

Tribe of Joseph

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Study given by W. D. Frazee—December 21, 1962

Let us turn to Revelation 7. As we read these opening verses we will doubtless be thinking of recent happenings as far as war and rumors of war is concerned. But that is background. Here in the Bible I want you to notice what all the universe is waiting for.

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Ruben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand" Revelation 7:1-8.

Our text this evening is the middle line of verse 8:

"Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand"
Revelation 7:8.

I want to study the tribe of Joseph. Joseph's name will be on one of the twelve gates made of pearl in the Jasper city. I say it will be. It is there now, and you and I will see it one of these days. One of the groups that make up the one hundred forty-four thousand will march into that city through that gate. They belong to the tribe of Joseph.

Joseph is a wonderful character. We are told that the life of Joseph is an illustration, a type of the life of Christ. There is much in his life that is parallel to the life of our Lord. Like Jesus, Joseph was unjustly accused. He suffered for his virtues rather than his vices. Like Christ, he took all the suffering and unjust accusation patiently. The more he was abused and persecuted the more his beautiful character shone out.

Like Christ, he was betrayed by those near to him. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. It was one of Christ's closest disciples, Judas, who betrayed Him. It was Joseph's own brothers who sold him. In each case the unnatural and inhuman actions called forth no revengeful feelings or hateful attitudes. Both accepted the providence of God.

The particular thing I want to study is how in both the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus the experience of receiving ingratitude and calling for a reaction of divine love is a type and illustration of the love which is to fill the hearts of the remnant down here in this world in these closing hours of human history.

In Matthew 24 we are given a preview of what is ahead for some of us sitting right here in this room. Matthew 24 is the great second advent chapter. Jesus is answering His disciples regarding their question, What shall be the sign of Thy coming and the end of the world? He is telling them about wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes and famine and pestilence. Then He deals with persecution that was back in the first century, persecution that has ever been the lot of the church from that day till now, and persecution which will reach its climax just ahead:

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" Matthew 24:9,10.

Wouldn't it be a terrible experience to be betrayed by somebody you loved and by somebody who had loved you? Wouldn't it be a terrible disappointment? That experience is ahead of us. The authority for it is Jesus Christ. These are His words:

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" verse 12.

When love grows cold, friendship ceases and hatred takes the place of affection. There will be various reasons for those betrayals, and we are given the following:

"Those who apostatize in time of trial will, to secure their own safety, bare false witness, and betray their brethren. Christ has warned us of this, that we may not be surprised at the unnatural, cruel course of those who reject the light" *The Desire of Ages*, page 630.

I tell you, unless we join with Jesus and Joseph in revealing forgiving love, we will join with Judas and with those who betrayed Joseph in betraying our brethren down here today. There will not be any middle class. We will either be the betrayed or the betrayers. We will either be the persecuted or the persecutors. Every one here, unless he dies before his time, will be in one or the other of those classes. I want to read another statement to put with the one I have just read:

"Now is our time of peril. Our only safety is in walking in the footsteps of Christ, and wearing His yoke. Troublous times are before us. In many instances friends will become alienated. Without cause men will become our enemies" *Manuscript, #74, 1902*

The Psalmist prophetically said of Christ that they hated Him without a cause. What about Joseph? Why did they hate him? For the same reason Cain hated Abel. Abel's works were righteous and Cain's works were evil. That is why Simeon and Ruben and the other men hated Joseph. They were doing wicked things, and Joseph's life was righteous. That is why Judas hated Jesus at the end. Judas despised and betrayed Him.

"The motives of the people of God will be misinterpreted not only by the world but by their own brethren. The Lord's servants will be put in hard places" *Ibid.*

Where you ever put in a hard place? The Lord may have you as a candidate for the tribe of Joseph. Did your brethren ever do anything that disappointed you? Remember it was Joseph's brothers who sold him.

When W. C. White was alive, he used to visit us and our company of workers from time to time. One day he was telling us experiences of the past. He told about some experiences that happened when his boys were growing up.

