



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 60



THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polyglot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polyglot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV=Literary Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV=Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakh (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

JACOB DWELLS IN CANAAN AND JOSEPH BECOMES THE FOCUS

Gen 37:1 "And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. ² These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. ⁶ And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ For, 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. ⁸ And 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. ⁹ And 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. ¹⁰ And 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? ¹¹ And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying. ¹² And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. ¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. ¹⁵ And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? ¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. ¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. ¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. ¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. ²⁰ Come 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. ²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. ²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. ²³ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; ²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. ²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. ²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. ²⁹ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. ³⁰ And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? ³¹ And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; ³² And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. ³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. ³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. ³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard." Genesis 37:1-36)

Jacob dwells in Canaan, and Joseph is loved more by Jacob than the others. This aggravated his brothers, and eventually they rid themselves of him– Given O. Blakely

Jacob in Canaan, Joseph the Focus 1 of 24

CONTENTS

- ▶ INTRODUCTION
- ▶ JACOB, A STRANGER IN THE LAND OF PROMISE (37:1)
- ▶ THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF JACOB (37:2a)
- ▶ JOSEPH, THE SEVENTEEN YEAR-OLD (37:2b)
- ▶ JACOB LOVED JOSEPH MORE (37:3-4)
- ▶ AND JOSEPH DREAMED A DREAM (37:5)
- ▶ THIS DREAM WHICH I HAVE DREAMED (37:6-8)
- ▶ HE DREAMED YET ANOTHER DREAM (37:9-10)
- ▶ HIS BRETHREN ENVIED HIM (37:11)
- ▶ JOSEPH IS SENT TO HIS BROTHERS (37:11-14)
- ▶ HE SENT HIM OUT OF THE VALE OF HEBRON (37:15-17)
- ▶ THEY SAW HIM AFAR OFF (37:18-20)
- ▶ REUBEN'S REACTION (37:21-22)
- ▶ THEY STRIPPED JOSEPH OF HIS COAT AND CAST HIM INTO A PIT (37:23-24)
- ▶ LET US SELL HIM (37:25-27)
- ▶ MIDIANITES AND ISHMAELITES (37:28)
- ▶ THE CONCOCTED SCHEME (37:29-34)
- ▶ ALL JACOB'S SONS AND DAUGHTERS ROSE UP TO COMFORT HIM (37:35)
- ▶ THE MIDIANITES SELL JOSEPH TO POTIPHAR (37:36)
- ▶ CONCLUSION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

After declaring that Jacob dwelt in the land of Canaan, with all that were with him, our attention is turned to Joseph, now seventeen years of age. The purpose of God is being worked out as it relates to the promises made to Abraham. Jacob loves Joseph most because he was the son of his old age. His brothers hated him because of Jacob's love for him. Joseph has two dreams, and relates them to his brothers, and they hated him even more. He told his second dream to his father as well as his brothers, and Jacob rebuked him. Later, when Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his

INTRODUCTION

brothers, they conspired to kill him. Working providentially, God used Judah to change their mind, suggesting that they sell him to the Ishmaelites, which they did. The brothers then took Joseph's coat, soaked it in blood, and sent it to Jacob, who concluded that he had been killed by an "evil beast." Jacob lamented, and his sons and daughters came to comfort him. In the meantime, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, and office of Pharaoh, and captain of the guard.

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

In the book of beginnings, Genesis, we are witnessing God working for the good of His people.

- ➔ THE REVELATION. Over two millennia after the time of our text Paul wrote, "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" (Rom 8:28).
- ➔ JOSEPH'S STATEMENT. Joseph himself will say over thirteen years later, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but **God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive**" (Gen 50:20).
- ➔ DAVID TESTIFIES. Centuries after Joseph David would write, "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamo. **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah**" (Psa 46:1-3).
- ➔ JEREMIAH CONFIRMS. Centuries later Jeremiah would write, "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried

away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up" (Jer 24:6).

- ➔ PAUL TESTIFIES. Paul would testify, "For I know that this **shall turn to my salvation** through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:19).

- ➔ PETER AFFIRMS. Peter wrote, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, **might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ**" (1 Pet 1:7).

CONFIRMED THUS FAR IN GENESIS

- ➔ THE FALL OF MAN. When Adam fell, plunging the whole human race into sin and judgment (Rom 5:15-19), God revealed He was going to raise up one who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15).
- ➔ THE MESSIANIC LINEAGE. When Abel was slain by Cain, God raised up Seth to take his place (Gen 4:25).
- ➔ THE RACE PRESERVED IN NOAH. When the whole world was destroyed by a flood, God preserved Noah (Gen 6:8; 9:1).
- ➔ GOD WORKED WITH ABRAHAM. From the time of his calling, even though much was against him, God preserved, led, enabled and provided for Abraham (Gen 15:1; Josh 24:3).
- ➔ GOD PROTECTED AND PROSPERED ISAAC. The Lord kept Isaac safe amidst a host of enemies (Gen 25:11).
- ➔ GOD WORKED WITH JACOB FOR GOOD. Although subject to danger and injustices, God cause Jacob to survive, and taught him to trust in

the Lord (Gen 32:16; 35:9-12).

In this manner the doctrine of Scripture is fleshed out in the record of

the lives of those living in old time. The faithfulness of God is seen in His dealings with those who lived by faith. His hatred of sin and Divine indignation

is seen in His judgements against sinners. As we become familiar with these realities, faith will grow and strength will be increased.

JACOB – A STRANGER IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

Gen 37:1 *"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan."*

The Spirit now begins a concentration on the seed of Abraham,

It was a time and place of testing, preparation, and increase (Gen 29:1-31:55).

Abraham had experienced the same thing, dwelling for a season in

"heavenly places" where God has Placed them (Eph 1:3; 2:6). It is *"in Christ Jesus,"* where we have been made accepted (1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:6).

Many professing "Christians" have stagnated, ceasing to grow, because they insist on living outside the perimeter of blessing. They live too close to the world from which they have been delivered (Gal 1:4).

WHEREIN HIS FATHER WAS A STRANGER

" . . . wherein his father was a stranger . . . " Other versions read, *"had sojourned,"* ^{NASB} *"had stayed,"* ^{NIV} *"lived as an alien,"* ^{NRSV} *"made a place for himself,"* ^{BBE} *"was an immigrant,"* ^{CEB} *"had stayed,"* ^{NET} *"lived as a foreigner,"* ^{NLT} *"had lived,"* ^{LIVING} *"the land of his father's travels,"* ^{LITV} and *"had been a stranger and a sojourner."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This verse is an intended contrast with what was previously said of Esau and his progeny: *"these be the dukes of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession: he is Esau the father of the Edomites"* (Gen 36:43). **The Edomites were permanent dwellers in the land given to them.** They had no future dwellings, either in this world or the world to come. They received all they were going to receive in this world.

But it was not so with Jacob and his seed. They dwelt in a land that **would be** theirs and their offspring. Yet, they had no permanent dwelling there – no place they could call their own. Apostolic doctrine said of them, *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the*

The Spirit now begins a concentration on the seed of Abraham, through which the world would be blessed. He will reveal a series of seemingly impossible circumstances through which the purpose of God is developed.

through which the world would be blessed. He will reveal a series of seemingly impossible circumstances through which the purpose of God is developed. **We will be exposed to the temptations of Satan, the hardness of the human heart, the tenderness of the believing heart, and the ability of those with faith to pass through great difficulty.** In all of this the Lord will set before us His manner of working, and the invincibility of His determinations. He will confirm that circumstance always bows to the Lord.

JACOB DWELT IN THE LAND

"And Jacob dwelt in the land..." Other versions read *"lived in the land,"* ^{NASB} *"settled,"* ^{NRSV} *"was living,"* ^{BBE} *"now dwelt,"* ^{GENEVA} *"settled again,"* ^{NLT} *"stayed and lived,"* ^{ERV} *"continued to live,"* ^{GNB} *"settled down."* ^{MESSAGE}

Prior to this, there was a kind of parenthesis in Jacob's life – a time when he was living temporarily in another land – Padanaram in Mesopotamia. **He was there for at least twenty years – but that was never intended to be his permanent dwelling.**

Egypt, which was also a time and place of testing, preparation, and increase (Gen 12:10-13:2).

Now Jacob settles in the land that was promised to Abraham (Gen 12:7; 13:15,17; 15:7,18; 17:8) and to Isaac as well (Gen 26:2-3). He had also promised the land to Jacob and his seed (Gen 28:13; 35:11-12).

Further, while he was yet with Laban, the Lord said to Jacob, *"Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred"* (Gen 31:1,13). Jacob knew the identity of that land. Abraham had lived in Egypt, but that was not his land. Isaac had spent time in Gerar, but that was not the specific area to which Jacob was to return.

A Lesson to be Learned

If a person wants the blessing of God, he must be in the place where God has told him to be. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that was Canaan. For the early disciples who were tarrying until they received the promise of the Father, it was Jerusalem (Lk 24:49). For those in Christ Jesus, that place is the

land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb 11:8-16).

The word "sojourned" means "RESIDE AS A FOREIGNER: SOJOURN IN, BE A STRANGER." STRONGS It does not mean "had stayed," NIV "made a place for himself," BBE "stayed," NET "lived," LIVING or "travels." LITV

Generally speaking, the grammar speaks of Isaac and Abraham dwelling in the land of Canaan as strangers, without actually owning any of it. Doctrinally, that is the point of the text – **they were living in a land that was promised to them and their seed, yet, which they did not own.** Further, because enemies occupied the land at that time, their time there was spent in the midst of hostility.

