**Lesson 22**

**14-15 March 2022**

**Genesis 42-47**

***Another Perspective*: Zephaniah**

**Timeline and Map –** Zephaniah is minor prophet number seven chronologically, so write his name on blank 7 of the timeline work sheet. The date we are using for him is 620 b.c. He lived and prophesied in Judah.

**Interesting Facts About Zephaniah –** Zephaniah is apparently of royal descent, because he identifies himself as the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah of Judah. He also tells us that he prophesied during the reign of King Josiah. Both Hezekiah and Josiah were godly kings who initiated spiritual reform during their reigns. But it seems that the majority of the people still either worshiped pagan gods overtly (both Baal and heavenly bodies such as the sun and stars are mentioned as objects of worship in chapter one) or else thought they could “bow and pledge loyalty to Yahweh” but worship pagan gods as well (1:4-5).

**Strong Warnings for All –** Zephaniah warns the people of Judah that “the great Day of the Lord is near…and rapidly approaching” (1:14). And he then proceeds to tell them what will happen to all the nations around them. He starts off with the Philistines to the west (2:4-7), moves on to the Moabites to the east (2:8-11), sweeps southwest to Cush (2:12), and then describes what will happen to Assyria in the far northeast (2:13-15). But lest the people of Judah smugly think that they will escape while their enemies are punished, Zephaniah circles back around to Jerusalem and places her and the land of Judah squarely in the crosshairs of God’s judgment 3:1-7).

**Near and Far Fulfillment –** We know that all the things Zephaniah predicted would happen did happen to the peoples of his day. But there is also a strong end times element to his prophecies. Look at 1:14-18 and 3:8. This sounds very much like the prophecies of 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 6:15-16.

**Promise of Future Restoration and Joy –** These prophecies about coming judgment are pretty scary…but Zephaniah ends his book the same way that the apostle John ended Revelation. Notice how these verses or phrases from Zephaniah echo what we read in Revelation chapters 20-21:

* “I will then restore pure speech to the peoples so that all of them may call on the name of Yahweh and serve Him with a single purpose.” (3:9)
* “Sing for joy, Daughter Jerusalem! The King of Israel, Yahweh, is among you.” (3:14-15)
* I especially love the very last verse of Zephaniah’s little book: “At that time I will bring you back; yes, at that time I will gather you. I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your eyes. ***YAHWEH HAS SPOKEN****.”*

**Jen Wilkin, *God of Covenant* video #9: *Joseph Over Egypt***

**Review** – What we are going over today is the second half of the rather lengthy story of Joseph. It answers an important question that would have been in the minds of the Israelites of Moses’ day: how did the children of Israel end up in Egypt? Right in the middle of the story of Joseph being sold into slavery in Egypt, scripture records the account of Tamar and Judah. We need to keep our eyes on Judah in the rest of the Joseph narrative.

**Jacob’s Ongoing Favoritism –** Jacob seems rather impatient with his ten older sons, asking, “Why are you just standing around looking at each other? Why haven’t you gone to Egypt to buy grain for all of us?” He is also callous, not caring if harm should come to any of them, but wanting to protect Benjamin, his one remaining child by Rachel.

**Initial Encounter of the Brothers with Joseph –** When the ten brothers appeared before Joseph, they immediately bowed down with their faces to the ground, and Joseph recognized them and remembered the dreams he had had as a young boy. He was not expecting this encounter any more than they were. He didn’t know at this point whether to be pleased or sad that they have come because he doesn’t know their motives. So he accused them of being spies so that he could set up a series of tests to discern their heart attitudes. Their repeated response to this accusation was, “We aren’t spies: we are all sons of one father!” In other words, it would be extremely unlikely for a group of ten spies to be so closely related to each other.

**Joseph’s Tests Center Around Benjamin –** Why does Joseph tell the ten men to bring Benjamin to Egypt? One reason is that he loves his younger brother, and he wants to protect him during this time of great famine.He leaves the ten brothers locked in prison for three days, and then he comes and announces that nine of them can go back home with the grain they purchased, while one will remain imprisoned until they return with their youngest brother Benjamin.

**Jacob and Judah –** When the grain ran out, Jacob wanted his sons to return to Egypt for more. But they remind him that they can’t go unless Benjamin goes with them. In typical Jacob style, their father wails, “Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone. Now you want to take Benjamin. Everything happens to me!” He rebuffs Reuben’s offer to put Benjamin in his care, but then Judah steps in and not only offers to take full responsibility for Benjamin’s safety, but also turns Jacob’s attention away from himself to the entire family, including “the little ones,” who are all suffering from the results of this famine. His words convince Jacob, who puts the matter into God’s hands at last.

**A Loving Act of Deception –** The story of Jacob’s life and the lives of his sons has been filled with very unloving acts of deception. But when Joseph’s steward tells the ten brothers not to be afraid because “*God* must have put treasure in your bags”, he refrains from explaining that Joseph was behind this. [Edie’s comment: And the steward may have been making a little joke, since Pharaoh and probably Joseph were regarded as “gods” by the Egyptians.]