One day they came home from a school they were attending, and related certain experiences to their father. They said, "Why do such good men do such bad things?"

He went on to explain that over and over again in the work of God that sort of thing has happened. Our own brethren may do things we do not understand; things that do not look right; things that perhaps are not right. Joseph went through that experience.

"A mountain will be made out of a molehill to justify men in pursuing a selfish unrighteous course. The work that men have done faithfully will be disparaged and underrated because apparent prosperity does not attend their efforts. By misrepresentation these men will be clothed in the dark vestments of dishonesty because circumstances beyond their control make their work perplexing. They will be pointed to as men who cannot be trusted, and this will be done by members of the church.

"God's servants must arm themselves with the mind of Christ. They must not expect to escape insult and misjudgment. They will be called enthusiasts and fanatics, but let them not become discouraged. God's hand is on the wheel of His providence guiding His work to the glory of His name" *Ibid*.

That is a sad picture. But along with it is a very encouraging picture. Others have gone over the way before us.

In a vision the servant of the Lord saw the remnant people starting out with loaded wagons. They advanced until the way grew narrow, and they had to go on horses and on foot, and finally walked along with bare feet. They noticed marks of blood along the rugged path. Sister White said as she looked she felt sad to see those marks of blood. But at once the thought came to her, thank God, those marks will encourage those who come after.

As we see the trials that Jesus endured, and the trials Joseph endured, we may gather courage.

There is one thing in the life of Joseph I want you to notice. In Joseph's life the betrayal came near the beginning, and he had the joy of seeing some results from the attitude he took in the matter. On the other hand, the one who betrayed Jesus committed the unpardonable sin, and was lost eternally as a result of that betrayal. I think we shall doubtless see both experiences. But it is especially about Joseph's experience I want you to meditate with me.

Joseph fed those men who betrayed him in time of famine. He not only gave them something to eat, but he opened up the best of the land of Egypt that he had charge of, and said to Judah and Simeon and Ruben and Levi, and all the rest, Come men, I have a home for you.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, 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. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God" Genesis 45:4-8.

Oh friends, that is a wonderful experience and a wonderful attitude. I want to tell you something. Joseph didn't get it that day. The brothers found it out that day, but it had been Joseph's feeling toward them all the way through. Notice the message he sends to his father:

"And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty" verses 10,11.

It must have been a wonderful thing for Joseph to see they were all united with him. He had tried them during the preceding days, and as he saw that envy and jealousy and hate and malice was gone, how happy he was that there could be unity. Doubtless he felt as David did hundreds of years later singing:

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" Psalm 133:1.

Some of you will see more in what I have just studied than others, but I want to tell you something. However much we see in it, there is more to it than we see. I say that you and I had better be doing what Joseph was doing. We had better be getting ready to feed and nourish people who sell us. For some it may be too late as it was with Judas. But for some, thank God, it will be, as in the case of Joseph and his brothers, such an exhibition of heaven's love as will melt and draw hearts. But remember, Joseph didn't get that experience at this time. He had it all the way through.

If he had not had that experience, what would he have done when Simeon and Levi and Ruben and Gad were in his hands? You know what he would have done. Did you ever wish you could show some people a thing or two? Give them what they deserve?

Joseph showed them a thing or two, but it was entirely different from what they expected or anticipated in meeting Joseph again. They did not know the heart of Joseph that day twenty years before when, seeing him coming across the fields, they plotted for his life and finally ended up selling him to the Ishmaelites. They called him a hypocrite. They completely misunderstood his hatred of sin, and could not see his love for them as it really was. But now they saw it, and they were fed by the one they had betrayed; the one they had sold.

