Studies in Genesis

(Leaflet 30)

JOSEPH—A TYPE OF CHRIST (Cont’d)

THE REJECTED ONE PRESERVING HIS BRETHREN

Genesis 42:1—44:34

After Joseph’s brethren sold him into Egypt, they passed off the scene for a long time. But in the time of great famine that “was over all the face of the earth,” they were driven by force of circumstances out of their own land of promise; and they went down to Egypt, which is a type of the world. Then after a time of chastening, they were brought to realize that the one who had preserved them during the years of famine was none other than their own brother, whom they had rejected and sold as a slave.

After the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and sold Him for “thirty pieces of silver,” they were set aside, as a nation, for a very long time. Ever since they refused their Messiah and King, He has been calling out from among the Gentiles “a people for his name” (Acts 15:14), even the church, which is His bride. As the Saviour of the world, He has been offering the Bread of Life to a heart-hungry world. From the day when the Roman emperor, Titus, destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Israel has been scattered among the nations, going “down to Egypt,” as it were, “the people of the wandering feet.” They have not seen their Messiah and Lord since they thrust Him out of the world at the point of a spear. Indeed, before they crucified Him, even as He wept over them, He said:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:37-39).
The prophetic Scriptures plainly teach that Israel will not say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," until after she has gone through the greatest spiritual famine known to the history of man. She will not know that the One who has been preserving her throughout her centuries of wandering over the face of the earth is the Lord Jesus Christ, her rejected King. The great tribulation must run its course; Israel must be chastened and brought to the place where she is prepared for the "revelation of Jesus Christ," when He comes in glory to make Himself known to His chosen people and to the world, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

This preparation of Israel to receive her King will not take place in a day; it is not an event; it covers a period of time, even as Joseph’s brethren were being prepared, over a period of time, for his making himself known to them. They did not know that it was Joseph who was preserving them through the famine. Jacob thought Joseph was dead, even as many in Israel have thought for nearly two thousand years that Jesus of Nazareth is buried in a tomb in Palestine. But Joseph was alive, exalted, receiving a Gentile bride; yea, preserving their very lives, though they knew him not. And the Man of Galilee is "alive for evermore," exalted at God’s right hand, calling out His Gentile bride, preserving His chosen people, even though they do not know Him.

This is a wonderful truth; and it is the subject of our lesson for today—Joseph, a type of Christ, rejected by His brethren, yet preserving them and preparing them for the day when He shall make Himself known to them. The Genesis story, so strikingly prophetic of these things, is found in chapters forty-two, forty-three, and forty-four. As we read them prayerfully, may the Holy Spirit take the things of Christ, and show them unto us.

"JOSEPH’S TEN BRETHREN WENT DOWN TO BUY CORN IN EGYPT"

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt . . . ." (42:1, 2).
Could it be that, when Jacob mentioned Egypt, the brothers of Joseph felt a twinge of conscience? That was the country into which they had sold their brother. Did they not want to go to Egypt? They did go, in order to buy corn, that they might "live, and not die."

"But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him" (verse 4).

That they might "live, and not die," the sons of Israel went to Joseph to buy corn; "for the famine was in the land of Canaan." That they may live forevermore, sinners in every age are bidden to go to Jesus for the bread that perisheth not. The godless world is in a state of veritable famine, with sin and suffering, war and strife rampant in the world. Men are afraid to live and afraid to die. But Christ offers them eternal life and hope and food for their souls.

"And Joseph's brethren... bowed down before him"

"And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth" (42:6).

Five times we read that Joseph's brothers made "obeisance" to him: here in 42:6; and also in 43:26, 28; 44:14; 50:18. "And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance... they fell before him on the ground."

"And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them" (42:9).

Those dreams of Joseph, told in chapter thirty-seven, were prophetic of this very obeisance on the part of his brethren, their sheaves bowing down to his sheaf; the sun, moon, and the eleven stars making obeisance to him. Partly because of these dreams, Joseph's brethren had sought to slay him, had put him in the pit, and had taken him out again only to sell him as a bond-slave into Egypt. They did not want to hear his claims to sovereignty over them. In our former study we saw how all this was prophetic of the rejection of Jesus by His brethren, the Jews. They did not want
to hear; they would not believe His claim to be sovereign God. But Joseph's brothers did not get rid of Joseph by selling him into Egypt; nor did Israel get rid of the Lord Jesus by nailing Him to the accursed tree. Just as Joseph's dreams came true, so also will the Jewish nation worship Christ Jesus as their eternal God and King. And Joseph's dreams might well suggest the hundreds of definite prophecies in the Bible that point on to that glorious day when Christ's brethren "according to the flesh" will bow before Him saying, "My Lord, and my God."

