

# The Test for the Brothers of Joseph

## *Genesis 44:1-34*

- I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE TEST (Genesis 44:1, 2)
  - A. The Passing of the Former Test (Genesis 43:33-34)
    1. In the last two verses of chapter 43 the brothers prove to Joseph a change of character in two areas.
      - a. The seating arrangement
      - b. Benjamin's mess being 5x's as much as the rest of the brothers.
    2. The test given (Genesis 43:33-34)
      - a. Joseph wanted to see how they would react to each one being favoured or disfavoured in their placement.
      - b. Joseph wanted to see, in giving Benjamin a better portion than the rest of the brothers, if their attitude would change toward Benjamin. Certainly, they had shown jealousy and hatred toward Joseph years before.
    3. They did not show any jealousy toward Benjamin (Genesis 43:34)
  - B. The Preparation for the Final Test (Genesis 44:1, 2)
    1. The preparing of the corn in the sacks (Genesis 44:1)
      - a. Joseph commanded the steward, "*saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry.*"
      - b. Joseph's love for his brothers is evident in his generosity toward them.
      - c. Before testing them:
        - (1) He gave them a feast (supped with them)
        - (2) And filled their sacks (filling them with corn to brim)
    2. The preparing of the cash in the sacks (Genesis 44:1)
      - a. "*And put every man's money in his sack's mouth.*"
      - b. This love-motivated generosity will also serve to test the brothers when Benjamin is arrested, they're told they could leave and go back home.
        - (1) The brothers had shown remorse over their sin during the duress of their presence before Joseph on the first trip.
        - (2) However, prosperity (the money here in the sacks) often causes the repenter to return to his old ways (Deuteronomy 24:17; see Deuteronomy 16:19).
    3. The preparing of a particular cup (Genesis 44:2)
      - a. "*And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest.*"

- b. This act would indict Benjamin and show whether the brothers would forsake him.

## II. THE PURSUIT IN THE TEST (Genesis 44:3-13)

### A. The Sending Before the Pursuit (Genesis 44:3)

1. *“As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.”*
2. The plan was to let the brothers go on their way and then Joseph would send his steward after them.
3. All the while the cup was planted in Benjamin’s sack.

### B. The Commencement of the Pursuit (Genesis 44:4)

1. *“Up, follow after the men.”*
2. The quickness of the pursuit would cause a sudden change in the brothers’ attitudes and situation.
3. They likely had been rejoicing and reflecting over the previous day’s events.
  - a. Joseph had hosted them.
    - (1) Giving them a feast
    - (2) Releasing unto them Simeon
    - (3) And still they had Benjamin.
  - b. This will soon change with the arrival of the steward from Joseph.
  - c. Trials are often like this—They will come upon us suddenly with no warning. The Psalmist Asaph seems to have experienced such a situation (Psalm 73:1-26).
    - (1) His *“steps had well nigh slipped.”*
    - (2) He was *“envious at the foolish.”*
    - (3) He believed that they were *“not in trouble as other men.”*
    - (4) He believed that he had *“cleansed”* his *“heart in vain.”*
    - (5) Until he went into God’s house (Psalm 73:17-26)
    - (6) As believers we need to be constantly in the word to help us through life’s trials.

### C. The Charge in the Pursuit (Genesis 44:4, 5, 6)

1. The steward charged the brothers... *“Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh...?”*
2. The words in this charge or accusation were dictated by Joseph. They indicted the brothers for stealing Joseph’s cup.

3. The charge said they had “*rewarded evil for good.*” Joseph had treated them very nicely and released Simeon, but instead of being grateful, they had returned evil for good by taking that which belonged to Joseph.
  - a. This false charge would sting. But the brothers had obviously accused Joseph falsely; thus, they were looking in the mirror again at their own sins.
  - b. Examples from scripture:
    - (1) Nabal and his treatment of David (1 Samuel 25:21)
    - (2) The Psalmist David concerning evil and good (Psalm 35:12; Psalm 38:20; Psalm 109:5)
    - (3) The rewarding of evil for good and the end reward of doing so (Proverbs 17:13; Isaiah 5:20)
    - (4) Concerning those that should know to do right (Jeremiah 4:22)
  
- D. The Complaint Over the Pursuit (Genesis 44:7-9)
  1. The proof in the complaint (Genesis 44:7, 8)
    - a. The argument here is that the brothers proved their innocence by returning the money they found in their sacks.
    - b. To charge them with stealing went contrary to their proven conduct.
    - c. Note: The brothers’ actions and statements are classic of the man of the world—a self-righteous, self-justifying sinner (Genesis 44:7-8; Isaiah 64:6; Revelation 3:17-18; note Job’s comment Job 14:4; Romans 7:18)
  2. The proposition in the complaint (Genesis 44:9)
    - a. The brothers were so sure of themselves that they offered who(m)ever had the cup could be put to death, and the rest be made bondmen.
      - (1) Note: The brothers admitted here that the wages of sin is death.
      - (2) Thus, they offered the life of the offender (Genesis 44:9-10).
    - b. The proposition was accepted, howbeit in a modified form (Genesis 44:10)—only the guilty would be punished and that by slavery not slaying. Joseph will repeat that punishment later.
  
- E. The Calamity from the Pursuit (Genesis 44:11, 12, 13)
  1. The finding of the cup
    - a. After the dialogue with the steward the brothers quickly removed their sacks (Genesis 44:11).
    - b. “*The cup was found in Benjamin’s sack*” (Genesis 44:12)
    - c. Not only was this unexpected it was the worse case scenario.
  2. The feelings of the brothers
    - a. “*Then they rent their clothes*” (Genesis 44:13)
    - b. This reaction showed the change in the brothers was real and sincere.
    - c. Note: The sinner comes to a crisis point which must be resolved.
  3. The faithfulness to the proposition
    - a. The brothers were faithful to their proposal.
    - b. Neither would they forsake Benjamin.

