

LESSON 21 - May 26, 1888.

GOD'S CARE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

I. RELATE the main points of what happened to Joseph in Egypt.

2. How long had he been in bondage when he was made prime minister? Compare Gen. 37 :2 and Gen. 41 : 46.

3. Why did the Lord allow Joseph to experience so much bitter suffering ? Ps. 105 : 17-19.

4. After having been the lowest of all, over whom was he exalted? Verses 20-22.

5. Of what general statement is the case of Joseph an example ? Prov. 15 :33.

6. How extensive was the famine which Joseph had predicted ? Gen. 41 : 56, 57

7. Who, among others, went to Egypt to buy corn ? Gen. 42 : 3.

8. What did Joseph's brethren do when they came into his presence ? Verse 6.

9. In so doing what did they fulfill ?

10. Did they recognize one another? Verse 8.

11. How did Joseph accost his brethren? Verses 7-9.

12. What did he do to them ? Verse 17.

13. Afterward what did he say and do to them? Verses 18-20.

14. What did this treatment cause them to remember? Verse 21.

15. What did they rightly judge had now come upon them? Verse 22.

16. How was Joseph affected by this evidence of their remorse for their evil course ? Verse 24, first part.

17. When the corn which they took home was eaten up, what conversation took place between Jacob and his sons? Gen. 43 : 2-7.

18. What responsibility did Judah take concerning Benjamin ? Verses 8,9.

19. When they were about to return home the second time with their corn, what did Joseph do to try them ? Gen. 44 : 1-5.

20. To what did they attribute all these calamities ? Verse 16.

21. When they thought that Benjamin was about to be enslaved, what pathetic plea did Judah make? Verses 18-34.

22. What did Joseph now know ?

Ans.- He knew that his brethren had thoroughly repented of their past wicked course.

23. What did he say to comfort them? Gen. 45 : 4-6.

24. Who did he say had ordered his being sold into Egypt ? Verses 7, 8.

25. What will God always accomplish with the wrath of men? Ps. 76 : 10.

Patriarchs and Prophets

Chap. 21 - Joseph and His Brothers (part 1)

At the very opening of the fruitful years began the preparation for the approaching famine. Under the direction of Joseph, immense storehouses were erected in all the principal places throughout the land of Egypt, and ample arrangements were made for preserving the surplus of the expected harvest. The same policy was continued during the seven years of plenty, until the amount of grain laid in store was beyond computation. {PP 224.1}

And now the seven years of dearth began to come, according to Joseph's prediction. "And the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians." {PP 224.2}

The famine extended to the land of Canaan and was severely felt in that part of the country where Jacob dwelt. Hearing of the abundant provision made by the king of Egypt, ten of Jacob's sons journeyed thither to purchase grain. On their arrival they were directed to the king's deputy, and with other applicants they came to present themselves before the ruler of the land. And they "bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." "Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him." His Hebrew name had been exchanged for the one bestowed upon him by the king, and there was little resemblance between the prime minister of Egypt and the stripling whom they had sold to the Ishmaelites. As Joseph saw his brothers stooping and making obeisance, his dreams came to his mind, and the scenes of the past rose vividly before him. His keen eye, surveying the group, discovered that Benjamin was not among them. Had he also fallen a victim to the treacherous cruelty of those savage men? He determined to learn the truth. "Ye are spies," he said sternly; "to see the nakedness of the land ye are come." {PP 224.3}

They answered, "Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are no spies." He wished to learn if they possessed the same haughty spirit as when he was with them, and also to draw from them some information in regard to their home; yet he well knew how deceptive their statements might be. He repeated the charge, and they replied, "Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." {PP 225.1}

Professing to doubt the truthfulness of their story, and to still look upon them as spies, the governor declared that he would prove them, by requiring them to remain in Egypt till one of their number should go and bring their youngest brother down. If they would not consent to this, they were to be treated as spies. But to such an arrangement the sons of Jacob could not agree, since the time required for carrying it out would cause their families to suffer for food; and who among them would undertake the journey alone, leaving his brothers in prison? How could he meet his father under such circumstances? It appeared probable that they were to be put to death or to be made slaves; and if Benjamin were brought, it might be only to share their fate. They decided to remain and suffer together, rather than bring additional sorrow upon their father by the loss of his only remaining son. They were accordingly cast into prison, where they remained three days. {PP 225.2}