"And Joseph Saw His Brethren, and He Knew Them, but They Knew Him Not"

There was every reason why Joseph should recognize his brethren. They were Hebrew shepherds, ten in the one company; and they had been shepherds when Joseph was a youth. They were grown men when they had sold Joseph; for he was younger than they, and he was seventeen when he was sold into Egypt, old enough to remember them well. There were also several reasons why they did not recognize Joseph. He was doubtless dressed in Egyptian clothes. "He spake unto them by an interpreter" (42:23), in order to withhold his identity from them for a time. "And they knew not that Joseph understood them"—in their own Hebrew language. (See 42:23.) Nor did they expect to find their slave-brother the ruler of the great kingdom of Egypt. They did not even know whether he was yet alive. Joseph was thirty-seven before the years of famine began to run their course; he was thirty-nine when he made himself known to his brethren on their second trip into Egypt to buy corn. From a lad of seventeen years he had grown to be a man nearly forty; and doubtless his whole appearance was changed.

But although Joseph was unknown to his brethren; yet he "saw" them, and he "knew" them. What a picture of the Greater than Joseph! He sees and knows His people, Israel. And seeing their afflictions, knowing their persecutions and their rejection of Him, He cares! He yearns over them and loves them and preserves them, even as He awaits the day when their hearts will be prepared to accept Him
as their Lord and King. Jacob thought Joseph was dead. Israel thinks Jesus died many centuries ago, and did not arise from the grave. But Joseph was alive; and the Lord Jesus is alive for ever and ever! He looks down upon His people, and loves them with an everlasting love, as they shall one day understand.

"JOSEPH . . . PROVED . . . HIS BRETHREN"

1. "He Made Himself Strange unto Them." Why did Joseph not reveal himself unto his brethren at once? He has been thought by some cold and unkind in his dealings with them, but that was not the case. He wanted to "prove" his brethren for their own good, to bring them to the sense of their own sin, possibly to see if they still hated him. And let us not forget that God was guiding, making Joseph a prophetic picture of Christ. His chastening of Israel is for her own good, to bring her to see her need of a Saviour, to show her the awful guilt of rejecting Him as her Messiah. "Joseph was the cause of all the troubles of Jacob's sons"; and the Lord Jesus is the cause of all of Israel's troubles—her rejection of Him has brought upon her suffering and woe unspeakable. Not until she has been chastened and "proved" will she be ready to acknowledge Him as her Lord.

Joseph was not cold and cruel. Repeatedly he wept, turning his face away, so his brothers could not see his tears. When they confessed their guilt concerning Joseph, not knowing that he understood them, "he turned himself about from them, and wept" (42:21-24). When they returned with Benjamin, and bowed down before him, he yearned over his brother; and "he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there" (43:28-30). And when his brethren feared him, after Jacob's death, "he wept when they spake unto him" (50:17). It hurt him to think that they did not trust him and his love for them. Already in this lesson we have read the Scripture which tells of our Lord's tears which He shed over Jerusalem. Out of His great compassion He yearns over His chosen people Israel. He sees their affliction; nor will the persecutor of Israel go unpunished! And seeing, He cares, and says unto the stubborn, wayward sons of Jacob:
"Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished" (Jer. 46:28).

2. "He Spake Roughly unto Them." This was a part of Joseph's plan, to bring them to conviction of sin, and to get Benjamin in Egypt before he made himself known unto them. Therefore, he said:

"Ye are spies: to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. . . . Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies" (42:9, 15, 16).

What was Joseph doing in all this? Not being vindictive surely! He was executing his plan, whereby he could be certain to get all his brethren to go to him in Egypt. He knew that they might find some other way of obtaining corn; they might send their servants in their stead; and he wanted to be sure they would return—with Benjamin. That is why he kept Simeon bound during the time between their two trips to Egypt for corn. He wanted them all there before he revealed himself to them.

