

June 5, 2011

The Epiphany of Joseph

Genesis 44 – 45

Genesis 37 – 50 is often called “The Joseph Narrative.” What does 37:2 call this section?

What is the Chief Concern of this section of Holy Scripture?

Who are the FOUR main characters among Jacob’s 12 sons?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Genesis 44:1-13

- 5 “practices divination”- Joseph has been pretending to be a full-fledged Egyptian around his brothers, the divination also works as a pretext for how he would know it was stolen.
9 “Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die”- the brothers have sealed Benjamin’s fate!
10 The steward adjusts their claim so that he would only enslave Benjamin and the rest be free
13 “they tore their clothes”- a sign of great mourning and lament
“they returned to the city”- according to the steward, only Benjamin was required to go

Genesis 44:14-17

- 14 “Judah and his brothers”- not Reuben, Simeon, Levi, or Benjamin- JUDAH is the central figure
16 “God has found out the guilt of your servants”- impending slavery reminds them of what they did to Joseph
17 “go up in peace to your father”- that would most certainly not go over well!

Genesis 44:18-34

- 18 “like Pharaoh himself”- in 42:6 Joseph is Governor or Vizier- the chief administrator
27 “surely he has been torn to pieces”- remember- this is Jacob’s conclusion, the brothers let him believe it
30 “as his life is bound up in the boy’s life”- the father loves him with a special connection
32 The Pledge- the turning point for Judah. He displays integrity and a willingness to sacrifice himself
33 “let your servant remain instead of the boy”- THE GREAT EXCHANGE! SUBSTITUTION!
34 “fear to see the evil that would find my father”- the misery, angst, and sorrow would be unbearable
Luther: [Joseph] cannot contain himself any longer after he sees that their heart is sincere, that their prayer is steadfast, and that the love of Judah and his brothers for Benjamin is not feigned but is joined with true penitence. For this is an example not only of prayer but of true and very great penitence (AE 7:376)

Genesis 45:1-15

- 1 “no one stayed”- 1) protects Joseph’s Egyptian reputation, 2) he may speak candidly with his brothers, and 3) protects his brothers from having their actions known to the Egyptians

- 3 “dismayed at his presence”- perhaps they feared vengeance
 St. Ambrose of Milan (339 – 397 AD) takes this revealing of Joseph as an opportunity to speak of Jesus revealing himself to his brothers, the disciples, after they had betrayed him and fled. *“And they came to him, and he said, ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me here; for God sent me before you for life.’ What fraternal devotion!...Christ would even excuse his brothers’ crime and say that it was God’s providence and not humanity’s wickedness, since he was not offered up to death by humans but was sent by the Lord to life. What else is the meaning of that intervention made by our Lord Jesus Christ, who excelled all his brothers in holiness? When he was on the cross, Jesus said in behalf of the people, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ ... And when they were startled and panic-stricken and thought they saw a spirit, again Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you disturbed, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Feel and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have (Lk 24:38-39).”*
- 5 “do not be distressed or angry with yourselves”- words that all contrite hearts must hear
 “God sent me before you to preserve life”- God used their sin to save thousands of lives (Rom 8:28)
- 6 “yet five years”- a time marker helping us determine how long Joseph has been away
- 7 It sounds as if Joseph is speaking of the Abrahamic Lineage of the Covenant Promise!
- 10 “Land of Goshen”- it’s easy to miss the importance of this, is it a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
- 14 “fell upon his...neck”- an idiom for a hug

Genesis 45:16-20

- 19 wagons- most people traveled by foot and animals, this would be easier for the women and children
- 20 “the best of the land of Egypt is yours”- a wonderful gift, yet they leave the promised land

Genesis 45:21-28

- 22 An expression of special love without the fear of brotherly resentment and hostility
- 23 *Ambrose: And presents are also sent on ahead to the father. The son does honor to the father; so Christ invites his people with promises and invites them with presents. The presents are carried on asses that before were profitless and fit only for toil but now are profitable (Philem 11). They carry in a figurative way the presents of Christ, and in the gospel the donkeys are going to carry the giver of the presents (Mt 21:7).*
- 24 “do not quarrel on the way”- perhaps a little humorous, yet still true, they must guard against sin
- 26 “heart became numb”- disbelief prevents initial joy, very similar to initial reports of Jesus’ Resurrection
- 28 “before I die”- Jacob is 130 years old (47:9)

The Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow
 Praise Him all creatures here below
 Praise Him above ye heavenly host
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost- Amen