**Judah as a Type of Christ –** The passionate plea from Judah that he become Joseph’s slave in place of Benjamin reveals how completely he has changed. He who once sold a brother as a slave now wants to become the *substitute and bear the cost*, i.e. to take the punishment meant for Benjamin upon himself.

**Joseph in Contrast with Jacob –** When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, he also revealed much about himself. Unlike his father Jacob, Joseph demonstrates an unwavering trust in God. He understands that God is always with him. He knows that God goes before him and hems him safely in on every side—and he wants his brothers to understand the same thing about the Lord.

**Egypt Revisited –** Years earlier when Abraham went to Egypt during a time of famine, we observed that it was an act of self-reliance, i.e. that he was trusting in the provision of Egypt rather than relying upon God to provide his needs. In fact, Egypt has been shown to be an archetypal symbol of self-reliance. But God now reassures Jacob that this time it is actually part of His plan for him and his family to go to Egypt. As Jen pointed out, it is not an act of self-reliance when God instructs you to do it.

**A Double Fulfillment –** God promised to go with Israel (Jacob) to Egypt and to bring him back to Canaan when he died. When the people of Moses’ day heard that statement, they would have realized that God was talking about *them*, the nation of Israel, as well as their ancestor Jacob the man.

**The Significance of Seventy –** Chapter 46 lists the people of Jacob’s family who came with him into Egypt and concludes with verse twenty seven that there were 70 in all. This is not the first time we have encountered that number in Genesis: the table of nations in chapter ten listed seventy nations in all. So were there precisely 70 members of Jacob’s family that settled in Egypt? There might have been. But we have seen before that the number of people listed in the genealogies of Genesis were used as a teaching device. For example, the contrasting lists of Cain’s descendants and Seth’s descendants contained the same number of names, but the two genealogies were used to tell us something about the people in them. The number 70 is the multiple of seven and ten, both numbers that refer to completeness. So when we read that 70 members of Jacob’s family settled in Egypt, we know that the entire family was there. No one was left behind.

**Jacob Blesses Pharaoh –** Genesis 47:7 contains the interesting statement that Jacob *blessed* Pharaoh when he came into his presence. It is interesting because it is always the greater person who blesses the lesser; in other words, Moses is telling his original audience that there was a time when the ruler of Egypt bowed to the ruler of Israel.

**Jacob’s Desire To Be Buried in Canaan –** When Jacob senses his end is near, he makes Joseph swear solemnly that he will make sure that Jacob’s body is buried in Canaan. Jacob has finally come to realize that his God and the God of his ancestors has promised the land of Canaan to the people of God. And even though his family is not now living in Canaan, he wants his bones put there as a deposit, signifying that they will all return there someday.

**Parallels to the Life of Christ –** This passage of scripture contains many beautiful parallels to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ:

* There are brothers dwelling in a *land of famine*, and that famine is what drives them to Joseph. We are like this. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are those who *hunger and thirst* for righteousness.”
* Joseph was *initially unknown and unrecognized* by his brothers, but *he knows immediately who his brothers are* when he sees them. Similarly we were initially blind to who God is, but all the while He was fully aware of us.
* Joseph’s brothers *wanted to pay him* for the bread he offered them, but *he wasn’t willing to take any payment* from them for the bread he had to give. In the same way Christ, who is the Bread of life, offers to satisfy our hunger with something that He will not take payment for. The one who wants to pay for his/her salvation has not yet reached the point of desperation.
* At first Joseph spoke roughly to his brothers, and he put them in prison and other *situations that would force their consciences to be stirred*. We have the same experience when we encounter the gospel for the first time. We are shaken by it and need time to process it. *The gospel stirs our consciences.* At first it seems more like a bitter pill to us than a matter of sweetness.
* Joseph *provides for his brothers while they are still ignorant of his identity*. We know that *while we were yet dead in our sins, Christ died for us*.
* Joseph designs a *circumstance that will bring about confession*. So too *God brings us to the point where the only alternative left is to confess*.
* In that moment of confession, *the brothers acknowledge their guilt before God*, and then *Joseph makes himself known*. This is an illustration of *another step in the process of our salvation*.
* Immediately after he makes himself known, *Joseph invites his brothers to draw near*. Our brother Christ has done the same thing, saying that He suffered to save many.
* Joseph *tells his brothers how he will provide for them*. *Christ does the same* for us.
* Joseph *shares his joy with the house of Pharaoh*. And scripture tells us that *when one sinner repents, the angels in Heaven rejoice*.
* Joseph’s brothers went to get the rest of the family and *bring them to a place of salvation*. So *Jesus sends forth His disciples to bring others to Himself*.
* Joseph *warns his brothers not to quarrel*. He wants his brothers to be unified. In Jesus’ high priestly prayer, *He prays that we all might be one*. He too desires unity among the brethren.
* *Seventy souls are brought into the safety and provision* of Pharaoh’s land through the working of Joseph and the help of his brothers. So, too, will *the fullness of souls that God has called to salvation come to pass:* “All that the Father has given to the Son will come to Him.”

**A Promise and a Picture –** The story of Joseph is a promise. It is also a picture of what the individual believer and the entire family of God knows of salvation. It is a story that points us toward deep hope: though we may now feel that we dwell in a land of famine, we know we are headed to a place where hunger and thirst are completely met in the person of Christ.