During the years since Joseph had been separated from his brothers, these sons of Jacob had changed in character. Envious, turbulent, deceptive, cruel, and revengeful they had been; but now, when tested by adversity, they were shown to be unselfish, true to one another, devoted to their father, and, themselves middle-aged men, subject to his authority. {PP 225.3}

The three days in the Egyptian prison were days of bitter sorrow as the brothers reflected upon their past sins. Unless Benjamin could be produced their conviction as spies appeared certain, and they had little hope of gaining their father's consent to Benjamin's absence. On the third day Joseph caused the brothers to be brought before him. He dared not detain them longer. Already his father and the families with him might be suffering for food. "This do, and live," he said; "for I fear God; if ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die." This proposition they agreed to accept, though expressing little hope that their father would let Benjamin return with them. Joseph had communicated with them through an interpreter, and having no thought that the governor understood them, they conversed freely with one another in his presence. They accused themselves in regard to their treatment of Joseph: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Reuben, who had formed the plan for delivering him at Dothan, added, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required." Joseph, listening, could not control his emotions, and he went out and wept. On his return he commanded that Simeon be bound before them and again committed to prison. In the cruel treatment of their brother, Simeon had been the instigator and chief actor, and it was for this reason that the choice fell upon him. {PP 225.4}

Before permitting his brothers to depart, Joseph gave directions that they should be supplied with grain, and also that each man's money should be secretly placed in the mouth of his sack. Provender for the beasts on the homeward journey was also supplied. On the way one of the company, opening his sack, was surprised to find his bag of silver. On his making known the fact to the others, they were alarmed and perplexed, and said one to another, "What is this that God hath done unto us?"--should they regard it as a token of good from the Lord, or had He suffered it to occur to punish them for their sins and plunge them still deeper in affliction? They acknowledged that God had seen their sins, and that He was now punishing them. {PP 226.1}

Jacob was anxiously awaiting the return of his sons, and on their arrival the whole encampment gathered eagerly around them as they related to their father all that had occurred. Alarm and apprehension filled every heart. The conduct of the Egyptian governor seemed to imply some evil design, and their fears were confirmed, when, as they opened their sacks, the owner's money was found in each. In his distress the aged father exclaimed, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Reuben answered, "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again." This rash speech did not relieve the mind of Jacob. His answer was, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." {PP 226.2}

But the drought continued, and in process of time the supply of grain that had been brought from Egypt was nearly exhausted. The sons of Jacob well knew that it would be in vain to return to Egypt without Benjamin. They had little hope of changing their father's resolution, and they awaited the issue in silence. Deeper and deeper grew the shadow of approaching famine; in the anxious faces of all in the encampment the old man read their need; at last he said, "Go again, buy us a little food." {PP 227.1}

Judah answered, "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Seeing that his father's resolution began to waver, he added, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little

ones;" and he offered to be surety for his brother and to bear the blame forever if he failed to restore Benjamin to his father. {PP 227.2}

Jacob could no longer withhold his consent, and he directed his sons to prepare for the journey. He bade them also take to the ruler a present of such things as the famine-wasted country afforded--"a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds," also a double quantity of money. "Take also your brother," he said, "and arise, go again unto the man." As his sons were about to depart on their doubtful journey the aged father arose, and raising his hands to heaven, uttered the prayer, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." {PP 227.3}

Again they journeyed to Egypt and presented themselves before Joseph. As his eye fell upon Benjamin, his own mother's son, he was deeply moved. He concealed his emotion, however, but ordered that they be taken to his house, and that preparation be made for them to dine with him. Upon being conducted to the governor's palace, the brothers were greatly alarmed, fearing that they were to be called to account for the money found in their sacks. They thought that it might have been intentionally placed there, to furnish occasion for making them slaves. In their distress they consulted with the steward of the house, relating to him the circumstances of their visit to Egypt; and in proof of their innocence informed him that they had brought back the money found in their sacks, also other money to buy food; and they added, "We cannot tell who put our money in our sacks." The man replied, "Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money." Their anxiety was relieved, and when Simeon, who had been released from prison, joined them, they felt that God was indeed gracious unto them. {PP 227.4}