IN THE LAND OF CANAAN
". . . in the land of Canaan."

Abraham was also a "stranger" in Egypt (Gen 12:10-13:1) – but that was not the land of reference. Jacob had sojourned for twenty years in Padanaram Gen 28:2-7; 31:18; 33:18; 35:9) – but that was not his intended land. **Canaan was the place where he was intended to remain, and he did stay there until the rime of the famine during**

Our lives, when governed by faith in Christ, love for God, and joyful subjection to the leading of the Spirit, will be lived with a keen sense of our status of "strangers" in this world. Like the faithful who have gone before us, we live with the future in mind, and with our affection set on things that are presently located where we are going. People who are attached to this world are God's enemies (James 4:4), and have no hope of a favorable eternal

Our lives, when governed by faith in Christ, love for God, and joyful subjection to the leading of the Spirit, will be lived with a keen sense of our status of "strangers" in this world.

the days of Joseph. Only then was it proper for him to move.

The Lesson for Us

Those in Christ are also "strangers and pilgrims," journeying in a world that does not yet belong to them – a world that spawns all manner of "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11). Although we will eventually "inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5), and be in charge of "the world to come," over which Jesus presently presides (Heb 2:5-9), that is not the case now.

destiny while they remain in such a posture. This is not a popular message, yet it must be declared with boldness.

People who are actually living as strangers and pilgrims in this world are more easily directed by the Lord. They require less rebuke, and are more easily led into green pastures and still waters. Their hearing is more sensitive, and their hearts are more tender. Such are the most blessed and happy people in the world (James 5:11). They are the only people walking in Divine favor.

THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF JACOB

"^{2a} **These are the generations of Jacob.**" Other versions read, "the history of Jacob," NKJV "the records of the generations," NASB "the account of," NIV "the story of the family of Jacob," NRSV "the account of Jacob's descendants," CEB "the family records," CSB "account of Jacob and his descendants" GWN and "This is the story of Joseph." NJB

The word translated "generations" has a broad meaning: "1) DESCENDANTS,

RESULTS, PROCEEDINGS, GENERATIONS, GENEALOGIES 1A) ACCOUNT OF MEN AND THEIR DESCENDANTS 1A1) GENEALOGICAL LIST OF ONE'S DESCENDANTS 1A2) ONE'S CONTEMPORARIES 1A3) COURSE OF HISTORY (OF CREATION ETC) 1B) BEGETTING OR ACCOUNT OF HEAVEN (METAPH) ."

STRONGS As used here, it refers to those who came from Jacob – as compared with those who came from Esau, whose generations were listed in the previous chapter.

Throughout Esau's generations nothing of historical importance was

provided. No details of any of his children were given.

But it will be different with the generations of Jacob, for he is in the Abrahamic lineage. His generations differ from that of Abraham and Isaac. With Abraham, only one of his eight sons were prominent in the purpose of God to bless all of the families of the earth. Isaac was the only son of that was promised the land of Canaan. Only one of Isaac's two sons was involved in

fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise – Jacob. Esau was excluded.

However, with Jacob, all twelve of his sons would be involved in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise **“An Israelite” would be defined by the individual’s relationship to one of these sons.** Moses and all of the prophets would come from his sons. Moses and Aaron would come from Levi (Ex 2:1-4; 6:20). Under the First Covenant, the priesthood would spring from Levi (Num 1:47-54). David would come from

Judah (Matt 1:3-6). The Messiah would come from Judah (Rev 5:5). Paul the apostle would come from Benjamin (Phil 3:5).

Israel was defined by these twelve sons, each one of which was the head of a tribe. Therefore we read of *“the twelve tribes of Israel,”* each one being named after one of the generations of Jacob (Gen 49:28; Ex 24:4 Ezek 47:13; Matt 19:28; Acts 26:7; James 1:1; Rev 21:12). They are also called *“the house of Israel”* (Ex 16:31; Josh 21:45).

Beginning at this point, and throughout the rest of Genesis, the focus will be placed upon Joseph. Joseph had only two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Both of them were accepted by the Lord, and headed up prominent tribes among the Israelites. They inherited the portion given to Joseph (Gen 48:5,14-20; 49:3-4,22-26; Deut 33:13-17). **Commencing with the next verse, the shift of emphasis to Joseph will become very apparent.**

JOSEPH, THE SEVENTEEN YEAR-OLD

“^{2b} Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.”

SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD

mankind has little value.

EXAMPLES OF THIS MANNER

➡ **ADAM AND EVE.** We have no details of the lives of Adam and Eve from the

➡ **ABRAHAM.** We are given no details of the first seventy-five years of Abraham’s life (Gen 12:4).

➡ **MOSES.** We know nothing concerning Moses from the time of his infancy until he was forty years old (Ex 7:7).

➡ **AARON.** We know nothing of Aaron’s life until he was forty-three (Ex 7:7).

➡ **JOSEPH.** There are no details of Joseph’s life until he was seventeen (Gen 37:2).

➡ **DAVID.** No details of David’s life are provided until he was of age to keep his father’s sheep, and was anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam 16:11).

➡ **JESUS CHRIST.** The only details we have of Jesus’ life prior to the commencement of His ministry at the age of thirty, are the action taken to protect Him from Herod when He was two, and when He was in the Temple at age twelve (Matt 2:16; Lk 2:42).

Once a person digests this manner of providing human history, there are a lot of things associated with spiritual life that prove to be sensible and God-honoring.

“Joseph, being seventeen years old . . .”

We know nothing of Joseph’s life from the time of his birth until he was seventeen years of age. That is when he became personally involved in the purpose of God. From this point on, Moses will provide some significant details about Joseph’s life – more than were provided up to that time.

This is the manner in which the Spirit reveals the people of God. **The Spirit always sets human history within the framework of the purpose and working of Almighty God.** Apart from that, so far as revelation is concerned,

fall until Adam was one hundred and thirty years of age (Gen 5:3). After Seth was born, we know nothing of Adam for the last eight hundred years of his life.

➡ **CAIN AND ABEL.** No details are provided of their lives until the time when Cain slew Abel (Gen 4:3).

➡ **NOAH.** We do not have a single detail of Noah’s life until he was 420 years old (Gen 6:3 with Gen 5:32).

➡ **SHEM.** We know Shem was born when Noah was five hundred years old (Gen 5:32), and that he begat Arphaxad when he was one hundred (Gen 11:10).

Something to Learn

Once a person digests this manner of providing human history, there are a lot of things associated with spiritual life that prove to be sensible and God-honoring.

➡ **LIVING TO THE GLORY OF GOD.**

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col 3:23)

➔ **LIVING SO DYING IS GAIN.** *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil 1:21)*

➔ **LIVING BY FAITH FOR JESUS.** *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20)*

On the day of judgment, the review of our lives will probably be much like the reviews written in Scripture. At the forefront of our assessment will be WHY we lived, WHOSE GLORY we sought, and WHY we sought to please. For those who will enter into the joy of the Lord, their service for the Lord will be accented. For those who are cast into outer darkness, their lives will be assessed much like that of Cain, those who died in the flood, Judas, and other similar people.

The secret to living a life that will be accepted in that day is to live solely for the Lord now. It is reflecting both the death and the resurrection life of Christ in our present bodies (2 Cor 4:10-11).

The Predicament of Our Times

Babylon the Great, the religious church-monster created by Satan, has shaped the thinking of the people so they imagine they are the main persons. **They do not see themselves indebted to their Creator, and therefore do not live for Him.** They do not value the fact that Jesus laid down His life for them, and therefore they do not give Him the priority in their lives. They do not accept the fact that man lives by every Word of God, and therefore they do not feed upon it.

Those who have accepted this version of religious life are living in stark

contradiction to the ordained examples of godly living and devotion to God.

➔ **NOAH.** When Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, his total live was

have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb 11:13-16).

On the day of judgment, the review of our lives will probably be much like the reviews written in Scripture. At the forefront of our assessment will be WHY we lived, WHOSE GLORY we sought, and WHY we sought to please.

given over to doing the will of God. This commenced by completing a one hundred and twenty year project – building the ark.

➔ **ABRAHAM.** When God called Abraham, and told him to pull up his roots and go to another land, he never again lived out of pure self-interest. He lived where God told him to live, and did what God told him to do. That was the summation of his life.

➔ **ISAAC.** The same kind of life was lived by Isaac. His whole being was centered in the Lord and His will.

➔ **JACOB.** Now we find that the same proved true of Jacob. When he, by commission, became involved in the will of the Lord, that proved to be his total reason for living.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to as *"the fathers"* (Ex 3:15-16; 4:5; Deut 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; Micah 7:20; Acts 3:13; 7:32; Rom 15:8). It is written of them, *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to*

God spoke of them in this manner: *"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6; 4:5). He told Moses to say to the people, "of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you" (Ex 3:15).*

In shaping the record of these *"fathers,"* God taught us to associate them with faith, and with the unwavering demands of faith. Abraham himself was a living definition of faith. That is why it is referred to as *"the faith of Abraham"* (Rom 4:16). Abraham himself is referred to as *"Abraham our father"* (Rom 4:1), and *"the father of us all"* (Rom 4:16). Those in Christ are said to *"walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham"* (Rom 4:12). They are also called *"the children of Abraham"* (Gal 3:7).

There is no record of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob ever disobeying God. **That is because they are the appointed examples of faith, which never disobeys.**

JOSEPH

Now we will find that Joseph also lived the same manner of life. Whenever he was directed by the Lord, he followed. If he was requested to do something that violated what he knew was the will of the Lord, he would not

do it – not at any cost.