Years ago God told His people to get out of the cities and into the country, because in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. You can read about it in *Selected Messages*, Book 2, in the wonderful pages on country living. But I want to ask you something. What are you going to do out there in the country? Are you going to make a place for anyone beside yourself and your family? Will you have a place there for someone who did something to you that you did not deserve? Will you have a place for some brother or sister who told lies about you, or threw mud at you, or wronged you, or did something mean to you? Is that a fair question? Yes it is. And I want to tell you something. It will take more than a room and some sacks of corn. It will take a heart that is as big as Joseph's was. And the only way we will be able to do it then is to learn now the experience of forgiving love.

Repeat with me the Lord's prayer:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" Matthew 6:9-13.

Forgive us how? As we forgive. Thank God there is Jesus Christ who is going to feed us forever. We who have been His betrayers and murderers He is going to welcome into the mansions He has prepared for us, and feed us with the bread of life. That is forgiving love.

He says He wants you to treat others just the way He has treated you. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. It is going to be a wonderful privilege to take in some brothers who in days gone by have put obstacles in our way. It is going to be a wonderful thing to welcome them and feed them. Perhaps in the cave of Adullam with David, or perhaps draw from the storehouses as did Joseph. The point is, it will be because forgiving love has been and is in our hearts.

We do not have to wait until that crisis. We can have that spirit and attitude in our hearts right now.

When the Lord revealed to Joseph the meaning of those dreams of Pharaoh, when by the Spirit of Prophecy he saw that ahead was coming the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine, he was not just thinking of Egypt and Pharaoh. He knew that not many miles away, across the border in the land of Canaan, were those brothers who had betrayed and sold him. Acquainted with the providence of God as he was, I feel sure that many a time during those seven years, as he saw the storehouses going up and the grain going in, he thought, Oh what a joy it is going to be when one day we can open the storehouse and feed Ruben and Simeon and Levi and Gad and Issachar, and all those other men who are my brethren.

Did he still call them his brethren? Yes, thank God. And when the famine drew on and week after week went, I can imagine Joseph was watching and listening for any report that would indicate some men from Canaan had come to see if they could get something to eat. And when ten men came, it is no accident that Joseph and those ten men got together.

You remember the story. Joseph put them through various experiences to see what their present attitude was. But through it all he had two great objectives in mind. One was to be sure they and their families had something to eat. The other was to see how the grace of God had worked in their lives that there might be reconciliation and love and unity between them as members of the father's family once again. In all of that Joseph forgot himself, which is a very fine thing to do. In fact, to forget ourselves it is the only way we can forgive others.

Jesus did not think of Himself. He prayed even for those who drove the nails through His hands and feet. And as something of that forgiving love reaches and melts our hearts, it will reach out through us to others.

What do you think of the prospect of feeding those who sold you? Does it appeal to you? Would you be willing to store up wheat and corn? Would you be willing to welcome them? Give them a bed and a place at your fireplace and at your table?

As we look into the future, and famine and earthquake and pestilence and persecution of all kinds gather over the earth, you and I know that we are going into a time far worse than that time of trouble Joseph prepared for back in Egypt. We will not be able to store vast granaries as Joseph did, but we can do what the Lord has told us.

We can get ready for the time just ahead. And we can, as Joseph did, prepare our hearts to show forgiving, brotherly love toward those who have opposed us, circulated reports about us, told lies about us, or done anything else to injure us. We will have the privilege of feeding and entertaining them, and taking some of them with us through the gates to the city of God.

To learn to do that is our present assignment. In order that you and I may learn it, from time to time and day to day, you and I are given opportunities to forgive somebody for something they have done to us.

Has anyone done anything against you today, or yesterday, last week, or last month? Looking back over the past year, has anyone offended you, or given you something you might be offended about? Will you not like Jesus say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Will you not like Joseph think of some nice good thing you can do for those who have thus treated you? Thus we shall be preparing to share in that wonderful blessing of Joseph, the one who was separated from his brethren, but who at last became their savior in the time of famine.

Precious Lord, rightly interpret to each heart the message of this vesper meditation as it applies to each heart. If there be ought in any mind and soul of malice or revenge or lukewarm toleration, Oh Lord, lift our sights, and may we see the great joy and privilege of being like Joseph. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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