

JOSEPH: A STUDY IN DESTINY

Part II

Never a Dull Moment in God's Service

Last time, we looked at how Joseph's brothers mistreated Joseph and at the same time began a chain of events that would lead to the fulfillment of God's promises concerning the Hebrew people. We learned that no matter what outward circumstances look like, God is ultimately in control. Nothing surprises Him. God never has a contingency plan. We learned that *God's word is forever settled in heaven*.

This week, we'll see how God is faithful to Joseph in all circumstances. We will also learn why the story of Joseph is so important to us today. Really, the story of Joseph isn't about Joseph at all. Like so many stories in the Bible, Joseph's story is about something much bigger. We'll see what that is in a few moments.

1. Some background.

The story of Joseph picks up with the Ishmaelites selling the young man to Potiphar. Remember that the Midianites and Ishmaelites are the same people. Potiphar's job was similar to being head of the Secret Service, so he had a very responsible position and prestigious too.

Verse two serves to establish the overall theme of the Joseph narrative: *"The Lord was with Joseph"*. We'll see that God was with Joseph in the pit, in the house with Potiphar and in prison too. In fact, there never was a time in Joseph's life when God had left him. And so it is with you. No matter what your circumstances may be, God is with you. He never leaves when the going gets tough.

An interesting fact concerning this part of Joseph's life is how different he was from his father, Jacob and his grandfather, Abraham. Remember how they acted when they sojourned in Egypt? Abraham was so afraid of the Egyptians that he told his wife to lie, saying she was his sister and not his wife so they would be left alone. Jacob did the same thing. In fact, you'll notice that the stories of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—are the stories of their moral and spiritual failings. But Joseph is the story of how one man can remain faithful to God no matter what the circumstances! Joseph never fell; he never forsook God. But more importantly, Joseph's story is really a story of God's faithfulness to His promises. Note this verse: **Genesis 12:3**. The Joseph narratives further give expression to the part of God's promise given to Abraham in **Genesis 18:19**. There is a human part to be played in the fulfillment of God's plan. When God's people respond as Joseph responded, then their lives and God's blessing will prosper. Also of note is how Joseph's story of prosperity parallels that of his father in **Genesis 30:27**.

2. The righteous man.

Notice that Potiphar's house was blessed because of Joseph's faithfulness to God. Also notice that Potiphar *saw* why his house was prospering. Potiphar could see Joseph's faith in action; Joseph was not ashamed of his faith, but lived it so the whole world could see it.

Joseph was promoted because of his wisdom and success at running Potiphar's household. Truly God was with Joseph and blessing him. Isn't it obvious?

The last phrase of verse six serves to set the stage for what follows.

3. *The shoe drops*

So, Joseph was promoted and blessed beyond imagination. Things were going well. So, of course, the tempter rears his ugly head. That's usually the case, isn't it? Good times, or bad times for that matter, never last forever. Just look at the stock market in recent days! The tempter in this case was actually a temptress; namely Potiphar's wife. Joseph was handsome, we're sure she was beautiful and the day came when she set her sights on the good-looking Hebrew who was always around, unlike her husband who was always out working. It's the perfect scenario. But Joseph was a man of character. He resisted her advances—over and over. How did he do this? He was young and healthy, he wasn't made of stone! Of note is this verse: **Genesis 41:38**. In all the book of Genesis, only Joseph is described as being filled with the Spirit of God. Joseph was a man of God, a man of integrity and man of character.

And how was Joseph rewarded for his faithfulness to God and to his master? He was cast into a prison, naturally. It wasn't just any prison, either. It was the prison for the King's enemies! Those who committed crimes against the state had an especially nasty place to go to.

4. *It's not all bad.*

I love verse 21. Joseph experienced God's presence in the darkest place on earth. Joseph didn't whine and despair. He could feel His God right there with him! In fact, even in prison, God caused Joseph to prosper. You just can't keep a good man down! Don't you just love how God works? The epilogue to this part of the story is so clear. God had turned an intended evil against Joseph into good. God was with Joseph and prospered his way. Lying behind the course of events, then, is the lesson of Joseph's entire life: *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good*—**Genesis 50:20**. Like Daniel during the Exile, Joseph suffered for doing what was right, but God turned the evil done to him into a blessing.

5. *Bringing it home.*

What can we take from this:

- A. **Hebrews 12:6**. If you know Jesus, then nothing comes to us without God's permission. God works all things together for good to them who love Him.
- B. There is a hedge about every child of God and nothing gets through without God's permission (*Job 1:10*)
- C. There is another aspect of the life of Joseph that should be an encouragement to believers today. None of God's children today have ever had a direct revelation from God. Some may claim the contrary, but God does not appear to people today. It is for our encouragement that God didn't appear to Joseph directly either, yet He was still leading and guiding and blessing him in every circumstance.