When the governor again met them they presented their gifts and humbly "bowed themselves to him to the earth." Again his dreams came to his mind, and after saluting his guests he hastened to ask, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" "Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive," was the answer, as they again made obeisance. Then his eye rested upon Benjamin, and he said, "Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me?" "God be gracious unto thee, my son;" but, overpowered by feelings of tenderness, he could say no more. "He entered into his chamber, and wept there." {PP 228.1}

Having recovered his self-possession, he returned, and all proceeded to the feast. By the laws of caste the Egyptians were forbidden to eat with people of any other nation. The sons of Jacob had therefore a table by themselves, while the governor, on account of his high rank, ate by himself, and the Egyptians also had separate tables. When all were seated the brothers were surprised to see that they were arranged in exact order, according to their ages. Joseph "sent messes unto them from before him;" but Benjamin's was five times as much as any of theirs. By this token of favor to Benjamin he hoped to ascertain if the youngest brother was regarded with the envy and hatred that had been manifested toward himself. Still supposing that Joseph did not understand their language, the brothers freely conversed with one another; thus he had a good opportunity to learn their real feelings. Still he desired to test them further, and before their departure he ordered that his own drinking cup of silver should be concealed in the sack of the youngest. {PP 228.2}

Joyfully they set out on their return. Simeon and Benjamin were with them, their animals were laden with grain, and all felt that they had safely escaped the perils that had seemed to surround them. But they had only reached the outskirts of the city when they were overtaken by the governor's steward, who uttered the scathing inquiry, "Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing." This cup was supposed to possess the power of detecting any poisonous substance placed therein. At that day cups of this kind were highly valued as a safeguard against murder by poisoning. {PP 229.1}

To the steward's accusation the travelers answered, "Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: behold, the money, which we found in our sack's mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen." {PP 229.2}

"Now also let it be according unto your words," said the steward; "he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless." {PP 229.3}

The search began immediately. "They speedily took down every man his sack to the ground," and the steward examined each, beginning with Reuben's, and taking them in order down to that of the youngest. In Benjamin's sack the cup was found. {PP 229.4}

The brothers rent their garments in token of utter wretchedness, and slowly returned to the city. By their own promise Benjamin was doomed to a life of slavery. They followed the steward to the palace, and finding the governor yet there, they prostrated themselves before him. "What deed is this that ye have done?" he said. "Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?" Joseph designed to draw from them an acknowledgment of their sin. He had never claimed the power of divination, but was willing to have them believe that he could read the secrets of their lives. {PP 229.5}

Judah answered, "What shall we say unto my Lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." {PP 229.6}

"God forbid that I should do so," was the reply; "but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father." {PP 230.1}

In his deep distress Judah now drew near to the ruler and exclaimed, "O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh." In words of touching eloquence he described his father's grief at the loss of Joseph and his reluctance to let Benjamin come with them to Egypt, as he was the only son left of his mother, Rachel, whom Jacob so dearly loved. "Now therefore," he said, "when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father." {PP 230.2}

Joseph was satisfied. He had seen in his brothers the fruits of true repentance. Upon hearing Judah's noble offer he gave orders that all but these men should withdraw; then, weeping aloud, he cried, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" {PP 230.3}

His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. The ruler of Egypt their brother Joseph, whom they had envied and would have murdered, and finally sold as a slave! All their ill treatment of him passed before them. They remembered how they had despised his dreams and had labored to prevent their fulfillment. Yet they had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams; and now that they were completely in his power he would, no doubt, avenge the wrong that he had suffered. {PP 230.4}

Seeing their confusion, he said kindly, "Come near to me, I pray you;" and as they came near, he continued, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor

angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Feeling that they had already suffered enough for their cruelty toward him, he nobly sought to banish their fears and lessen the bitterness of their self-reproach. {PP 230.5}