God, too, has a plan for Israel! A plan whereby He will bring them back to Himself! "And so all Israel shall be saved." The Old Testament is filled with literally hundreds of definite prophecies concerning Israel's return to Palestine before her Messiah comes back to reveal Himself to her. We quote just one of the many such prophecies:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land"
that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes” (Jer. 16:14-17).

Here the Lord has said that He would send hunters and fishers after Israel to lead them back to Palestine. A fisherman attracts his prey; a hunter goes after it and drives it. Many Jews are being attracted to the land of their fathers today; for verily it is once more becoming “a land flowing with milk and honey.” And men like Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin are literally driving the Jews to Palestine, those who can get there. They are going wherever they can to escape from the cruel hand of persecution. The tragedy is that many thousands can not escape! But God will lead many of them back to Palestine in unbelief; then He will make Himself known to them—when they are ready to receive Him.

While the “blessed hope” of the church is the rapture, when she will be translated, forever to be with the Lord; yet the greatest blessing for the world will be the re-gathering of Israel to her land and the manifestation of Christ to His chosen people; for that event will usher in the millennium. The eleventh chapter of Romans makes it very plain that, when Israel was set aside, following her rejection of Christ, salvation was offered to the Gentiles; and that Israel will yet come into her full blessing:

“Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom. 11:12, 15).

My friends, within our own generation we are living to see prophecy wonderfully fulfilled, in that Israel is going back to Palestine as quickly as the nations will let her. For nineteen hundred years she was not free to go back; but the
first World War accomplished one thing for the furtherance of God's plan for the Jew; it gave Palestine to Israel. It is true that the Arab is going to fight for it—the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, are continuing to quarrel over the land of their father, Abraham. But God gave it to Isaac and Jacob; and He will see that the sons of Jacob inherit the land in very truth!

Today the nations are fighting for the rich oil fields of the Near East; and the greatest oil line ever built leads from those fields across Palestine to the Mediterranean Sea coast. Some nine thousand men, we are told, worked continuously for more than eighteen months, in order to complete the construction of this, the greatest oil pipe-line in the world.

Palestine has the richest store of wealth of any spot on earth. It is estimated that the mineral deposit in the Dead Sea alone totals twelve hundred and fifty billions of dollars! And men are beginning to utilize this source of great riches. No wonder the Antichrist will want Palestine and will make a covenant with Israel, only to break it later and bring upon suffering Jews "the time of Jacob's trouble"! It will be to end this awful tribulation that the Lord Jesus will open the heavens and come down to deliver His people, to reveal Himself unto them. Then they will rejoice at His appearing! Then they will be ready for His coming!

When Joseph "spake roughly" unto his brethren, accusing them of being spies, they were not ready for his making himself known unto them. They had given no evidence that Joseph could see to indicate their sorrow for their sin against him. And like the self-righteous man of all time, they answered Joseph, saying, "We are true men, thy servants are no spies" (42:11). It was, indeed, a fact that they were no spies; in that sense they were "true men." But, in another sense, they were not truthful. Had they not let their father believe for more than twenty years that Joseph was dead? God has to bring us to the place where we see ourselves guilty before Him, sinners, utterly unworthy, before we can be saved. No self-righteous parading of our own supposed virtues can make us accepted in His holy sight. Still Joseph's brethren were not fully repentant of their sin; if they had been, they would have confessed their guilt to their
father, Jacob. They were not ready for Joseph to make himself known to them, according to his plan.

3. "And He Put Them All Together into Ward Three Days," and Bound Simeon "before Their Eyes." During their three days' imprisonment these ten brothers must have had time for heart-searching thoughts. And how strange it must have seemed to them to hear the ruler of pagan Egypt say, "This do, and live; for I fear God" (42:18). On the third day Joseph said unto them further:

"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 . . . and he took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes" (42:19, 20, 24).

"On the third day he caused Simeon to be bound in the place of his brethren, and declared that by this means they might all be delivered, in the third day era, that is to say, on the resurrection side of the grave" (Dr. I. M. Haldeman).

