

Building on Biblical Foundations

“Providence”

Part 1

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Genesis 3

August 18, 2024

Genesis 37, 39, 40 – Summarized -

We have come to one of my favorite biblical accounts – the story of Joseph.

Genesis chapters 37- 50 tell us the story of Joseph. I will summarize these few chapters and we will look deeply at what the Lord is teaching us through this account.

You can read it in your own bibles this week and continue on to the end of Genesis. We will take two weeks to cover this title – *Providence*.

Genesis 37:3 – 4

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”

5And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

His father sends him to Shechem where his brothers are tending his flock. When they see Joseph coming they conspire to kill him.

Genesis 37: 19-20

19And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

20Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

But Reuben heard them and – said let us not kill him. But throw him into the pit – he planned to return and fetch Joseph and bring him back home.

The brothers agreed with this plan. They striped Joseph of this coat and threw him into the pit and then sat down to lunch. As they were eating, **“a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.”**

Judah said – what profit is it to kill him, let’s sell him instead. SO they sold him for 20 pieces of silver. When Reuben returned to the pit, Joseph was gone. And he mourned.

The other brothers took Joseph’s coat, soaked it in the blood of a goat and tore it, and brought this to their father. Israel assumed Joseph had ben devoured by a wild beast and not one corrected him.

Meanwhile – Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar – an officer of Pharaoh - the captain of the guard.

We are going to skip chapter 38. You can read it. It is a side story concerning Reuben.

We pick up the account of Joseph again in Chapter 39.

Chapter 39: 2- 3

And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

Potiphar made Joseph an overseer in his house and over all he had. . .
Verse 5:

“. . . the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.”

Verse 6: “And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.”

Things are going well for Joseph and then. . . Potiphar’s wife takes an extra special liking to him.

When he refuses her, she lies and accuses him of trying to rape her. Potiphar has him thrown into prison. But once again the Lord is with him.

Genesis 39: 21-13

But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

23The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

Living in prison in Egypt – falsely accused and wrongly condemned, Joseph is still in the hand of God. There is no mistake. This is not a punishment.

Here in prison Joseph encounters two of Pharaoh’s servants. The chief butler and chief baker. Each has a dream and Joseph says to them:

Genesis 40:8 And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.”

They tell him their dreams and Joseph tells them the interpretations that the Lord shows him. In 3 days one is to be restored to his old position and the other is to be executed. And truly in 3 days those things come to pass.

The Chief butler is restored but he forgets Joseph. . . .

We will pick this up at Chapter 41 next week.

Let’s look at what the Lord is showing us thus far. I called this Providence

What is Providence?

The word "providence" comes from the Latin providentia (Gk. pronoia [provnoia]) and means essentially foresight or making provision beforehand.

Well that sound like God doesn't it? I found this explanation of the Providence of the Lord:

"The Extent of Providence. Simply put, providence encompasses every aspect of the created order. From beginning to end, from heaven to earth, from animate to inanimate, from individuals to nations, from hours to ages, from weeds to wheat, from birth to death, from catastrophe to calm — everything is within the loving presence and involvement of the heavenly father. In his wisdom, power, righteousness, and love he is hastening slowly to work out his own eternal purposes for his own glory and for our eternal good. Because this is such an all-pervasive theme throughout the Scriptures it is possible only to give a selective, though representative account of what is taught there."

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/providence-of-god/>

We see that from the beginning the Lord's blessing was upon Joseph. – What??? IF that is blessing –betrayed by your own brothers, sold as a slave before anyone could rescue you, falsely accused, innocently charged and condemned and left rotting in a prison in Egypt???? If this is blessing – you can keep it right?

There is no doubt that the Lord was with Joseph from his childhood. Several times we read that the Lord was with him and everything he touched prospered. It did not matter where he was. . .whether in his father's house, the Egyptian Captain's house or in a prison cell.

It is also important to note that Joseph – even in his distress – knew that any good that came from him was from the Lord. The power to interpret dreams, the ability to manage the Captain's household and affairs.

How many times in your life did you land somewhere that was less than desirable? Wrongly accused? Unjustly punished? Slandered? Betrayed by someone you thought loved you?

With each trial that Joseph faced, he was being shaped. He was being prepared. Prepared for what? For the purpose that the Lord had created for him since before he was even born. He did not understand why he was being crushed, but he did not reject the Lord in the crushing process.

The Lord warns us that we too shall be crushed. We will be tried and tested. We are also being prepared. Each of us has a heavenly purpose that exceeds our vocation. Sometimes you get a glimpse of it. Most of the time, it is revealed in the person you are becoming. The crushing is revealing Jesus in you – the hope of Glory. The process . . . if you will surrender to it . . . produces wisdom. Not just learning, not just knowledge, but wisdom. Wisdom gives us the ability to discern the times, the ability to apply knowledge to situations and provide solutions.

James 1:2-5

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

The process is important, vitally important.

How do you know if this trial you are enduring is from the Lord to prepare you for what is yet to come? Are you his child? Then He is working all things out for your good and his glory. ALL things!!!

Next week we will see how the Lord took all of this in Joseph's life and used it to mold him into a mighty leader. A beautiful illustration of God's providence will unfold in all its perfection.

When Joseph was ready, he was lifted – out of the pit and into the palace. Let's take communion – and pray.