WAS FEEDING THE FLOCK

“ . . . was feeding the flock with his brethren . . . ” Other versions read, “pasturing” ^{NASB} “tending,” ^{NIV} “shepherding,” ^{NRSV} “looking after,” ^{BBE} “kept,” ^{GENEVA} “took care of,” ^{GWN} “enjoying himself with his brethren,” ^{YLT} and “helping out his brothers in herding the flocks.” ^{MESSAGE}

Like Moses after him, and David

Those who cared for Israel – the priests and the prophets – did not do a good job. In fact, the Lord upbraided them for not caring for His people – His flock. *“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! **should not the shepherds feed the flocks?** Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: **but ye feed not the flock.**”*

mouth, that they may not be meat for them” (Ezek 34:2-10).

The similarities to our time are most remarkable. **Charlatans and greedy men have made merchandise of the flock of God** (2 Pet 2:3). They have left the people of God in such miserable shape that the enemies of God have been able to exploit them as they barter with the souls of men. They have not fed the flock. That is why they are so sickly and feeble. They have not been fed, *“nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine”* (1 Tim 4:6).

Charlatans and greedy men have made merchandise of the flock of God (2 Pet 2:3). They have left the people of God in such miserable shape that the enemies of God have been able to exploit them as they barter with the souls of men. They have not fed the flock.

HE WAS WITH THE SONS OF BILHAH AND ZILPAH

“ . . . and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives . . . ”

much later than Moses, Joseph cared for and fed sheep – his father's sheep.

*The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and **none did search or seek after them.** Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became meat to every beast of the field, **because there was no shepherd, neither did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not My flock;** Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their***

These were Joseph's half-brothers: Dan and Naphtali (Bilhah), with Gad and Asher (Zilpah). Joseph was assisting them in caring for his father's sheep.

JOSEPH BROUGHT AN EVIL REPORT TO JACOB

“ . . . and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.” Other versions read, “a bad report,” ^{NKJV} “an ill report,” ^{RSV} “unflattering things about them” ^{CEB} “he accused his brethren to his father of a most wicked crime,” ^{DOUAY} and “the bad things his brothers were doing.” ^{GWN}

The precise nature of the report is not specified. Remembering that this is being written by Moses several centuries after the event occurred, I doubt not that Moses gives an indication of its substance in the next verse. I gather that they had chided and spoken evil of Joseph because he was his father's favored son. However, having said that, the point seems to be the distinction of Joseph himself. Their conduct was properly reported to the father of them all.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRECEDENT

In this arrangement, God was establishing a precedent, or principle, that would be employed throughout His dealings with His people. He would liken His people to a flock of sheep, both before Christ (Jer 50:17; Ezek 34:6,11,12), and after Christ (Matt 26:31; John 10:2-16; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet 5:2-3).

ISRAEL LOVED JOSEPH MORE

"³ 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 colors. ⁴ 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."

ISRAEL

"Now Israel . . ."

It is of interest that Moses refers to Jacob as "*Jacob*" in the first two verses of this chapter, as well as in verse thirty-four. In verse three, however, he refers to him as "*Israel*," and in verse thirteen as well. Throughout the remainder of Genesis (chapters 37-50), Moses refers to the patriarch as "*Jacob*" thirty-seven times, and as "*Israel*" thirty-one times. His name was prophetically changed in Genesis 32:28, and officially changed by God Himself in Genesis 35:10. When Abram's name was changed to "*Abraham*" (Gen 17:5), throughout Genesis he was never referred to as "*Abram*" again. From the change of Abram's name, Abraham was always considered from a covenantal point of view.

The use of the name "*Jacob*" from Genesis 37 through 50 was within the context of Joseph, and not vice versa. During this period, the working of God through Joseph was the preeminent consideration, and therefore, it seems to me that the use of the name "*Jacob*" was more appropriate.

ISRAEL LOVED JOSEPH

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age . . ."

Here, the use of the name "*Israel*" confirms that **this was a covenantal matter**. That is, the history that now follows concerning Joseph relates directly to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **This is not the report of an incidental matter.**

Some years earlier, God had revealed to Abraham, "*Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger*

in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." (Gen 15:13-14). Now, through Moses, the Lord is going show how this would be

Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel" (John 5:20).

As far as I am concerned, there is not enough being said these days about the Father's love for His "*only begotten Son*" (John 1:14,18; 1 John 4:9).

From the standpoint of God's purpose, this was the means He would use to stir up Joseph's brothers against him, which would eventually lead to him being positioned in Egypt at the appropriate time to set the stage for the nation of Israel being developed in that environ.

accomplished. It would all be under the supervision of the Almighty. He would cause things to take place that would assure the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Therefore we read that "*Israel loved Joseph more than any of his children.*" From Jacob's point of view, this was because Joseph was "*the son of his old age.*" From the standpoint of God's purpose, this was the means He would use to stir up Joseph's brothers against him, which would eventually lead to him being positioned in Egypt at the appropriate time to set the stage for the nation of Israel being developed in that environ.

A Type of Christ

As the son whom Jacob loved "*more than all His children,*" Joseph was a clear type of Jesus Christ. As much as God "*so loved the world*" (John 3:16), and as much as He loves the person who has the commandments of God and keeps them (John 14:21,23), **God loves His Son, Jesus, MORE!** That is why He is called God's "*Beloved Son*" (Matt 3:17; 17:5), and His "*His dear Son*" (Col 1:13). Jesus Himself affirmed, "*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*" (John 3:35). And again, "*For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth*

HE MADE HIM A COAT OF MANY COLORS

" . . . and he made him a coat of many colors . . ." Other versions read "*a varicolored tunic,*" ^{NASB} "*richly ornamented robe,*" ^{NIV} "*a long robe with sleeves,*" ^{NRSV} "*a long coat,*" ^{BBE} "*a long robe,*" ^{CEB} "*a vest of many colors.*" ^{DARBY} "*a special robe with long sleeves*" ^{GWN} "*a special tunic,*" ^{NET} "*a decorated tunic,*" ^{NJB} "*a beautiful robe,*" ^{NLT} "*a long coat,*" ^{YLT} "*a brightly colored coat,*" ^{LIVING} "*a fancy coat,*" ^{CEV} "*a special coat, which was long and very beautiful,*" ^{ERV} "*a long robe with full sleeves,*" ^{GNB} "*richly-embroidered tunic,*" ^{ISV} "*a robe reaching to the soles of his feet,*" ^{LITV} and "*a [distinctive] long tunic with sleeves.*" ^{AMPLIFIED}

The various versions present quite a picture of the division that is found in the field of scholarship and etymology.

- ➡ Coat of many colors
- ➡ Varicolored tunic
- ➡ Richly ornamented robe
- ➡ Long robe with sleeves
- ➡ Long coat
- ➡ Long robe
- ➡ Vest of many colors
- ➡ Special robe with long sleeves
- ➡ Decorated tunic
- ➡ Special tunic

- Beautiful robe
- Brightly colored coat
- Fancy coat
- Special coat which was long and beautiful
- Long robe with full sleeves
- Richly embroidered tunic
- Robe reaching the soles of his feet
- Distinctive long tunic with sleeves

There you have eighteen different representations, all supposedly based on lexical authorities. Among other things, this again confirms that the field of language is not a consistent one, and therefore cannot deliver the final word on any text of Scripture.

For myself, I do not believe there is any compelling reason to depart from the perception that this was, in fact, a "coat of many colors."

WHEN HIS BRETHREN SAW

" . . . And when his brethren saw

that their father loved him more than all his brethren . . . "

The brothers "saw" the love of Israel for Joseph in the coat that he had made for him. This necessarily means they had **not** been given such a gift. The superior love Jacob had for Joseph was demonstrated in what he gave him. **So it is with God's "only begotten Son."** The superior love that He has for Him is confirmed by His exaltation, and what has been given to Him.

Joseph's coat would serve to increase the hostility of the other sons against him. Owing to the providence of God, and the working out of his purpose, they would not be able to tolerate Joseph being so highly regarded by his father. In so doing, they were actually fulfilling the will of God – just like the Jews fulfilled the will of God in condemning Jesus: "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their

rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, **they have fulfilled them in condemning Him**" (Acts 13:27). In an arrangement like that, the enemies of the Lord cannot win.

HIS BROTHERS HATED HIM

" . . . they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Other versions read "could not speak to him on friendly terms," ^{NASB} "could not speak a kind word to him," ^{NIV} "couldn't even talk with him in a civil manner," ^{CJB} "could not greet him with friendliness." ^{DARBY}

Joseph's brothers were so eaten up with hatred that they could not even speak to him in a civil manner. **Although their conduct was reprehensible, God would use their hatred to fulfill His will, confirming that He is, in fact, Sovereign and Head over all. God uses men, but men never use God!**

AND JOSEPH DREAMED A DREAM

"⁵ And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. ⁶ And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ For, 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. ⁸ And 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."

Joseph had been enduring the insults and malice of his brothers. Yet, he did not hesitate to tell them his dreams – dreams that involved them.