Could it be that Simeon had been the chief instigator in the crime against Joseph; and that, therefore, he was to be chastened most severely? Reuben, the oldest of Jacob's sons, had wanted to save his brother; and Simeon was Jacob's second son. He and Levi had been the two who had perpetrated that terrible crime against the men of Shechem (chapter 34); and in his prophetic blessing upon the twelve tribes Jacob said of them, "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations" (49:5). It is mere speculation even to wonder if Simeon had been the leader in the conspiracy to kill Joseph; but it is also true that we reap what we sow; that is in accordance with the law of retribution.

4. He Restored "Every Man's Money in His Sack." Not just once, but twice the brothers of Joseph found all their money in their sacks after they had left Joseph's presence. It must have caused them great anxiety, thus to be placed under suspicion of theft. No wonder "they were afraid" (42:28, 35; 43:18)!
As we remember that, according to one possible derivation, Joseph's new name, given him by Pharaoh, meant "saviour of the world," we are reminded of another beautiful picture of grace in this incident concerning the restored money. Joseph was a "saviour of the world" only in a human sense, of course; through his God-given wisdom he had saved many people of all lands from starvation during the seven years of famine. But the Saviour of the world, of whom Joseph was but a prophetic picture, is Saviour, indeed, the only Saviour of lost men.

In this connection we observe that Joseph would not accept his brothers' money. He wanted them to know—that he did not want their money. Doubtless also he restored it twice, in order to add to their grave concern over the strange mystery they faced, to cause them to search their hearts before God. But the Greater than Joseph wants every sinner to know that he can not buy his salvation. It is all of grace. Joseph's brethren wanted to "buy" corn for physical life; and ever since the days of Cain, self-righteous men have sought to "buy" their acceptance before God by the works of their own hands. From Genesis to Revelation God's message, repeated a thousand times, is that sinful man can be saved only by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before Bethlehem's manger and Calvary's Cross, men were saved by faith in the promised Redeemer. Since Jesus died and rose again, men are saved by looking back to the Christ of history. And in every age it is His precious blood, shed upon the accursed tree, that saves men's souls. That is why the prophet wrote, saying,

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

And again, after many centuries, the same Holy Spirit who inspired Isaiah spoke through Paul, saying,

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).
God was painting a beautiful picture in the life of Joseph, a prophetic picture of His well beloved Son, whose salvation is free to all the world.

5. The Brethren Were Brought “into Joseph’s House.” With what fear and trembling these eleven brothers of Joseph must have gone into his palatial home! Without doubt it was the best that the great kingdom of Egypt could afford. Was it not for the second ruler in the kingdom? What had happened they could not understand. Why the money had been restored, they did not know. Upon their father’s advice, they had brought the ruler of Egypt a costly present when they returned from their own country with Benjamin, a present consisting of “the best fruits in the land” of Canaan, “a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds” (43:11). And they had brought double their money, lest “peradventure it was an oversight” when the money was put in their sacks the first time.

When the apparently austere ruler invited them to dine with him at noon, then “the men were afraid ... and they said,

“Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses” (43:18).

They were afraid, wondering why they had been invited to the ruler’s home at noon, unless for some evil intent upon his part. They communed with the steward of Joseph’s house, making full explanation concerning the money. They must have been yet more mystified to hear his strange reply,

“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. And he brought Simeon out unto them” (43:23).

At least the sight of Simeon once more, the courtesy of Joseph’s steward, his reassuring words, and the feast provided for them by Joseph must have allayed their fears. Yet they presented unto Joseph their gift, and “bowed themselves to him to the earth . . . and made obeisance” (43:25-28).
Joseph could not eat with them and maintain his disguise; for he was, to all appearances, an Egyptian; and the Egyptians would not eat with the Hebrew shepherds. It was “an abomination” unto them. The Hebrews ate and offered as sacrifices the animals which the Egyptians worshipped, in their idolatrous practices.

Yet further mystery was added to the confused minds of the brethren when they found that they had been seated according to their ages, “the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another” (43:33). Then when Benjamin received a portion five times as great as that of any of the others, they must have wondered still more. But “they drank, and were merry with him” (43:34).

