

Joseph, Sermon #9

Genesis 41—the life of Joseph

Last week, we saw Joseph promoted from the prison to the palace—he was
Providentially elevated

We must not forget that everything we have seen occurring in Joseph's life is not just for Joseph individually but it all has national significance and, furthermore, of Jesus coming out of Israel, it has international importance.

This passage tells us of the series of events that God designed to make possible the bringing of Jacob and his sons to Egypt.

I have entitled today's message "Joseph's Administration"

Genesis 41:45

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Genesis 41:45-57

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

Joseph's Administration

The question now before Joseph was, Would he be able to accept prosperity and still keep his heart right with God?

He was only 30 years old at this time and his new position and prosperity could have easily turned his attention away from spiritual things.

Consider how prosperity can affect a person.

Prosperity often brings pride, and *"pride goeth before destruction"* (Prov. 16:18).

One has only to think of such men as Nebuchadnezzar and Herod to realize that this is true.

The Word of God also makes clear that *"only by pride cometh contention"* (Prov. 13:10).

The Bible also says, *"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"* (I Pet. 5:5)

Prosperity often makes a man hard and selfish.

Frequently it causes him to forget the friends of his humble youth.

And worst of all it often causes him to forget God.

Egypt symbolized the world, and although Joseph was in Egypt, Egypt was not in him. His life was not divided between secular and sacred.

Money can change people.

The Hebrews were an abomination to the Egyptians (Gen. 46:34) and Pharaoh had a plan to help Joseph.

As far as the Egyptians were concerned, in spite of the high esteem in which he was now held, there was still one problem.

Joseph was not an Egyptian, and this would inevitably be a hindering factor in the effectiveness with which he could carry out his duties.

Because of Joseph's alien background, Pharaoh decided to confer, insofar as possible, Egyptian citizenship and social status on Joseph, making it easier for him to be accepted as second ruler by the Egyptian people.

First, a name change— Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah [revealer of secret things)

Then, Pharaoh obtained a suitable wife for Joseph—suitable in the eyes of the Egyptians, that is.

Vs. 45—records Joseph's marriage—it was a part of his promotion.

The girl chosen was the daughter of an Egyptian priest.
Nothing is said about her except her name and parentage.

This introduces us to a problem

Joseph is marrying a heathen.

This is an age-old problem—of believers with unbelievers in marriage—this is forbidden.

This is a major problem, because if you notice the girl's name, it is Asenath, which means devoted to Nath; Nath is an Egyptian goddess.

Her name speaks of the dedication, at least by her family, to their false god.

Her father's name is Potiffera (Po-Tiff-era).

His name means devoted to Ray, the sun god.

It gets worse if you notice Joseph's father-in-law's occupation—he is the priest of On (*Own*).

Own was a religious center just to the north of Memphis on the eastern bank of the Nile and dedicated to the worship of the sun god, Ray.

This guy is a priest in that occultic system and he is marrying into that family.

His father-in-law is a problem.

Let me remind all of us that at this time, the Law of God had not been given.

We can only assume that Joseph, dedicated as he was to the Lord, would not have consented to marry her unless he was satisfied that she would leave her own pagan beliefs to follow Jehovah.

She was to be the mother of Joseph's children, and the problems encountered in his own home background would have caused him to understand fully how essential it would be for him and his wife to have one mind in the training of their children to follow the Lord.

In any case, Joseph did marry her and, from all evidence, did find her to be a suitable and faithful mother for his children.

So far as the record goes, at least, Joseph never married any wife other than Asenath.

So, we have Joseph being assimilated into Egyptian culture.

Beginning in verse 46, we have the record of Joseph's administration.

Joseph immediately proceeded to get to work on the project with which he had been entrusted.

The first thing he had to do, of course, was to go "out over all the land of Egypt."

He needed to have firsthand knowledge of the resources and people, and this could only be acquired by a survey region by region.

Vs. 46-48—every major metropolis, the fields around contributed to that storage facility, much like our co-ops of today.

Vs. 49

I. First thing, I want you to notice about Joseph's administration was the tremendous responsibility placed on a 30-year-old man.

To be the chief of one of the international powers in that time and to be responsible to lay up food for its survival, to provide for the nation for seven years of famine—this is a burden of fourteen years.

The way God kept His word in verse 47 and brought forth by handfuls.

For the land of Egypt to be prosperous, the Nile had to overflow its banks every year. The flood waters brought black mud and made it very fertile and then the water receded and they would sow it.

Way up the Nile it would have to rain enough to cause the flood depositing rich black silt and then it would have to recede soon enough and stay within its banks until the crop was reaped.

God is in charge of the weather to bring this about for seven years.

II. Secondly, Joseph was very wise in his administration—heavy responsibility.

Verses 50-52, we get a little insight to Joseph's domestic life.

They record some sober reflection of Joseph's life and God's dealing with him.

Vs. 51 – Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh, which means forgetting. What does Joseph want to forget? Why is that significant?

Vs. 51 – forget antagonism of his hateful brothers—all gone

He realized that God meant it for good (50:20).

Therefore, looking at the past from that perspective, he attained victory over his bad memories and bitterness.

