

CONCERNING THE WAY

June 10, 2008



LESSON 20: GENESIS: FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM

Introduction - Joseph - the Deliverer of Israel

We've said that in the remainder of Genesis you're going to see one basic theme. The idea is that God has called forth this family, the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and it's this family from which he will form the kingdom of the Old Testament. Everything will flow out of this family; that's the basic idea.

Now, since the family has been called out of the world what's the danger? The danger is that the family will sink back into the world from which it was called, so we can say that the major theme of Genesis, chapter after chapter after chapter is trying to maintain the separate purity of this family unit. In fact, as we go into this last section on Joseph, the whole argument of the Joseph story is to show why it was necessary for Israel to go into captivity in Egypt and be extracted by a miraculous exit; that's an unanswered question without the Joseph stories. Why did God all of a sudden start a plan with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then kind of dump them in Egypt and leave them there for four centuries; that's a long time. Our country isn't even four centuries old. Israel and the Jews spent a longer time in Egypt than our entire nation has existed. So why did that happen? Genesis is giving you the why. It's to keep that family sufficiently pure in order to carry on the foundation of the kingdom.

All through this period in the history of the Bible we have the set of mechanics that God is using to bring in the kingdom of God. The set of mechanics that God uses to do this we ought to appreciate and reflect upon. Man sinfully, from the dawn of time, has always wanted to create his own perfect society on earth. This has been the dream of men dating back to the time of Pharaoh, going on up to more late ancient times, Plato wrote the standard book, *The Republic*, and then following Plato we have all the other schemers of history including Karl Marx and the modern communists, the western socialists, and others have all had their schemes and plans for bettering humanity, but all the schemes and plans, whether communist, platonic, or from Pharaoh, have at their base one central assumption and that is that the state is the place to start. The Bible has an opposite assumption and that is the family is the place to start.

Now all these stories are not just entertaining Sunday School stories; these stories are to teach that all such changes in society start with the family unit. And the reason that it starts with the family unit is because it's in the family that authority is learned. The family is always the first place God works to do His thing. Not only is authority learned but that's the first place where we have any kind of real mature social experience. - *Dusty Rhodes*

Genesis Chapter 37

Now, let's keep in mind what God is doing throughout these stories. As we have seen in our earlier lessons, as time goes by, the human race seems to degenerate further and further. This is even true in the families that God has called out of the world. We've seen it in the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Left to themselves, they decay, become weaker, more and more part of the pagan world system. But God wants to build a kingdom out of this family. So, how does he keep this family from decaying? He has to intervene, and we'll see this again in the story of Joseph as we go through the chapters.

By the time we get to chapter 37, we can see the decay has been developing in Jacob's family. Jacob seems to be having a problem controlling his family. In Genesis 34, Jacob's daughter Dinah is raped by a Canaanite, and two of his sons, Simeon and Levi, go and murder every man in the city this Canaanite was from. Simeon and Levi were strong; they had the moral aggressiveness of their father, minus their father's accumulated wisdom, and went out and massacred a village, not a great thing to do when you're trying to plant a new society on friendly terms with everybody else in the land. And so there was a failure there in this family, a progressively developing weakness.

In this chapter we see a weakness of Jacob, that he loves Joseph more than all of his other sons, and not only that, but verse 4 tells us the bitterness that his other sons feel toward their father because they know very well their dad loves him more than them.

So it was this material that God used to bring forth His kingdom. It should be encouraging to all of us. See, God doesn't start with success; He starts with failure because in that way He reminds us that it's His grace that does it. So don't think because in your home, because you have all these splits, disharmony, and maybe after effects of irresponsible acts in the past, that that disqualifies you from a great work of God because if it does, why isn't this family disqualified? This family has its deep problems also.

Genesis 37 is a chapter that introduces all the actors. It introduces all the main forces that are going to be operative in the family and in history down to the time that the nation becomes established in Egypt.

Genesis 37:1 *"But Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, in the land of Canaan."*

Now Jacob has come back from Haran after twenty years of herding Laban's sheep. He came back with his wives, his eleven sons, then Rachel has Benjamin, she dies in childbirth and passes out of the story. But now, we are introduced to Joseph. And Joseph almost fills the rest of the Book of Genesis.

Genesis 37:2-11 *This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, his seventeen-year-old son, was taking care of the flocks with his brothers. Now he was a youngster working with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. (3) Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons because he was a son born to him late in life, and he made a special tunic for him. (4) When Joseph's brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated Joseph and were not able to speak to him kindly. (5) Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him even more. (6) He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: (7) There we were, binding sheaves of grain in the middle of the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose up and stood upright and your sheaves surrounded my sheaf and bowed down to it!" (8) Then his brothers asked him, "Do you really think you will rule over us or have dominion over us?" They hated him even more because of his dream and because of what he said. (9) Then he had another dream, and told it to his brothers. "Look," he said. "I had another dream. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." (10) When he told his father and his brothers, his father rebuked him, saying, "What is this dream that you had? Will I, your mother, and your brothers really come and bow down to you?" (11) His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept in mind what Joseph said.*

From this time forward you're not going to see God spectacularly reveal Himself again for a while. God withdraws and you won't see any of that kind of revelation until the time of the burning bush with Moses some four centuries later. For a while God is backing off and the only way revelation is now communicated is through dreams. It's a period of almost silence from God; dreams and providence are the two ways God now communicates to man during these 400 years.

So what conclusions can we make at this point about Joseph?

- He's already receiving revelation from God in the form of dreams
- He has all the natural and spiritual gifts he needs for the rest of his life
- However, he doesn't have the wisdom to use those talents yet

You could argue that Joseph, at this point, was a brilliant brat. He was given tremendous talents by God but frankly he was just a brat when he came to exercising them. This is very important because it shows you where God is going to work on him.