How much they must have had to talk about as they started home to the land of Canaan! The ruler of Egypt had provided for them at his banquet table while they were strangers in a strange land. And again, we are reminded of how Israel’s Messiah has been providing for them, watching over them, during their years of wandering from nation to nation. Any other people would have been annihilated from the bitter persecution that has been the lot of Israel. Any other nation so hunted and driven and hated would have been wiped off the face of the earth. But God sees His people, and yearns for them, and preserves them, and provides for them, even though they do not know who He is or how great is His love for them. Surely “His judgments are tempered with mercy”!

6. Joseph’s Silver Cup Was Put in Benjamin’s Sack. That was the most severe test of all, the most bitter trial. But Joseph was proving his brethren, causing them deep searches of their guilty hearts. Not that he did not love them; of this we have already become convinced. The very sight of Benjamin, after all the years of separation, had driven Joseph off to a hiding place where he could weep unseen.

When the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack, “then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. . . . And came to Joseph’s house . . . and they fell before him on the ground” (44:12-14). Their hearts
were heavy; their fears returned with even greater intensity. What would their old father say? Would he stand the shock of the loss of his youngest son, his beloved Rachel's only child left to him, as he supposed?

All these trials, by which Joseph had "proved" them, had been very hard to endure. But through them they were being prepared for the revelation of their brother unto them. They were a part of God's plan for their chastening and discipline. And the testing did bear fruit! As we go back now to trace the story of their ever-deepening sense of sin, we realize that the testings accomplished the purpose for which God sent them; for He was guiding Joseph; of this we have no doubt. And once more we would remind ourselves that Joseph's experiences pointed on to those of Another, who would have to chasten Jacob's children's children for a far more grievous crime, to prepare their hardened hearts for a far more glorious revelation of Himself to His own kinsmen "according to the flesh."

JOSEPH'S CHASTENING OF HIS BRETHREN LED THEM TO CONVICTION OF SIN

We retrace our steps through this strange and wonderful story to see how the brothers of Joseph became more and more conscious of their sin.

1. "We Are Verily Guilty Concerning Our Brother," they said after Joseph had accused them of being spies, had put them in prison for three days, and later had told them that he would keep one of them as a prisoner until their return with their youngest brother.

"And they said one to another, 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" (42:21).

The scenes of more than twenty years that had passed came vividly before their eyes. They saw once more, from conscience-smitten hearts, the "anguish" of Joseph's soul as he plead with them not to strip him of his coat of many colors, not to put him into the pit to die, not to sell him
as a bond-slave into a strange and pagan land. But they "would not hear."

Many hundreds of years later the Lord Jesus told the Jews in loving appeal that He came to be their King, that He was their God; but they would not hear. They stripped Him of His robes. They mocked Him and scourged Him and spat upon Him. They saw "the anguish of his soul" as He became the Sin-Bearer for a guilty world. But they would not hear. "Therefore is this distress come upon" them. It has already lasted nearly two thousand years; and even after the translation of the church, it will yet last for the seven darkest years the world and Israel have ever known.

2. "Therefore . . . His Blood Is Required," Reuben said to his fearful, perplexed brothers (42:22). And this oldest son of Jacob said unto them,

"Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required" 42:22).

With what emotion Joseph must have listened to their confession of sin! To him also it brought back memories! "And he turned himself about from them, and wept."

Although they do not realize it, the Jews who crucified the Lord uttered a prophecy that has been in the process of fulfillment ever since that day when before Pilate they said,

"His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25).

In the days of the early church the high priest spoke the mind of the unbelieving Jews when he said to the apostles,

"Behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28).

Neither the high priest nor the people wanted to accept the blame or bear the responsibility, to say nothing of the punishment, that came as the just fulfillment of that significant prophecy, "His blood be upon us, and on our children." But they must accept the guilt; and they have suffered through the years in awful retribution, in bitter chastening, for their unspeakable sin.
3. Joseph’s Brethren “Were Afraid.” A guilty sinner, unsaved, unprepared to meet his God, is afraid, no matter how loudly he may boast of courage in the face of death. He is afraid to die, afraid to meet a holy God. His guilty conscience puts fear into his heart. When Jesus comes in glory, the wicked will cry out for the rocks and the hills to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of the Son of God. (See Rev. 6:15-17.)

But thank God! “Perfect love casteth out fear” (I John 4:18). And when our Lord died and rose again, through death He destroyed Satan’s power over sin and the grave, and delivered them “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14, 15).