He could have carried a grudge in his heart because of the way his brothers had treated him, but grudges are like weeds in a lovely garden or germs in a healthy body: they just don't belong there.

. . . meaning "Forgetting," and signifying that God had caused Joseph to forget all the long years of suffering and rejection he had endured—not in the sense that he had no memory of them, of course, but rather that the bitterness had been removed.

Joseph could now see, as he later told his brothers (Genesis 50:20), that all of his troubles had been allowed by God for his own good and for his family's ultimate deliverance.

As we are conformed more and more to the image of Jesus Christ, we will be so thrilled with what God has accomplished in our lives that we will tend to forget the tests and sufferings that were used to cause us to be conformed to God's Son.

The Apostle Paul's testimony was, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:13,14).

What was Paul referring to when he said he was forgetting those things that were behind?

He was forgetting all the trials and tests, the stonings and shipwrecks because his attention was focused on God and how he might glorify Him.

Paul did not dwell on the past; he fixed his eyes on God and looked to the future glory and reward with Him

Vs. 52

Second son is Ephraim which means doubly fruitful, abundance

Why the name of Ephraim? Vs. 52e

Vs. 51-52 – is Joseph’s personal outline of his life.

The years of toil and affliction and the years of forgetting and fruitfulness—have you ever stopped to think that there is no fruitfulness without affliction?

Joseph can say so easily, “I forget.”

Folks, it is possible to forget the affliction? the hungry times? the suffering?

God can help us forget.

III. Thirdly, God’s preparation of the land to receive Jacob and his sons.

Vs. 53

The seven years of bountiful crops are over now, and the famine will begin.

At this time Joseph is thirty-seven years old.

Keep that in mind for the next chapter.

Vs. 54

Here we have international famine—the famine is worldwide.

Vs. 54e – “but” – vs. 54e

Vs. 55

Joseph made the people go as far as they could with their own resources.

Let them come to the brink of famine and then the people cried unto Pharaoh and

Pharaoh said go see Joseph.

What he saith to you, do.

When the people began to be concerned, naturally their first reaction was to complain to Pharaoh.

It is the government's responsibility to provide food for us, they reasoned, though they could hardly have expected Pharaoh to decree an increase in the flow of water in the Nile!

In this case, however, thanks to Joseph, the government really was able to help them.

Pharaoh simply sent proclamations throughout the land announcing that food was available, and that they could obtain it by dealing with Joseph's food administration.

Joseph, in turn, waited as long as possible, the better to conserve the grain which was available, and then, finally he opened up the storehouses to allow the people to purchase grain.

This was not a give-away program.

These people bartered what they had in order to provide for themselves

It might surprise some that Joseph “sold” grain to the Egyptians during this period (v. 56).

But we should remember that they had been warned of the impending disaster, and that having to pay for food would encourage them to draw on the limited supply sparingly.

One cannot help but be impressed by Joseph’s ingenious administration, to say nothing of the boundless energy with which he traveled throughout the land while preparing for the famine (v. 45).

Advocates of welfare may wonder why Joseph did not simply give the food to the people instead of making them buy it.

Joseph instead maintained strict control over the supplies, in order to prevent looting and waste, knowing that even the vast supplies that had been accumulated would have to be carefully husbanded to last through seven long years of famine.

He then sold them for a reasonable price and on an equitable basis to all who were in need of grain.

Had it been given away, it would have rewarded indolence and shortsightedness.

Vs. 56c-e – vs. 57

Then the famine came to that area of the Middle East, and Joseph provided the food that saved the lives of the people.

But visitors started coming from other nations to get food, and Joseph knew that one day his brothers would arrive and bow down before him.

Then would begin the greatest drama of all: restoring relationships in a divided home and healing wounds that had been festering for many years.

This is the first in a series of providential events with Israel that has continued right up to the present day.

God will move Heaven and earth for these people always.

As the famine wore on in other lands as well, news reached them about the Egyptian storehouses; and they began to send caravans and missions down to Egypt to buy corn.

Eventually this situation would lead to the migration of Jacob and his family to Egypt. This, of course, was the ultimate purpose, in God's economy, of the entire series of events.

These proportions constitute a remarkable testimony to both the overwhelming abundance which God had provided during the first seven years and also to the exceptional efficiency of Joseph's management of the gradually dwindling stores of grain during the last seven years.

People can, when they have to, get by quite well on far less than they are accustomed to during good times.

God has graciously promised to supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19), but not necessarily all our wants.

By the time the famine came, Joseph had been in Egypt twenty years. He had never received any word from his family during all that time. For all he knew, his father might well be dead.

Joseph must often have longed to see him, and even his brothers.

Probably, since coming to power in Egypt, he must have considered taking a trip (well protected by soldiers) back into Canaan to look up the family again; but, if so, he had presumably been hindered from it by the pressure of the business activities for which he was responsible.

In any case, it would not be much longer now before God would be sending his relatives down to him in Egypt.

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Rear of Document

New name, new career, new wife, new job, new family

He was not the kind of person who would have one kind of ethics in business and another kind in church or at home.

All his life was dedicated to God at all times.

That is why he was successful and always ready for what God had for him to do.

Romans 8:28-29: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."