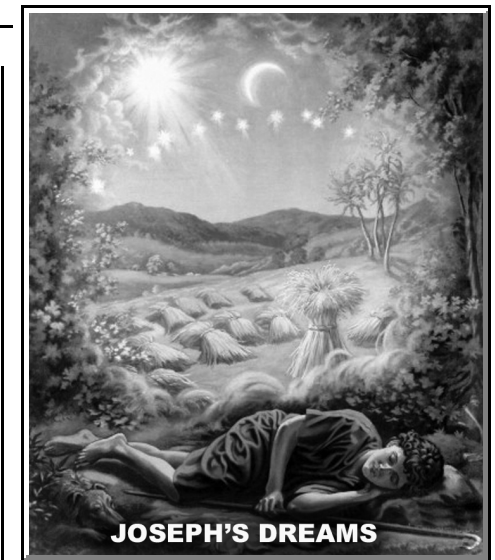
No person should attempt to psychoanalyze what Joseph did, or assign to him youthful naivete. **This is a record of the working of the Lord, not the blunders of men.** Years later Joseph will give an inspired view of this event and everything that stemmed from it:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen 50:20).

In view of Joseph's statement, and Moses' rehearsal of it, it is wrong to attempt to judge this whole matter according to appearance. This was God at work, and, at the time, His purpose was "past finding out" (Rom 11:33). That is, it is impossible to properly evaluate this whole set of circumstances through natural means, and anyone who attempts to do so has played the part of a fool.

HE TOLD IT TO HIS BRETHREN

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, 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



JOSEPH'S DREAMS

to my sheaf . . . " Other versions read, "gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf," ^{NKJV} "came round and went down on the earth before mine," ^{BBE} "prostrated themselves before it," ^{CJB} and "compassed round about, and did reverence to my sheaf." ^{GENEVA}

The dream made known to Joseph

that his brothers would voluntarily bow before him, confessing their subjection to him. Heaven informed him that even his Father and mother would do so.

We know that this dream was a prophecy – one that would help to sustain Joseph during thirteen hard years in Egypt. It would also be a key to understanding what was really happening when, in fact, his brothers would bow down to him many years later (Gen 43:26; 44:14). They would also refer to Joseph as their “lord” (Gen 44:19).

The Potency of Spiritual Ignorance

We see in this event the potency of spiritual ignorance. Here Joseph’s half-brothers were exposed to a prophecy of the future and, because of their ignorance, it moved them to hate the one to whom they would, by Divine appointment, bow.

sent Him (John 5:30,36,37; 6:39; 8:28), and why He had come (Matt 10:34-35; Lk 12:49,51; John 9:39; 10:7,11,36;11:25), yet they opposed Him, and finally crucified Him (Acts 2:23,36; 3:17; 13:27-28).

Speaking of the ignorance of the people concerning the identity of Jesus, the Spirit affirms, “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and **the world knew Him not**” (John 1:10). Paul declared to a Jewish synagogue, “For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, **because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him**” (Acts 13:27). John also affirms of the world, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, **because it knew Him not**” (1 John 3:1).

*testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, **being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness***” (Eph 4:17-19).

The heathen aphorism, “What you do not know cannot hurt you,” is nothing more than an articulation of ignorance.

Now, we will see what the ignorance of Joseph’s brothers moved them to think of him and do to him.

THEY HATED HIM THE MORE

“ . . . And 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.*”

They reasoned that Joseph was their younger brother, how could they in any way be subject to him. **Therefore we see that Joseph’s dreams were a means of strengthening him, and, at the same time, a means of revealing the hearts of his brothers.**

To confirm to our hearts that God is, in fact, “a great King over all the earth” (Psa 47:2), **He will fulfill His will in the midst, of presence of, of His enemies.** In Joseph, He will exalt the man of His choosing while he is being opposed by his own household – which household the Lord will strictly manage. Men – all men – are tools in the hands of the Master architect.

They reasoned that Joseph was their younger brother, how could they in any way be subject to him. Therefore we see that Joseph’s dreams were a means of strengthening him, and, at the same time, a means of revealing the hearts of his brothers.

The same kind of thing happened to the Jews when God sent His Son among them. Even though He “went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38), and although He clearly made known to them who He was (John 6:35,41,51; 9:5; 19:21), where He was from (John 6:38; 8:23), who had

When He was on the cross, Jesus cried out to God, “Father, forgive them; for **they know not what they do**” (Luke 23:34).

Ignorance of God and things of God is of such magnitude that it is written, “This I say therefore, and

HE DREAMED YET ANOTHER DREAM

“⁹ And 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

obedience to me.”¹⁰ And 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?”

HE DREAMED YET ANOTHER DREAM
“And he dreamed yet another

dream . . .”

Later, God would make known to Pharaoh through Joseph that **two dreams affirming the same thing are given “because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass”** (Gen 41:32).

In other words, this kind of communication informs the recipient that what is revealed has been **“established,” or made firm by the Lord. Nothing can possibly stop it from happening.** It is a Divine appointment that will crush every effort to hinder it.

Some “established” matters that could not be thwarted include the following.

- ➡ The flood (Gen 7:13).
- ➡ The birth of Isaac (Gen 17:21).
- ➡ The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:13-24).
- ➡ The deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12:41).

There are also a number of things related to salvation that fall into this category. They are matters that were established by God, and there is no possible way they can be hindered or overthrown.

- ➡ The birth of Jesus (Gal 1:4).
- ➡ The death of Jesus (Acts 2:23).
- ➡ The resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:33).
- ➡ The exaltation of Jesus (Dan 7:14; Phil 2:9).
- ➡ The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).
- ➡ The Second coming of Christ (1 Tim 6:15; 2 Pet 3:10).
- ➡ The resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:52).

➡ The day of judgment (Heb 9:27).

In such events, the Lord has, and will, interject Himself into human history – and He will do so without requiring the consent of men, or in any way being hindered by them. **Men do not govern the world – God does, and He does so with His own appointed agenda in mind.** As Jesus Himself declared, *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”* (Acts 1:7). However, we can trust in the Lord to do right, and do whatever He desires whenever He desires to do it. On our part, **it is our obligation to live so close to the Lord, being in conscious synch with His purpose, that when He works it is always for our good.**

HE TOLD IT TO HIS BROTHERS AND HIS FATHER

“ . . . 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. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren. . .”

Those who bow at the shrine of psychology fault Joseph for doing this, chalking his action up to childish naivete. But they are wrong, and seriously so. In all of this, the stage is being set for Joseph to enter into Egypt as a slave, in order that God might, at the proper time, exalt him to be the ruler of the land – Pharaoh being the only exception.

I want to state this as emphatically as I can. It is not that God took the circumstances being created and turned them around so they would work for Joseph’s ultimate advantage.

Rather, the circumstances themselves were the work of the Lord. The events that are now being unfolded are actually what God intended to be done. They are His appointed way of Him fulfilling His own will (Gen 50:20).

JACOB REBUKED JOSEPH

“ . . . 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?” Other versions read, *“What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?”* ^{NRSV} and *“What is the meaning of this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow down ourselves to the earth and do homage to you?”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

At this point, Jacob did not have understanding concerning the critical role that God had assigned to Joseph. **He was looking at him primarily as his son.** It would be some years before he would clearly see the hand of the Lord in all of this.

The Reasoning Default of the Flesh

There is something about human nature that is revealed in this incident. **When men do not know the will of the Lord on a matter, their thinking defaults to an unacceptable mode.** Only revelation can properly redirect the way a person thinks. Until such a revelation is given the faith of the individual is being tried. For Jacob, this trial of his faith would last for a number of years, but in it all, he would not forsake the Lord – even if he later thinks that his favored is dead (Gen 37:34).

HIS BRETHREN ENVIED HIM

“ ¹¹ And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.”

HIS BRETHREN ENVIED HIM

“And his brethren envied him...”
Other versions read, *“were jealous,”*

NASB “furious at him,” NAB “held it against him,” NJB “were wrought up at him,” TNK “zealous against him,” YLT “fit to be tied concerning this affair,” LIVING “continued to be jealous of him,” ERV and “became more envious of him.” ISV

It appears that, from their point of view, even the suggestion of Joseph being given preeminence over them increased their hatred of him. **So far as they were concerned, they were competing with Joseph, and were**

losing the competition. When Joseph told them of this second dream, it exasperated them, causing anger to rise in their hearts, and it probably showed on their faces as well.

HIS FATHER OBSERVED THE SAYING

"... but his father observed the saying." Other versions read, "kept the matter in mind," ^{NKJV} "kept the saying in mind," ^{NASB} "took careful note of the matter" ^{CEB} "considered the thing with himself" ^{DOUAY} "kept thinking about these things," ^{GWN} "pondered the matter," ^{NJB} "wondered what the dreams meant," ^{NLT} "hath watched the matter," ^{YLT} "kept thinking about the whole matter." ^{GNB}

Jacob did not dismiss what Joseph had told him. His faith seemed to sense there was more to this that at first appeared. Like holy people who would follow him, he dwelt on what he did not understand at the first.

Eli's Experience

➔ When young Samuel was given a message from God to tell Eli, he did so, even though it contained a grievous word. Eli did not dismiss that words, but rather thought upon it and replied, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Sam 3:18).

Mary's Experiences

➔ The shepherds told her what the angels had told them on the night of Jesus' birth. They has been told, "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, **which shall be to all people**" (Luke 2:10). A "heavenly host" sang out, "Glory to God in the highest, **and on earth peace, good will toward men.**" (Luke 2:14).

Those were matters that had not been revealed to Mary or Joseph. "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

➔ When Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus to the Temple for dedication, Simeon told them, "'A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel . . . And

them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Though neither Joseph nor Mary understood the saying, it is said of Mary, "but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

SOMETHING TO PONDER

Right here we have an explanation why some professing Christians do not

Right here we have an explanation why some professing Christians do not grow in their understanding or manner of life. They are not Kingdom thinkers. They do not ponder what they hear, meditate upon the truth, or consider sayings to which they are exposed.

Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:32-35). It is written, "And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him" (Luke 2:33).

➔ When Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the Temple, after searching for him for three days, Mary said to Him, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke 2:48). With convicting pungency Jesus replied, "And He said unto

grow in their understanding or manner of life. They are not Kingdom thinkers. They do not ponder what they hear, meditate upon the truth, or consider sayings to which they are exposed. They tend to filter everything they hear through the contaminated reservoir of self-interest, and therefore they pass over both promises and warnings that were brought to them for their profit.

This is the fruit of a generation given over to entertainment – professing Christians that are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:4).

The Day of Judgment will confirm that they had been given enough revelation and insight for them to correct their lives.

JOSEPH IS SENT TO HIS BROTHERS

"¹² And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. ¹⁴ And

he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again."

The time has come when God will

begin setting a series of circumstances in place that will allow for the fulfillment of His Word to Abraham: "Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they

shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." (Gen 15:13-14). **God now begins to shape the circumstances in order to the fulfillment of that word.**

HIS BRETHREN WENT TO FEED THEIR FATHER'S FLOCK

"And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem . . ."

Shechem was an area in which Jacob had previously purchased a plot of ground. He had spread his tent there, and sanctified the area by building an altar there as well (Gen 33:18-20). That is also the area where his daughter Dinah was molested, and where his

been aware of the hostility that existed in Joseph's brothers. He also knew of Joseph's dreams, which Joseph had told him. It appears as though he did not think of Joseph being in danger when with his brothers in some remote area. However, that is not the thing that should capture our attention. **This was all the working of the Lord, setting up circumstances that would ensure Joseph would get into Egypt to do the work God had appointed for him to do.** Of course, at this point, that appointment was unknown, but the Lord Himself is in the process of making it all come to pass.

HERE AM I

" . . . And he said to him, Here am I. . ." Other versions read, *"I will go,"*

"Here am I" (Gen 27:1).

- ➡ When Jacob came to Isaac he said, *"My father,"* and Isaac replied, *"Here am I"* (Gen 27:18).
- ➡ When a holy angel spoke to Jacob in a dream saying, *"Jacob,"* Jacob replied, *"Here am I"* (Gen 31:11).
- ➡ When God spoke to Jacob in visions saying, *"Jacob, Jacob,"* Jacob replied, *"Here am I"* (Gen 46:2).
- ➡ When the Lord called out to Moses from a burning bush, *"Moses, Moses,"* he replied, *"Here am I"* (Ex 3:4).
- ➡ When the Lord called young Samuel he instantly replied, *"Here am I."* Thinking Eli had called him, he ran quickly to Eli and said, *"Here am I"* (1 Sam 3:4-8).
- ➡ When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, he *"heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* Isaiah quickly responded, *"Here am I; send me"* (Isa 6:8).

In every case the response was immediate, with a keen sense that the one responding was aware of the circumstances.

A Kingdom Manner

It seems to me that this is a Kingdom manner, and is therefore often mentioned when the purpose of God is being worked out.

Belated and retarded responses are not godly ones. No man of God ever asked God to give him some time to think about whether or not he had time to listen. The *"Here am I"* kind of instant and willing response is evidence of *"all readiness of mind"* (Acts 17:11). That is a posture of life that allows for the individual to be instantly directed by the Lord – like hearing a voice behind you saying, *"This is the way, walk ye in it"* (Isa 30:21).

I have observed that the "Christian" environment in which many

I have observed that the "Christian" environment in which many people are being raised, whether at home or in an assembly, has not cultured them to respond instantly.

sons had slaughtered the Shechemites (Gen 34:25-26). Additionally, the number of Jacob's flocks was increased the sheep, oxen, and asses that the sons had taken when they spoiled the city there (Gen 34:28).

The sons had apparently moved the flocks there because of the grazing available there. Perhaps they were even feeding the flocks in the area purchased previously by Jacob.

As I have pointed out previously, those who cared for the flocks had to find areas with sufficient food to feed them, and therefore they moved from place to place as required.

I WILL SEND THEE

"And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. . ."

At this point Jacob must have

NASB *"Very well,"* NIV *"I'm ready,"* CEB *"I'll go,"* GWN *"I am here,"* SEPTUAGINT *I'm ready to go,"* NLT *"very good,"* LIVING *"Yes sir,"* CEV *and "Behold me."* LITV

This response – *"Here am I"* – is frequently found in Scripture. **It is a reply that indicates the one saying it is ready to do what is required of him.**

- ➡ On their way to the place where Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac, Isaac wanted to ask Abraham a question concerning the absence of a lamb. When he said *"My father,"* Abraham replied, *"Here am I"* (Gen 22:7).
- ➡ When Abraham was about to plunge the sacrificial knife into Isaac, an angel called out to him, *"Abraham, Abraham!"* The patriarch replied, *"Here am I"* (Gen 22:11).
- ➡ When Isaac was old and called Esau, he said *"My son,"* and Esau replied,

people are being raised, whether at home or in an assembly, has not cultured them to respond instantly. When they grow older, they hardly know what is going on about them, and appear to be nearly totally deaf to the call of the Lord, and insensitive to the wooing of the Spirit.

This miserable lack of sensitivity is out of harmony with the salvation of God. Living by faith and walking in the Spirit produces a certain sensitivity that can instantly respond to Divine direction, *"Here am I!"*

SEE WHETHER IT BE WELL WITH THEM AND THE FLOCKS

" . . . And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again."

Although Jacob did not know precisely where his sons were feeding the flock, he knew they had headed for Shechem, which was a rather large area. **Joseph would have to work with the available knowledge.** He was commissioned to do three things:

- See if it was well with his brothers.
- See if it was well with the flocks.
- Report his findings to his father.

He could not depend on hearsay,

but had to see the status of things himself. He also knew he could not come home and report that he could not find his brothers.

A Depiction of Obedience

We have here a vivid depiction of obedience – the kind of obedience God requires of His children (1 Pet 1:14). Those who are truly obedient have an *"obedient ear"* (Prov 25:12) – one that tuned, so to speak, to the Divine frequency. Such a person is *"swift to hear"* (James 1:19), and his *"spirit truly is ready"* and poised to obey (Mk 14:35). Obedient people always respond, *"Here am I!"*

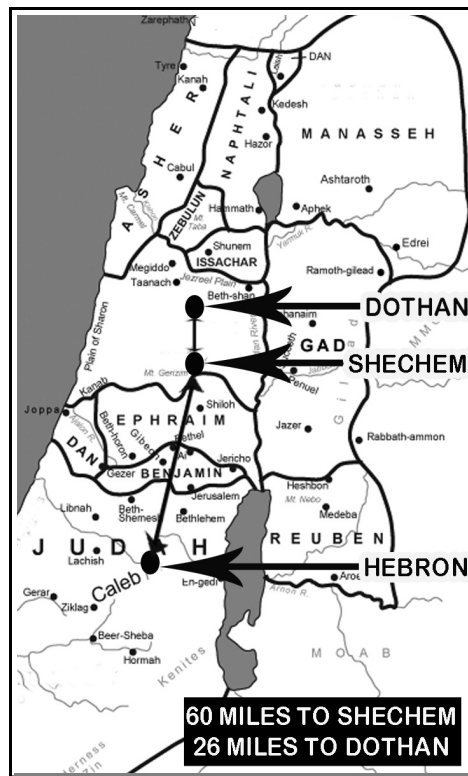
HE SENT HIM OUT OF THE VALE OF HEBRON

"¹⁵ So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. ¹⁵ And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? ¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. ¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan."

HE SENT HIM OUT OF THE VALE OF HEBRON TO SHECHEM

"So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem..."

The distance from *"the vale of Hebron"* to Shechem was sixty miles. JOHN GILL Considering that he possibly was journeying by foot, that was a considerable distance by today's standards. It would have been about a three-day journey. However, there is no hint that Joseph in any way considered this to be inconvenient, or something that interrupted his young life. Over and above that, this is not how an obedient person thinks. If Abraham is asked to leave Ur and head for Canaan, or to leave Beersheba and head for the mountains of Moriah, he does not ask how far it is. If Jacob is asked to leave



Canaan and go to Padanaram, he does not inquire about the distance, how long it will take, or how long he will be gone. That is simply not the manner of thinking for an obedient person.

A CERTAIN MAN FOUND HIM

" . . . And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? ¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. ¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. . . "

When Joseph finally arrived in Shechem, a territory of considerable size, his brothers were not seen. Having arrived, he now has to look for them.

Not meeting with any success, he is spotted by a certain man as he is wandering about, looking here and there. The man asks what he is seeking, and Joseph replies that he is looking for his brethren. He implores the man, *"Tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.?"*

Who is this man? Is he acquainted with Jacob and his sons? The answer is, we do not know. This is a man who has been put there by God to assist Joseph – a helper, so to speak.

This was an alert man who noticed what was going on around him. He immediately knows who Joseph is seeking and replies, *"They are departed*

hence; for I heard them say, *Let us go to Dothan.*" Keep in mind that the brothers apparently did not expect anyone from home to come looking for them – certainly not young Joseph.

Once again, this is an example of God working all things together for the good – the ultimate good – of those who love Him, and are His called.

JOSEPH FOUND THEM IN DOTHAN

" . . . And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan."

After at least an eighty-six mile journey Joseph finally finds his brothers.

Because of the tenderness of his heart, Joseph has qualities that are divinely associated with love. *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth*

all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor 13:4-7).