Joseph’s brothers were afraid; and with a growing sense of sin, they acknowledged the hand of God in the chastening that had befallen them. In two significant remarks, they said:

4. “What Is This That God Hath Done? God Hath Found Out the Iniquity of Thy Servants” (42:28; 44:16). It was when they found their money restored the first time, after having left Simeon bound in Egypt, that they asked the question, “What is this that God hath done?” Then for the first time they admitted that their crime against Joseph had been a sin against God. And it was when Joseph’s cup had been found in Benjamin’s sack that Judah said unto Joseph, even as they all prostrated themselves before him, “God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.”

The chastening had borne fruit. Conviction of sin had led to confession; and then God could bless them. Then they could know the joy of having their fears turned to peace and assurance of forgiveness on the part of the brother they had wronged. For when, shortly afterwards, Joseph made himself known to them, when they were “troubled at his presence” (45:3), terrified lest he avenge their wicked deed, he spoke peace and forgiveness to their troubled hearts. Their guilty consciences were relieved for the first time in more than twenty years!

My friend, do you know the peace of heart that only the Lord Jesus can give? He loves you. He wants to reveal [15]
Himself to you in all His matchless grace. Go to Him as the publican did, confess your guilt, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). And He will pardon, abundantly pardon, all your sins. He will quiet your fears. He will give you assurance of salvation for all eternity.

Do you see, my friend, why we said in the beginning of this lesson that Joseph was not being vindictive with his brethren in his dealings with them? Do you see why he led them through strange paths before they were ready for him to make himself known to them? We have dwelt at length upon this matter because it is so important to the true meaning of the message. Joseph "proved" them for their own good; and through the chastening they were led to confess their sins. And we repeat for emphasis, God was guiding in every detail; for He was completing the prophetic picture of His well beloved Son and His relationship with His brethren, the Jews.

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).

JACOB SAID, "ALL THESE THINGS ARE AGAINST ME"

When Joseph's brethren returned the first time and told their father "all that befell unto them," how the ruler of Egypt had spoken roughly unto them and had taken them for spies, how he had kept Simeon bound, and had demanded that Benjamin go with them into Egypt, then "Jacob their father said unto them,

"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" (42:36).

Yet all the while "all things" were working "together for good" on Jacob's behalf. (See Rom. 8:28.) Everything was going to be right for Jacob. He was not to lose Simeon or Benjamin; and he was to get Joseph back! The trouble was that he did not know all this. It was a sore trial of faith, and everything looked very dark to him.

Perhaps there is someone in the radio audience this morning who feels like saying, "All these things are against me."
To such a perplexed soul Jacob’s experience offers encouragement. God knows the end from the beginning. And if things look dark to us now, it may be because He is shaping our earthen vessels for some special service He has for us to do; and that the shaping requires trials, the exercise of faith, utter trust in His unfailing love.

When Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage, four-hundred and thirty years after Jacob and his family went there when Joseph ruled, many circumstances seemed against them. Encamped before the Red Sea, Pharaoh’s army following after them in pursuit, the mountains and the wilderness hemming them in—all seemed hopeless from the human point of view. And the people were afraid. But the pillar of cloud and fire, even the presence of God in the Shekinah Glory, went from before Israel and stood between them and the Egyptians, giving light to God’s people and confusion to their enemies. Moreover, “all that night” God “caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind” (Exod. 14:21). When? “All that night.” In the darkest hour He was working for His own! If you are in His will, my friend in sorrow, just know that, when the morning comes, you will see that God has been working for you.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17).

The story is told of an artist whose friends wanted to see his paintings. He took them to his studio, but not immediately into the art gallery where his work was on display. To his friends it seemed a needlessly long time that he detained them in an ante-room, talking of trivial matters. The little room was almost dark; there was nothing in there to see. But the artist knew what he was doing. He knew that his friends’ eyes were not prepared to see his pictures. They had just come out of the glare of the sun; only when their eyes were ready would he permit them to see his paintings; for only then could they fully appreciate them.

So it may be with you and me, as God leads us on from one trial to another. So it was with Jacob and his sons.
Through the darkness the eyes of their spiritual understanding were being prepared for a very great joy. Jacob was to see Joseph! The brothers were to know his forgiveness and his grace!

