

Building on Biblical Foundations

“Providence”

Part 2

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The Lord took all of this in Joseph’s life and used it to mold him into a mighty leader. And we see a beautiful illustration of God’s providence unfold in all its perfection.

Out of the pit and into the palace. When all was ready. . . when Joseph was ready, the Lord lifted him into position.

When we left Joseph last week, he was in prison, erroneously accused and condemned.

But the Lord was not ignorant of Joseph’s condition, on the contrary he was still at work in Joseph and the circumstances unfolding all around him.

As we continue with the story of Joseph I believe it is important for each of us to insert ourselves into this story. . . .

Remember not to lean on your understanding, The Lord himself is the author of your process and the finisher of your faith – of your life. We all have limited understanding but HE holds the blueprint of history ... Follow his lead and trust. even when it does not make sense to you. Sometimes our trusting happens while we wait. We are not following persay. . .we are just still before him... waiting. Waiting for instructions, waiting on circumstances to change, waiting on others to respond... it is important that we stay right there in faith, in hope, in expectation. The Lord has NOT forgotten you. HE did not forget Joseph.

What happened next? It is estimated that 11 years passed from the time Joseph was sold to Potiphar and the time he was released from prison. It was 2 years after the dream interpretation – that the cup bearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him.

We spoke last week about the process Joseph was in. The Lord was preparing him for a purpose that was yet to unfold. In this process Joseph faced a number of trials and tests and passed them all:

- Rejection from his brothers.
- Humiliation being sold into Egypt as a slave.
- Sexual temptation and faithful service when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him.

- False accusations.
 - Imprisoned without guilt.
 - He loneliness and disappointment when he was forgotten by the cup bearer/butler.
- Perhaps his greatest test was yet to come. Prosperity.

Pharaoh's Dreams: . (Genesis 41:1-8)

1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile.

2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass.

3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.

4 And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good.

6 Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them.

7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

8 Now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

The cup bearer remembers Joseph. Finally, after 2 years have passed. He tells Pharaoh his story from prison and his dream interpretation by Joseph.

Pharaoh calls for Joseph to be brought to him. They fetch him from the dungeon and, clean him up and present him before Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:15-16

15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

And Joseph – relying upon the Lord to give him the interpretation – gives Pharaoh this answer:

NO SLIDES FOR THESE VERSES –

Genesis 41:25-32

25 Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

26 The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same.

27 And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 "It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

29 Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt;

30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land.

31 So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.

32 Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

Not only was Joseph given the interpretation of the dream – but also the wisdom of how to prepare for the coming famine.

Genesis 41:33-36

33 "And now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. 35 Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. 36 And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine."

And what comes next? Transformation that is nothing less than miraculous for Joseph.

JUST READ – NO SLIDES

37 Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?"

39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.

40 You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you."

41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck.

43 And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt. (Genesis 41:37-45).

Za phe nath -pa neah means "the god speaks and he lives."

For the next 7 years Joseph undertook the administrative task of preparing for the famine. He took food supplies from each city and stored them up – 20% of all of the grain of those years.

When the seven years of prosperity were at an end, a famine came over the land. This famine was not only limited to Egypt, but it was in all the lands, even as far as Canaan.

As food shortages became severe, Joseph opened up the storehouses and began to *sell food* to the Egyptians.

Why did he not give it out to them? The Lord had given Joseph wisdom in administering the food stores during the famine. To dole it out in limited amounts preserved the stores so there would be food enough to last throughout the entire. We all know what happens when it is free. . . there is the opportunity to take more than we need.

This is also illustrative of how the Lord provides for us. . . one day at a time. We are also instructed not to store up for ourselves. . .but to rely upon the Lord for our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11).

Joseph learned to lean on the Lord despite his circumstance. We need to do likewise.

But this is to the end of our story. . . there is still more.

Joseph was 17 when he was thrown into the pit and 30 years old when Pharaoh elevated him to second over all of Egypt.