I am persuaded he knew something of the hostility that his brothers had against him, for they could not speak kindly or peaceably to him (Gen 37:4). However, he apparently did not hold any hostility toward them, and therefore comes to them peaceably. Remember, this is a person against whom no sin is recorded in Scripture. He was a gracious soul.

THEY SAW HIM AFAR OFF

"¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. ¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. ²⁰ Come 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."

Those who imagine there is a natural closeness among relatives need to take heed to this text. That mythological view has already been thrown down by the record of Cain being against Abel. It was also seen in the initial reaction of Esau to Jacob. In both of those cases, the one who was offended reasoned that their reaction was proper. Now, we face another example that reveals the folly of thinking too highly of flesh-and-blood relations. While there is to be no hostility on the part of those who are following the Lord, neither should there be childish naivete among them.

THEY SAW HIM AFAR OFF

"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him..."

I do not know precisely how they knew it was Joseph – even when they saw him *"afar off."* There must have been some distinct mannerism they

recognized: perhaps the way he walked or ran – or it might well have been that they could make out his multi-colored coat. At any rate, they knew that it was him.

"THIS DREAMER COMETH"

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

Joseph was now seventeen, and

We do not know the extent of Adam's exposure to the living God prior to his fall. We do know that from that point forward, any contact man had with God was initiated by God Himself.

A Small Observation

It ought to be noted that there are also traits of the children of God that can be recognized from *"afar off."* Perhaps it is their non-worldly manner, the way they talk, etc. The woman who confronted Peter on the night denied he knew Jesus, could tell by his speech that he was not from that region (Matt 26:73). It is my own persuasion that it is a serious matter when professing Christians do not have distinctive manners and appearance. I realize this matter could be greatly distorted, but Jesus taught there were distinctions that identified His people (John 13:35).

the only way they looked at him was within the context of the two dreams he had shared with them. They did not think of him as their brother, but only as a *"dreamer."*

LET US SLAY HIM

" . . . Come 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."

The human race, even in its best state (the seed of Abraham), thought rather crudely in those days. **That was owing to the fall of humanity, and removal from conscience Divine proximity.** The first thought these

brothers had of ridding themselves of the presence of Joseph was to slay him. They even concocted a scheme to cover the whole matter. They would report that a wild beast devoured him, which would conveniently remove any thought of wrong doing.

We do not know the extent of Adam's exposure to the living God prior to his fall. **We do know that from that point forward, any contact man had with God was initiated by God Himself.**

➔ This was true in the case of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8-24).

➔ It was also true of Cain (Gen 4:6–7,9-15).

➔ God initiated the contact with Noah (Gen 6:13-14).

➔ The association of Abraham with God was initiated by the Lord (Gen 12:1-3).

➔ The same was true of Hagar (Gen 16:7-14).

➔ The same was true if Isaac (Gen 26:2-5).

➔ The same was true of Jacob (Gen

28:13).

The fact that these brothers could even act in such a manner confirms the truth of the Divine assessment of humanity following the flood: "the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done" (Gen 8:21). In His magnificent longsuffering, God would endure the proclivities of man until the appointed Savior came at the purposed time to effectively deal with the issue of sin.

REUBEN'S REACTION

"²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. ²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

➔ The Israelites would develop a distaste for any land but the one God had ordained for them.

➔ The seed of Abraham would be sustained until the time God had appointed for them to possess the land of Canaan.

their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. ²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him . . ."

This is a deliverance wrought by a word. There was no militant confrontation, only an appeal to reason. To me, this confirms that man's higher abilities have to do with reason, as opposed to physical aggression. It is true that there have been times when outward aggression was necessary – such as expelling the former inhabitants from Canaan, the Babylonian captivity, the destruction of Jerusalem, etc. **However, in such cases men had grown callous in their hearts, and did not respond well to good reasoning.**

This is a deliverance wrought by a word. There was no militant confrontation, only an appeal to reason. To me, this confirms that man's higher abilities have to do with reason, as opposed to physical aggression.

AND REUBEN HEARD IT
"And Reuben heard it . . ."

It is God who delivered Joseph, working through Reuben to do so. The Lord had appointed Joseph to go into Egypt and prepare the way for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Several things would happen.

➔ The offspring of Jacob would increase in the land.

These and other reasons are why Reuben now enters the picture. He was no doubt unaware of the Lord's intention of his involvement, **but it was the Lord who was directing this whole affair.**

Reuben is the firstborn, and therefore his word would carry more weight than a suggestion from some of the other brothers.

REUBEN'S ADVICE

" . . . and he delivered him out of

I do not doubt that Reuben was aware of what God had said to Noah about bloodshed, and made some association of that word with this circumstance: *"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man"* (Gen 9:6). Without convicting power he said, *"Let us not kill him,"* by which he made quite clear that he wanted nothing to do with such action.

He did present an alternative which freed them from having to

murder their own brother, yet would remove his bothersome presence from them. *"Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him . . ."*

From the Higher Perspective

From the higher perspective, this was the means by which God preserved the life of Joseph. Later, God will use Joseph to preserve his father and brothers, with their families, from a life-consuming famine.

This is one of the ways God works among men. He causes his chosen to find favor with others, so they are not consumed. In this case, it was with Reuben. Joseph would later obtain favor from Pharaoh (Gen 41:41-43). In Nehemiah's day it was with king Artaxerses (Neh 2:1-8). In Daniel's day, it was with the Ashpenaz, master of the eunuchs (Dan 1:3), and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:48), and Belshazzar (Dan 5:29), and Darius (Dan 6:1-3), and Cyrus (Dan 6:28).

The people of God do well to live in such a manner as to be able to perceive the hand of the Lord in their lives – when they are granted favor from unexpected resources. This is how God works.

REUBEN'S INTENTION

" . . .that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

Reuben planned to return later, remove Joseph from the pit, and deliver him safely to his father. **That, however, was not the Lord's intention.**

Suffice it to say, great care must be taken not to take to ourselves the responsibility for specifying the manner in which we desire the Lord to work.

Of course, where the church has waxed carnal, and fallen away from the faith, there has been the generation of unjust laws, and an consideration toward the godly, together with a renunciation against many laws that were designed to protect life.

When seeking Divine intervention a certain generality must characterize our requests. It is right for us to seek specific results. It is not right for us to spell out how they are to be accomplished.

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY UPON CIVILIZATION

There is a certain impact that believers have had upon society. **This has not been the result of human planning, and special initiatives targeted to produce these results.** Rather, the presence of God among His people has had an impact upon the governments that have accepted them, and the societies where they have been able to dwell in peace. For example, the Law in England and America is quite different from that in heathen countries. Although the laws are not ideal, there is more mercy in them, and more of an intent to improve society.

Of course, where the church has waxed carnal, and fallen away from the faith, there has been the generation of unjust laws, and an consideration toward the godly, together with a renunciation against many laws that were designed to protect life.

Some believers, seeing the rise of

injustice in the land, have decided to be political champions, and seek change by legislation. While there may be some room for this kind of thing, it is very small. The best way to impact society for good is for the people of God to let their *"light so shine before men,"* that men may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:16). There is such a thing as living in a manner that is *"acceptable to God and approved of men"* (Rom 14:18).

For myself, I am not convinced that God will raise up rulers that will promote justice and favor a church that is dominated by the flesh, and blends well with the world. This is not an area in which procedures can be drafted within the framework of a love for our country. **All of that might sound well to the uninformed, but God has not made Himself known as raising up special helpers for those who are aligned against Him, or misrepresent Him.**

If we really want things to be worked together for our good, then we must be accurately identified as those who *"love God, and are the called according to His purpose"* (Rom 8:28). God has revealed that He will work in the behalf of such people. No one else can expect such a working.

THEY STRIPPED JOSEPH OF HIS COAT AND CAST HIM INTO A PIT

" 23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his

coat, his coat of many colors that was on him; 24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty,

there was no water in it."

I do not doubt that when Joseph

first came among his brothers, he was somewhat glad to see them. If not because of some respect that he had for them, at least because he was now able to complete the mission on which his father sent him. It is sometimes difficult for innocent souls to detect hostility.

For those who actually find themselves fulfilling the will of the Lord, there is a satisfaction and joy that no one else is able to obtain.

WHEN JOSEPH WAS COME UNTO HIS BRETHREN

"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him . . ."

Now, here is something to note. Joseph was wearing the coat that his father had given to him. He was certainly not ashamed of it, and while he spent time attempting to find his brothers, he must have often thought how good his father had been to him.

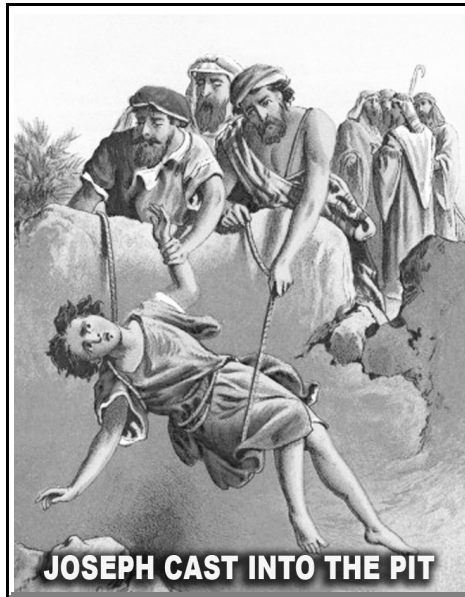
See how cruelly Joseph's brothers treat him. They take from him what is most precious to him. Instead of seeing that many-colored coat as an evidence of their father's tenderness, they thought of it as a token of his rejection of themselves. They did not know that in hating their brother, they were also hating their father.

