

## THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

*"In light of Genesis as a whole, Joseph clearly plays a major role by being one of the 'firstborn' through whom God's blessing is imparted to others."  
 – T. Desmond Alexander, From Paradise to the Promised Land*

## God & Joseph: His Rise to Power in Egypt

### The Theological Background:

#### The Threefold Office and God's Design for Mankind

- We saw that from the beginning of creation, mankind was to relate to God in certain ways that reflect what theologians would later refer to as the Threefold Office.

Adam as \_\_\_\_\_ → He was to know the Word of the Lord (Gen. 1:28; 2:16-17) and to speak it to his wife and children so that they might worship the Lord and serve Him faithfully

Adam as \_\_\_\_\_ → He was to "work" and "keep" (terminology used of the work of priests in Num. 18:5-6), guarding the Garden, himself, and his family from the defilement of sin as well as extending God's blessings.

Adam as \_\_\_\_\_ → He was to exercise dominion over the earth, stewarding creation and helping it to flourish to the glory of God.

- Despite Adam and Eve's failures in these areas, this remained the pattern for how man was to relate to God. Many of the individuals highlighted in the Genesis narrative can be assessed in terms of their successes and failures in carrying out each of these roles.

### Joseph in Potiphar's House: Genesis 39:1-20

The "Spurned Seductress" Motif – There are several examples of stories like this found in literature from the ANE. These all, however, involve deities and are not written as historical accounts the way that Genesis portrays the story of Joseph.

*The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. –Gen. 39:2-5*

"Yahweh was with Joseph" (39:2,3,21,23) → This emphasizes the sovereignty of Yahweh over all of these events.

#### The "Blessing" of Yahweh

- The Hebrew word here is *berakhah*, a term has major theological significance throughout Genesis.
  - God promised to **ble**ss Abraham and that he would be a **ble**ssing to others (Gen. 12:1-3)
  - Jacob stole the **ble**ssing that was intended by Isaac for Esau (Gen. 27:35-36)
  - When Jacob wrestled with God, he pleaded with Him to **ble**ss him (Gen. 32:26)

Point of Emphasis – The text is showing us that \_\_\_\_\_ is the one of Jacob's sons who has received the blessing of Yahweh as did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

*Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." ...And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. –Gen. 39:6b-7,10*

### The Priestly Role of Joseph

- ⇒ Joseph mediated the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord to others. (39:3-5)
- ⇒ Joseph guarded his own \_\_\_\_\_, and refused to allow the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord to be profaned. (39:9b)

### Joseph in Prison: Genesis 39:21-41:13

*But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. –Gen. 39:21*

- The Hebrew word here is *chesed*, which refers to the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh.

Ex. 20:19–but showing steadfast love (covenant faithfulness) to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Ex. 34:6–The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. –Gen. 40:1-3

- The arrival of these important figures is a foreshadowing of what lies ahead for Joseph.

When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me." –Gen. 40:6-8

**Interpreting Dreams** – The interpretation of dreams played a significant role in the Egyptian understanding of life. Dreams were understood to interpret or predict events in people's lives. They also believed that a special seer or diviner was needed to interpret such dreams.

- This passage serves as a **polemic** against the gods of Egypt as well as against diviners and seers.

## **Joseph and Pharaoh: Genesis 41:14-57**

- Joseph came to the attention of the Pharaoh after the chief cupbearer recalled Joseph's interpretation of his dream (Gen. 41:9-13)

### **The Prophetic Role of Joseph**

- ⇒ Joseph proclaimed the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord.
- ⇒ Throughout the Scriptures, the interpretation of dreams is associated with the prophetic office, \_\_\_\_\_ being the prime example of this. (Dan. 2:17-49; 4:4-37)
- ⇒ Joseph took no credit for the dreams' \_\_\_\_\_, recognizing that God alone is capable of such things. (40:8; 41:16)

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." –Gen. 41:37-40

### **Joseph's Authority**

- Joseph was given the **signet** of Pharaoh (Contrast this with Judah giving his signet to someone he believed to be a temple prostitute).
- Joseph was given the finest **garments**, symbolically replacing the one taken from him during the incident with Potiphar's wife.
- Joseph was given a **gold chain**, symbolic of the bestowing of great reward and favor.

**Point of Emphasis** – Joseph is receiving the blessings of Yahweh through the agency of \_\_\_\_\_.

"I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

**Zaphenath-paneah** – "God speaks and he lives" which could be a reference to how Joseph came to power or to the Pharaoh's hope for the future, that God will speak through Joseph and the Egypt will live as a result.

→ We should not read too much into Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian. In reality, the marriages of Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's sons all intermarried with non-Hebrews.

**Manasseh** – "For...God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house."

**Ephraim** – "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

### **The Kingly Role of Joseph**

- ⇒ Joseph was able to obey the command given to \_\_\_\_\_ in Gen. 1:28 in a way greater than anyone before him.
- ⇒ Joseph's authority was exercised for the blessing of \_\_\_\_\_ rather than for his own selfish gain.

## **Some Thoughts on the Story of Joseph**

1. His life demonstrates the importance of individual \_\_\_\_\_ in the midst of all circumstances.
2. His life shows that God's original commission to Adam and Eve was still to be obeyed by God's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. His life demonstrates the truth of God's promise to bless the nations through a descendent of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Because, in an earthly sense, his power was derived from Pharaoh, Joseph's rule points to the need of someone \_\_\_\_\_ Than him who will deliver both Israel and the nations from coming judgment.