:21 – Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter now into the joy of my kingdom.

Imagine the most joyful, most pleasurable experience possible on this earth and you will still be no where near the joy found in heaven. It is a joyful place, because God is there and all pain, sorrow and suffering will be over.

Hearts on earth may say in the course of a joyful experience, "I don't want this ever to end." But invariably it does. The hearts of those in heaven say, "I want this to go on forever." And it will. There is no better news than this.

- J. I. Packer -

*Psalms 16:11 - You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is **fullness of joy**; at your right hand are **pleasures forevermore**.*

JOSEPH'S REUNION WAS IN A PLACE OF PLENTY

*Genesis 47:5-6, 12 – Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. **Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen.**" And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents.*

Before leaving Canaan, before knowing Joseph was even in Egypt, the brothers and their father, Jacob, were desperate. They were starving with no plan to survive other than go to the place that had plenty and hopefully they could be spared. Little did they know the bounty that awaited them. And those who are bound for heaven have no concept of the blessings that wait for them.

*Revelation 21:4, 6-7 - He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. . . "To the thirsty I will give **water without cost** from the spring of the water of life. **Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.**"*

*1 Corinthians 2:9 - No eye has seen, no ear has heard, **no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.***

JOSEPH'S FAMILY HAD A NEW LIFE TOGETHER

Genesis 47:11 - Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

*Revelation 21:3 - And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. **He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.***

The family will be together for eternity and will never need to be reunited again. The differences between the next life and this one are vast.

After troubles, there is eternal **peace**.

After separations, there is eternal **unity**.

After trials, there is **reward**.

After questions, there will be **answers**.

After suffering, there is eternal **pleasure**.

After faith, there is **sight**.

The Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have begun thinking less of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in; aim at earth and you get neither.

- C. S. Lewis -

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 165, House Office Building