Of course, they do not take the coat merely to deprive Joseph of it, but so they may eventually use it as lying evidence that he has been slain.

I get the picture that his brothers pounced on Joseph as soon as he was within their reach.

THEY CAST HIM INTO A PIT

" . . . And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty,



there was no water in it."

This was a specific pit, for Reuben had said, *"but cast him into THIS pit that is in the wilderness."* Being merciful, Reuben probably chose a pit that did not have water in it. This indicates that it probably was a cistern, used to collect water, most likely to water the sheep. This particular pit had no water in it, which ensured Joseph's survival in it. That means that the pit, though grievous, was providentially tailored for the needed survival. Joseph was to be held there until the proper time, when God would see to it that he was released.

The hardness of the brother's hearts is seen in their treatment of Joseph. They had no regard for him, and certainly not for their father, who favored Joseph above them.

A Favored Expression

Holy men have expressed those opposing them as digging a pit for them. David wrote, *"For without cause*

have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul" (Psa 35:7). Jeremiah lamented, *"Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them"* (Jer 18:20).

Jeremiah's Experience

You may recall that Jeremiah was also thrown into a pit that was not after the manner of this pit. *"Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire"* (Jer 38:6). Some versions read *"cistern"* instead of *"dungeon."* NASB/NIV/NRSV

Therefore, in Joseph we have a depiction of the extent to which the enemies of those who believe will go in order to rid themselves of their holy influence. In countries such as our own, the laws of the land hold our foes in check, which is one reason God placed governments among men (Rom 13). However, given license to do so, other countries have thought nothing of killing believers and pillaging their homes.

I do not believe most Christians have a grasp of the enmity that exists between the world and the body of Christ. That enmity is not on the part of the saints themselves, anymore than Joseph had any hostility toward his brothers.

Of course, in all, of this, as will be confirmed later, God Almighty is taking note of what the brothers are doing. AT the time, it is all serving His own purpose. However, in due time this matter will be revisited, and the brothers will regret what they have done.

LET US SELL HIM

" 25 And they sat down to eat | bread: and they lifted up their eyes and | looked, and, behold, a company of

Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.



²⁶ *And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.*

Casting Joseph in a pit was intended to be a temporary measure. The brothers wanted to kill him. Reuben wanted to deliver him back to his father. Now the brothers will ponder the circumstance and determine their course of action. Unknown to them, the Lord is working things together for the good of Joseph. He is in control of the situation, and will direct their minds to do His will.

THEY SAT DOWN TO EAT BREAD

"And they sat down to eat bread . . ." Other versions read, "sat down to eat a meal." NKJV

The casualness with which they conducted themselves after casting

Joseph into a pit is arresting. It reveals their hardness of heart, lack of pity, and prevailing interest only in self. They continue with their lives just as though nothing had happened. In the meantime, Joseph also continues his life, and his situation has changed considerably.

BEHOLD A COMPANY OF ISHMAELITES

" . . . and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt..."

God has so coordinated this event that traveling merchants now cross the path of Joseph's brothers. The likelihood of this being nothing more than happenstance is not possible. We know from a revelation given to David centuries later that God *"sent a man before then, even Joseph"* (Psa 105:17). He did not send him by a commandment, or a vision, or a dream. He sent him by regulating the circumstances in his life. He was directing his paths (Prov 3:6), ordering his steps (Psa 37:23), and setting Joseph in the way of His steps (Psa 85:13). God had appointed Joseph to go to Egypt, and as ruler there sustain His chosen people – *"to save much people alive"* (Gen 50:20). **Now, therefore, God arranges for his transportation to Egypt.**

The doctrine of Scriptures is being lived out in this text. He will not suffer, or allow, Joseph's foot to slip, and he will keep him safe (Psa 121:3). **His brothers were planning one thing, but it is what the Lord had planned that will prevail!**

JUDAH'S SUGGESTION

" . . . And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for

he is our brother and our flesh. . . "

God uses Judah, the progenitor of the line leading to the Messiah, to deliver Joseph from death. Judah tells his brothers that there is really no advantage to killing Joseph, then trying to conceal, or cover up, his blood. He then suggests they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, and not lay their hands on him for harm.

I do not doubt that this made a lot of sense to Judah. **However, it was the Lord who moved him to say this, just as surely as He moved Caiaphas to say words he himself did not fully comprehend.** His peers had said in frustration, *"If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation"* (John 11:48). Caiaphas put forward that it would be best to take the life of Jesus. *"And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation"* (John 11:49-51).

That is the sort of word that Judah has spoken – **a prophecy relating to Joseph getting down into Egypt,** where the Lord was sending him.

AND HIS BRETHREN WERE CONTENT

" . . . And his brethren were content." Other versions read, "his brothers listened," NKJV "his brothers agreed," NASB "his brothers heeded him," RSV "hearkened unto him," ASV "obeyed," GENEVA "gave ear to him." BBE

Thus the malicious plans of the brothers were averted by the changing of their minds. They would see Joseph going down into Egypt – practically the same as his life and influence being taken from them.

MIDIANITES AND ISHMAELITES

" 28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."

MIDIANITES MERCHANTMEN

"Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen . . ." It appears that the Midianites were the actual merchants traveling with the caravan, while the caravan itself belonged to the Ishmaelites – something like a freight line. It apparently was not the job of the merchantmen to make purchases along the way. They would do the selling when they got to Egypt, marketing their wares. The Ishmaelites would be the buyers in this caravan.

THEY SOLD HIM TO THE ISHMAELITES

" . . . and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver . . ." I apologize for the artwork of Joseph. Most of it, with a few exceptions, portray him as a young boy. He was seventeen years old, and probably a little larger than some of the artists have portrayed him. These artists must have forgotten that he was a responsible young man who would be given charge of Pharaoh's entire house.

His brothers received twenty pieces of silver for Joseph – two thirds of what Judas received for the betrayal of Jesus (Matt 27:3)

Commenting on this occasion, Stephen said in a Jewish synagogue, *"And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him"* (Acts 7:9). **The reality of God being with Joseph offset any apparent deficiencies or circumstances.**

God was not only with Joseph, this is the means through which He was sending him to Egypt (Psa105:17). On the other end – in Egypt and the surrounding countries, He would call *"for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread."* (Psa 105:16). **This would set the stage for the elevation of Joseph to a place of**

However, when a person is actually in the heart of God's purpose, awareness has little, if anything, to do with the fulfillment of that purpose. It does relate to ones' state of mind, the measure of satisfaction and joy they receive, and the level of confidence they have.

governmental prominence.

I do not know how aware Joseph was of these realities. In fact, there is every reason to believe they were a bit vague to him at this time. **However, when a person is actually in the heart of God's purpose, awareness has little, if anything, to do with the fulfillment of that purpose.** It does relate to ones' state of mind, the measure of satisfaction and joy they receive, and the level of confidence they have. But the purpose of God is sure, and cannot fail of fulfillment. **As a person walks by faith, the time will come when he will be convinced of this, and will walk in growing confidence.**

THE REALITY OF THE MATTER

It made no difference how hopeless things may have appeared, it was true for Joseph like it is for all who are in Christ Jesus, *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than*

conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:31-39).

God's people must learn to live with a lively awareness of this fact. Circumstances may appear to contradict what God has declared, and one's own feelings may be weak on the matter. Yet, for those who abide in Jesus, this is the truth of the matter, and it must be the aim of every believer to take hold of this by faith, and never let it go.

FOR JOSEPH

For Joseph, God was working all things together for his good – and in due time, that would become very apparent.

It would be a little less than five hundred years from the time of our text, when the seed of Abraham would come out of Egypt 2-3 million strong. A little over thirteen years after the time of our text, the total number of Israelites would be seventy. It did not seem possible that a great nation could develop by the appointed time of Israel's deliverance.

God, however, is accelerating things, causing a lot to happen in a short period of time. He is at this time beginning "project Egypt," and Joseph is on the ground floor, so to speak, of

the purpose. As of yet, none of this good working can be confirmed by vision, or any form of human experience. Yet, the promise of God holds true, and everything that was promised to Abraham will surely come to pass. God is teaching us about Himself – particularly His faithfulness.

THEY BROUGHT JOSEPH TO EGYPT

“ . . . and they brought Joseph into Egypt.”

The merchants finally arrived in Egypt *“bearing spicery and balm and myrrh”* (Gen 37:25). Other versions read *“aromatic gum, and balm, and myrrh.”* ^{NIV} The Midianites would sell their spices, and the Ishmaelites would market men, which was done frequently in those times.

- ➡ Abraham had servants he had bought with money (Gen 17:13,27).
- ➡ God told disobedient Israel they would be sold to their enemies (Deut 28:68).
- ➡ *“Javan, Tubal, and Meshech . . . traded the persons of men”* (Ezek 27:13).
- ➡ God charged Tyre and Sidon with selling Judah and the children of Jerusalem to the Grecians (Joel 3:6).
- ➡ Babylon the Great is known for its

prolific marketing and trading, which includes *“the souls of men”* (Rev 18:13).

So, there was really nothing unusual about selling slaves, and men in general. It may not have been the ideal thing to do, but Joseph was sold in a normal manner, which was customary for the times.