## III. THE PRONOUNCEMENTS IN THE TEST (Genesis 44:14-17)

- A. The Obeisance Before the Pronouncement (Genesis 44:14)
  1. Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house. They had to come to his (Joseph's) house on his (Joseph's) terms.
  2. The brothers came in and bowed themselves before Joseph—no negotiating, no money, just pleas for forgiveness (Genesis 44:14) Note two things from this.
    - a. One, this once again fulfills Joseph's dreams of Genesis 37 (Genesis 37:7). This is the fourth time (Genesis 42:6; Genesis 43:26, 28; and here) that scripture records the fulfillment of the prophecy of the dream of Joseph.
    - b. Two, Joseph as a type of Christ: The brothers came in with just pleas of forgiveness, no buying their way out of a mess, no "doing it their way", just simple pleas for mercy (Genesis 44:14, 16)
- B. The Criticism in the Pronouncement (Genesis 44:15)
- C. The Offering for the Pronouncement (Genesis 44:16)
  1. The mediator in the offer—Judah steps forward to make a selfless offer similar to the one the brothers made to the steward.
  2. The confession in the offer
    - a. Judah may not have meant this to include their sin with Joseph, but it did.
    - b. Indeed, God hath found out the iniquity of the boys in selling Joseph. God always finds out our iniquity.
  3. The commitment in the offer
    - a. *"We are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found."*
    - b. They would not forsake Benjamin. If he is to be punished, they will stand by him and share the punishment. This is real evidence of change.
    - c. Judah offered the brothers as servants to Joseph. These brothers had come to the end of their rope; they knew they were guilty before Joseph (Numbers 32:23; James 4:10). They finally recognized their sin and guilt from God's perspective (Genesis 44:16).
  4. The confirmation in the offer
    - a. Years earlier the brothers in challenging the dreams of Joseph said, *"shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?"* (Genesis 37:8).
    - b. Now, it seems Joseph is in that very position. They are now confirming that very message.
    - c. Note: Sinners may challenge the word of God with a great deal of sarcasm, but the day will come when they will confirm it (Acts 17:31).

## D. The Ordinance in the Pronouncement (Genesis 44:17)

1. The justice in the ordinance (v. 17a)—Only the guilty would be punished. This will put pressure on the brothers and will expose their character.
2. The journey in the ordinance (v. 17b)—They had a chance to walk. Would they greedily forsake Benjamin for personal freedom, or would they stand by him.

## IV. THE PLEA FROM THE TEST (Genesis 44:18-34)

## A. The Courtesy in the Plea (Genesis 44:18)

1. Judah steps up and begins to speak.
2. The humility of Judah
  - a. Twice Judah uses the word “*servant*”
  - b. Courtesy often involves and necessitates humility. Which is why so many folks lack courtesy in the day in which we live. To be humble and to be courteous, pride cannot play a part.
3. The honour for Joseph
  - a. Judah requested permission to speak to Joseph.
  - b. He talked to Joseph as though he was talking to Pharaoh (Genesis 44:18; Acts 20:21).

## B. The Centrality of the Plea (Genesis 44:19-31)

1. Judah reminded Joseph of his request for the brothers to bring Benjamin (Genesis 44:19-23).
2. Joseph tested their *honesty* with the money; he tested their *jealousy* when Benjamin was given the greatest portion to eat; he tested their *loyalty* to their father and Benjamin.
3. Judah told Joseph that Jacob sent them to Egypt again for more food (Genesis 44:25).
4. The brothers told their father that they could not return to Egypt without Benjamin (Genesis 44:26).
5. Jacob told his sons of Benjamin’s importance (Genesis 44:27-29).
  - a. He told the sons that his wife bore him two sons (Genesis 44:27).
  - b. He mentioned that Joseph had been taken from him and torn in pieces (Genesis 44:28).
  - c. He mentioned that if Benjamin also was taken from him, he would go down to the grave in sorrow (Genesis 44:29).
6. Judah told Joseph that Jacob would die (Genesis 44:30-31).
  - a. The life of Jacob was bound in the life of Benjamin (Genesis 44:30).
  - b. Jacob would go down to the grave in sorrow (Genesis 44:31).
7. Judah told Joseph that it would be their fault (Genesis 44:31).

## C. The Climax of the Plea (Genesis 44:32-34)

1. Judah told Joseph that he became surety for the life of his brother Benjamin (Genesis 43:8-9; Genesis 44:32). Note: Judah as a type of Christ: Christ made Himself the surety for the believers (Hebrews 7:22).
2. Judah asked Joseph to take him as a bondman in the stead of Benjamin (Genesis 44:33).
  - a. He was willing to sacrifice the rest of his life so that Benjamin could live the rest of his life.
  - b. Note: Judah as a type of Christ: This act of Judah foreshadows Christ who *“took upon him the form of a servant... humbled himself”* (Philippians 2:7, 8) in order to die in our place on the cross to save us.
  - c. Note: Judah as a type of Christ: The Lord Jesus Christ took our place and gave Himself in our stead (Romans 5:6-8).
3. Judah told Joseph that he could not return without Benjamin and therefore witness the evil it would cause his father (Genesis 44:34). Judah would rather have suffered sorrow above measure and die in an Egyptian jail than to see his father brokenhearted again. Note: Judah as a type of Christ: Jesus willingly gave His life and bore the sins of the world in order to please His Father (Isaiah 53:10; 1 Peter 2:24).
4. Judah’s affection for his father and his brother was proof absolute that the brothers had changed in character indeed!