When the famine reached Canaan, Israel sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. So Joseph's brothers visited him, except Benjamin – his younger brother. Joseph recognized them, but hid his identity.

He sent them away holding back Simeon. They go back to their father and he is distressed. He doesn't want to send Benjamin but when they run out of food again – he relents and send Benjamin.

This time Joseph reveals who he is – their brother. You would think that what would follow was his vengeance for the betrayal and wickedness they did to him. But instead he weeps. He extends forgiveness and explains that what they may have intended for evil God used to deliver many from this famine – included his own family.

What a turn about! Forgiveness is key!

- Forgiveness is a choice, as demonstrated by Joseph's willingness to let go of past hurts and resentments.
- Forgiveness can lead to reconciliation and restoration of relationships, as witnessed in Joseph's reunion with his brothers.
- Forgiveness is a characteristic of people who follow God,

We end the book of Genesis with Israel blessing his sons – later to be known as the 12 tribes of Israel just before his death.

READ ONLY – NO SLIDES

Genesis 50:15-26

15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, ^[b]It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will pay us again all the evil which we did unto him.

16 Therefore they sent unto Joseph, saying, Thy father commanded before his death, saying,

17 Thus shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive now, I pray thee, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin: for they rewarded thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of thy father's ^[b]God. And Joseph wept, when ^[b]they spake unto him.

18 Also his brethren came unto him, and fell down before his face, and said, Behold, we be thy servants.

19 To whom Joseph said, Fear not: for I am not I under God?

20 When ye thought evil against me, God disposed it to good, that he might bring to pass, as it is this day, and save much people alive.

21 Fear not now therefore, I will nourish you, and your children: and he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

22 ¶ So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children, even unto the third generation: also the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought upon Joseph's knees.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am ready to die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones hence.

26 So Joseph died, when he was an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and put him in a chest in Egypt.

This brings Chapter 50 and the book of Genesis to an end.

In these 50 chapters we have learned much. From creation of the world, the fall of man, the redemption of Noah and his family, the great flood, the rise and fall of Nimrod, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who becomes Israel – God's chosen people – selected from among all the nations of the earth to be the bearer of his message to all the people – and the lineage from which the Messiah comes.

Again and again we have witnessed the providence of God regarding his creation. He protects, he provides, he instructs, he corrects, he forgives, he bestows mercy, he blesses. From generation to generation he is constant and faithful.

To this very day – the providence of the Lord is at work in the earth among his people. He has placed each of us right here right now in this very instance of time to do His will.

Even those who seem unaware are playing their part in the bigger picture. Joseph's brothers threw him into the pit – a plan which certainly seems contrary on its face. But the Lord sent Joseph ahead of them into Egypt – he found favor with Pharaoh and was strategically placed by God to be HIS instrument of deliverance for all Israel and all of the surrounding nations.

How do we recognize the Providence of God in our lives? Are we in sync with His plans?

How can we- like Josph - be aligned with the Lord? Ready for service?

1. Put on the Mind of Christ - Do we have the mind of Christ? Do we take every thought captive and submit it to Jesus?
2. Speak the Word of God. Does our speech reflect the Word of God? Are we speaking truth? Do our words line up, in agreement with what we have been taught by the scriptures?
3. See with heaven's perspective. Do we have the vision of heaven? Do we see with eyes of faith?

These three things – our thoughts, our words and our vision should align with the purposes of God. This takes effort on our part. It takes focus. Concentration. Commitment. Patience. Diligence. But when we do – we will indeed be put at ease. As the Lord promises our minds will be kept in perfect peace. Regardless of what is happening in the world around us – we will go from glory to glory. The Lord will increase in us, as the world and its desires shrink back.

The goal for every believer is to be of service to the Lord. To be at the ready. At the ready for what? Ah that is indeed the question. To be ready for whatever the Lord calls you to. . .to be a slave, to be a prisoner, to be a deliverer. To be available for the Lord's use.

Here I am Lord – send me.

Let's take communion – and pray.