It was the Divine objective that made this event so important. When the work for which Joseph was raised up – *“to save much people alive”* – Joseph had to be a seasoned and respected leader. By being sent to Egypt when he was:

- ➡ He would learn how to have the primary responsibility in a house (Potiphar’s steward).
- ➡ He will learn how to remain pure when tested in secret (with Potiphar’s wife).
- ➡ He will learn how to conduct himself when incarcerated (when a prisoner).
- ➡ He will learn how to manage other people (as a leader in prison).
- ➡ He will learn when and how to use his gift of interpreting dreams (When interpreting the dreams Pharaoh’s baker and butler).

- ➡ He will learn how to be patient in tribulation (while in prison).

When Joseph’s ordained time comes, he will be able to go from prison to the throne, assuming great responsibility with great wisdom.

Thus it is written of Joseph: *“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom”* (Psa 105:17-22).

God used an ordinary transaction (the selling of a slave), and a customary responsibility (being made the steward of a house). He merged it with an extraordinary temptation and an unjust imprisonment, spread over as period of time that tested the fabric of character. He created circumstances that allowed Joseph to use his gift, and to do it with influential people who had access to Pharaoh.

The concentrated work for which Joseph was ordained commenced with the words, *“and they brought Joseph to Egypt.”* Truly, this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes (Psa 118:23; Mk 12:11).

THE CONCOCTED SCHEME

“²⁹ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.³⁰ And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?³¹ And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;³² And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no.³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast

hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.”

REUBEN RETURNS

“And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? . . .” Other versions read, *“where*

shall I turn now?” ^{NASB} *“where am I to go?”* ^{NIV} *“what am I to do?”* ^{BBE} *“And I, where shall I go [to hide from my father]?”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Reuben had originally told his brothers not harm Joseph or carry out their intentions to kill him. He had suggested they cast him in a particular pit, with the full intention of returning later, rescuing Joseph, and delivering him to his father (Gen 37:22). He had apparently gone away at that

time, for here we read that *he “returned unto the pit.”* Further, he was not aware that Joseph had been sold to the Ishmaelites.

As the firstborn, he appeared to be responsible for young Joseph. He therefore asks in desperation, *“wither shall I go?”* The idea is two-fold. “Where can I look for Joseph,” and “How will I be able to account for his disappearance to our father?” **The brothers did not know of Reuben’s intention, and he did not know of the brothers action.** This was truly the society of the uninformed. Had Joseph escaped? Did the brothers kill him? Did someone else intervene in the whole matter? Reuben had no answer, and therefore tore his clothes in shame and frustration. In all of this, there is a hint that he finally told the brothers what he had intended to do.

THEY TOOK JOSEPH’S COAT

“ . . . And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no . . . ”

The text does not say whether or not the brothers told Reuben what they had done, although it is assumed by some that they did.

Instantly, the brothers developed a strategy that would, they thought, conceal their evil deed. They had taken Joseph’s coat from him (Gen 37:23), and now they would use it to delude their father. Originally they, when they had planned to kill Joseph, had determined they would tell their father

he had been slain by *“some evil beast”* (Gen 37:20). Now, they will employ that delusion.

They killed *“a kid of the goats”* – a male goat – and dipped Joseph’s coat in the blood, apparently soaking it thoroughly.

The text says they then *“sent the coat of many colors and brought it to their father.”* The idea appears to be that they sent it by some of their servants, thus drawing attention from themselves, as though the coat was found by someone else, and they immediately had it sent to Jacob, so it would arrive before they could lead the flocks back home. Then they returned home, they obtained the coat, and took it to their father. With seeming innocence they said, *“We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son’s tunic or not.”* ^{NIV}

Behold how sin causes people to be conniving and heartless.

THE RESPONSE OF JACOB

“ . . . And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.”

Even though it was soaked with blood, Jacob recognized his sons unique coat. Beholding the coat he concluded, *“an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.”* He was sure his assessment was correct, but it could not possibly have been more wrong. What Jacob thought was incontrovertible proof was

nothing more than a delusion. An evil beast had not attacked Joseph, and Joseph was not dead.

Jacob lamented, what he thought was the loss of his son, for many days. It must have been a very difficult time for him – even though his assessment of the situation was totally incorrect.

We see in this that the belief of a lie can move a person to willingly conduct themselves just as though their imagination was true. That is how powerful the mind of man is. There are people in heathen religions, for example, who will die for a god that is not real. Doing so simply because they think he is real. Those who lie in wait to deceive (Eph 4:14) know that if they can convince any person that what they are saying is the truth the deceived one will act just as though they had heard the truth. This is why it is essential that those in Christ *“try the spirits, whether they are of God”* (1 John 4:1).

Jacob was not the last person who was deceived by appearance. That is why Jesus said, *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”* (John 7:24).

Our adversary, the devil, still majors on *“appearance”* – he works in the area of sense and vision. **Those who are dominated by him focus on appearance, judge everything according to appearance, and strive to make their largest impression in that area.** The fact that the devil does this, and that he is so successful in that approach, is proof that sin has distorted man’s ability to assess and reason. He is easily deceived because he majors in the area where deception is wrought.

ALL JACOB’S SONS AND DAUGHTERS ROSE UP TO COMFORT HIM

³⁵ *“ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.”*

ALL HIS SONS AND ALL HIS DAUGHTERS
“And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him. . .”

Only one of Jacob’s daughters is

named in Scripture: Dinah (Gen 30:21; 34:1-5,13,26). Later in Genesis, when the children of Jacob are reviewed, Dinah is referred to as *“his daughter Dinah”* (Gen 46:15). Of course, that does not

necessarily mean she was his only daughter. **Adam** begat “*sons and daughters*” over a period of eight hundred years, and not a single daughter is named (Gen 5:4). **Seth** (Gen 5:7), **Enos** (Gen 5:10), **Cainan** (Gen 5:13), **Mahalaleel** (Gen 5:16), **Jared** (Gen 5:19), **Enoch** (Gen 5:22), **Methuselah** (Gen 5:26), **Lamech** (Gen 5:30), **Shem** (Gen 11:11), **Arphaxad** (Gen 11:13), **Salah** (Gen 11:15), **Eber** (Gen 11:17), **Peleg** (Gen 11:19), **Reu** (Gen 11:21), **Serug** (Gen 11:23), and **Nahor** (Gen 11:25) all begat “*daughters*” – but not a single one of them is named.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that Jacob’s “*daughters*” are mentioned, but, with the single exception of Dinah,

never named. Some feel that the word indicated daughters-in-law. I take the text to mean “*daughters*,” just as it says.

At any rate, all of the sons and daughters “*rose up to comfort*” Jacob. **That was certainly a hypocritical stance for the sons who sold him, and then concocted a lie to cover up their crime.**

Sin so hardens a person that they can pretend they are sad when they are not, and feign being a comforter, when they are totally lacking in their capacity to console others.

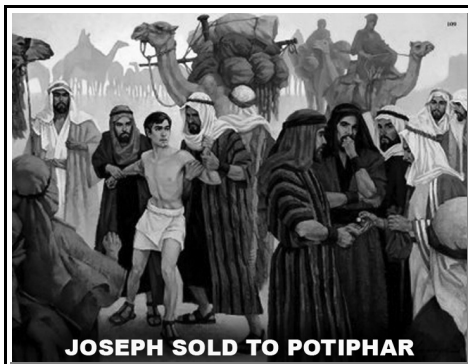
JACOB REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED

“ . . . but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down

into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.”

A delusion had so thoroughly gripped the heart of the patriarch that he would not allow himself to receive comfort. It was not a matter of being stubborn, but of being broken-hearted. He was convinced that he had lost his favorite son, and that being comforted was out of order. Under those conditions, the efforts of his family were all in vain. I have often wondered if Joseph’s malicious brothers were touched at all by the weeping of their father. There is no indication in the text that they were. Their sorrow would not come for nearly twenty years.

THE MIDIANITES SELL JOSEPH TO POTIPHAR



“³⁶ *And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of*

Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard.”

In the meantime, while Jacob wept and mourned, the Midianite merchants continued their business as usual.

However, God is at work in the transaction now mentioned. After apparently displaying Joseph on, what might be called, the auction block, they found a buyer. I take it that Joseph was impressive in his appearance, and judged to be a profitable servant.

It was no ordinary man that elected

to buy young Joseph. In fact, he was “*an officer of Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard.*” Other versions read, “*Pharaoh’s officer, the captain of the bodyguard,*” ^{NIV} and “*an officer of Pharaoh and the captain and chief executioner of the [royal] guard.*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Who cannot see what is taking place here. **The Lord has caused Potiphar to buy Joseph to serve him personally.** The timing is precise. Joseph is being positioned in a path that will eventually lead to the Pharaoh and unprecedented exaltation. The stage is now set for the rest of Genesis.

CONCLUSION

Thus our attention is turned from Canaan to Egypt, and from Jacob to Joseph. The mighty God is now concentrating on fulfilling His promise to Abraham concerning his progeny being in bondage, being oppressed, and finally being delivered. To being a concentrated work on this project, he begins with a seventeen year old boy. There are some preparations that are necessary, that will require about thirteen years. The whole plan will not be spread before Joseph during that wait.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/28/13. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The sixty-first lesson will cover verses 1 through 30 of chapter thirty-eight “THE EXPERIENCES OF JUDAH.” Judah has three children from an Adullamite, the daughter of a Canaanite. Judah then took a wife for his firstborn, Er, whose name was Tamar. Er was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord slew him. Judah told his brother Onan, to go in to her, marry her, and raise up seed to his brother. Knowing that the seed would not be his, Onan refused to do so, and the Lord slew him also. He then commanded The meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF JOSEPH, AND THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS PURPOSE