The years have been very dark for Israel for many long centuries. They must surely be thinking, "All these things are against me." But one day they will see Jesus! And they will know His kindness and His forgiving love!

THE BROTHERS "TOOK BENJAMIN . . . AND STOOD BEFORE JOSEPH"

When Jacob finally realized that Benjamin had to go, he sent him away with a prayer, saying,

"God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin"

(43:14).

That was faith, even in spite of his fears.

The prominence given to Benjamin in this prophetic story is very significant. In a former lesson we have seen that, before she died, Rachel called his name "Ben-oni," which means "son of sorrow"; but that Jacob called him "Benjamin," signifying "son of my right hand." We saw that in these two-fold names Benjamin was a type of Christ, the "Man of sorrows" and the "Son of God" at the Father's right hand in power and glory. And now, in the part of the story before us we see Benjamin and Joseph brought together once more. F. W. Grant, in "The Numerical Bible," and Ford C. Ottman, in "The Unfolding of the Ages," have expressed the lesson for us here in words we want to quote, as taken from "The Christian Workers' Commentary," by Dr. James M. Gray:

"We see how all at last is made to depend upon Benjamin. No one person could be a full type of Christ, and Benjamin is brought in to supplement what is lacking in Joseph. 'Benjamin' means 'the son of my right hand,' and he represents the Messiah of power for whom the Jews have always been looking. But Benjamin, before he was called by his father the name which means 'the son of my right hand,' was named by his mother 'Ben-oni,' which means 'the son of
my sorrow.' It was necessary for Christ to be the Sufferer before He could be the Conqueror. Christ, known to us as the rejected One, is now seated at the right hand of God, and He is the One whom Israel does not know. A Christ triumphant and reigning over the earth is the One for whom they have always looked; but the Sufferer for whom they did not look, but who must precede the Conqueror, they have refused.

"But power does not lie with Benjamin for whom his brethren are looking, but with Joseph whom they have refused. As a conquering Messiah, Christ has been prophesied to them, and as such He longs to display Himself in their behalf. This He cannot do without atonement for the sin that led them to their refusal of Him. For this they must be brought to repentance, and God sends them into an agony for their ideal Messiah that makes them ready to receive the true one. In the last great sorrow that shall overtake Israel as a nation this shall be accomplished. Before Him whom they do not know they shall plead for the Benjamin who has been lost to them; and in the agony of that hour, while they are still pleading for the ideal, conquering Messiah, the heavens shall suddenly open, and they shall be overwhelmed by a revelation of the Christ they refused (Zech. 12:10).

"The Conqueror and the Sufferer are one and the same blessed Person. The 'Lion' that prevails to open the book is the 'Lamb' that was slain."

JUDAH'S INTERCESSION FOR BENJAMIN

It was Judah who had suggested that the brethren sell Joseph. Now it was Judah who plead for Benjamin, offering himself as a bond-slave in his youngest brother's place. It was Judah who interceded for Benjamin, pleading the old age of his father, recounting to the ruler in Egypt how reluctant the father had been to let him go, picturing the grief that would send him with sorrow to the grave, should his youngest son not return home.

Benjamin must have been ever grateful to Judah for this offer to serve as a slave in his stead. Indeed, in later years there was a strong tie between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; for they formed the southern kingdom, whereas
the ten northern tribes broke away from the united kingdom of David. As Benjamin stood by and listened to the urgent heart-appeal of Judah, he must have loved his older brother for his deed.

It was all too much for Joseph. God’s time had come for him to make himself known unto his brethren. “Then” he told them that he was Joseph—when they were ready to receive him (45:1). But that part of our story will come in our next lesson.

The time of testing had been long and bitter—first for Joseph, and then for his brethren. But it was worth it all! The sufferings of Israel’s Messiah and our Saviour were bitter, far more bitter than any human being can ever know. But “for the joy that was set before him” He “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Israel’s time of greatest affliction, yet to come upon her, will be “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). But to end that “time of Jacob’s trouble” Israel’s Messiah will rend the heavens and come down. They shall look upon His nail-scarred hands, His wounded side, His glory-crowned brow; and all their mourning shall be turned into rejoicing. They “shall see the king in his beauty . . . they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 33:17; 35:10).