In children, one of the first things that they need to do is to learn the concept of authority, obedience and discipline. They're not going to go anywhere in life apart from authority and discipline. Joseph, while he has the capacity to dream great things, seems to have diarrhea of the mouth in verse 8 and verse 10, and that is not the way to take the things that God gives and spray people with them. Joseph doesn't yet have the wisdom of using some sort of diplomacy, and the result of this is tremendous antagonism towards him by his brothers.

You've probably seen this with someone you've known. A person might be gifted, but in a group they will be the biggest pain in the neck of anybody in that group. The reason is that they haven't learned to use their gifts wisely. The answer is not to quell it, the answer is train it and redirect it and they will be a strong positive factor

OK, so Joseph is a brilliant brat, and Verse 2 basically tells us Joseph was a tattletale. He'd go and tell daddy what big brother Levi did today, etc. this probably went on day after day. This contributed to the antagonism of his brothers, and of course his father should have seen this and corrected it.

The "Coat of many colors" It looks like Joseph got the best clothes. Now living in a family with multiple sons you know who usually gets the worst clothes is the youngest one because it gets passed down after it's been outgrown by the others. But in this family number 11 was the one that got the best clothes. But that's not all; that still doesn't explain the anger that this robe caused the brothers. The King James translation here isn't very accurate, it doesn't mean many colors. The Hebrew seems to suggest that it was richly embroidered. It carried a connotation of royalty. It set Joseph apart as the favored one.

So you can see from these things why the verses say that Joseph's brothers were developing a hatred for him. Here's the brilliance of Joseph and here's his bratiness; he is going to get this bratiness, this dross melted off of him. When he emerges from an Egyptian prison after years of living down there and being forgotten, Joseph will no longer be a brilliant brat, he'll be a brilliant man, so brilliant that he becomes the architect of the economy of Egypt. That's the story of sanctification as it's going to take place and I think we can, as we go on through it, see many applications in our lives.

There are two kinds of things that can happen to a child like this. We have all this talk about child abuse and it's a growing concern in our country. Let's talk about two kinds of abuse of children: good abuse and bad abuse. God has a good way of abusing children; He also condemns a bad way. And the reason I am using the word "abuse" for these two categories is because in the world today these two kinds of abuse are not being distinguished. It's all categorized as abuse and that's a clever little ploy for doing away with Christian child rearing.

The first way of good abuse is what we call breaking a child's spirit, and this happens to everyone who is sanctified. The Psalm that we read, Psalm 51:17 says, "A broken and contrite spirit, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Now what is David talking about? He's talking about a broken human spirit. The word in the Hebrew, shabar, means that God is going to break autonomous pride; all persons of the human race since Adam have been born as brats. And all members of the human race need to have their spirit broken. This is why we have so much trouble in the families, because we haven't had people who have had their spirit finally broken.

Now what do we mean by this good kind of abuse? It means that the person finally, in the core of their heart, becomes oriented to grace. It means that the person finally says, all right, **I see that the only way my basic needs are ever going to be met is by God meeting them, His way, not my way.** Now once this titanic conclusion dawns on somebody, and sometimes it takes years of suffering before it does, once this conclusion dawns then you have hope and then the child is ready for growth. That is what has not happened to Joseph yet in Genesis 37. That's the good kind of abuse.

Now let's look at the bad kind of abuse. There's another Hebrew word called nakah; this word means a broken spirit, it occurs in the book of Proverbs. And if you want some references it would be Proverbs 15:13; Proverbs 17:22, and this word means a whipped spirit, it really means a beaten whipped spirit. Now that is bad abuse. The child comes equipped with God-consciousness; the child comes equipped, therefore, already from birth with an innate sense that he's worthwhile in God's sight. He has two conflicting inner claims; one from birth that he is a creature in God's image and he intuitively knows this. The second thing that he comes equipped with is the sense that he's a sinner. No child has to be told he's a sinner, he knows it. All right, if that's the case, we've got that intuitively embedded in the soul. Now what happens?

Under an environment of abuse, where you have overbearing adults, who are unwise in the way they bring up the child, in

that situation you've got the child saying okay, I'm bad, I can't do anything, a lousy sense of self-worth. The conscience says hey kid, you're a sinner, but you're also made in God's image, you've got inherent dignity. The parent says you're worthless, you're worthless, you're worthless, and being overly harsh and overbearing on him. Now what happens to the kid? What the problem is that the kid is listening now to what the adults are saying, what his environment is saying, and not to what his own heart says, and he's been seduced away from his conscience, so now he takes all his cues from what people think. And he grows up in life not only listening to what people say but he grows up in life thinking that I must be judged by their standards. That is a whipped child; that is an abused child, his conscience has been shattered.

So we have good abuse and bad abuse; good child abuse is breaking the spirit in the sense of breaking pride. The second abuse is breaking the child period. Now when God goes to sanctify you and me, He engages in the good kind of abuse; if we want to define sanctification as abuse and I'm sure if you've been a Christian more than five minutes you've been in a situation where you feel like God is personally abusing you, picking on you, and so forth. So, we can call sanctification some kind of abuse. .

Joseph has brilliance; Joseph is going to be used by God in a vital way to save his people. Joseph is being groomed for a mighty act; he is going to be God's man on the scene at one of the crisis points of history. He's going to be the man with the goods in the right place at the right time. The problem with it is he can't exercise his brilliance because his bratiness gets in the way. So now this has got to be sheered off and that's the place where God begins His divine plan of abusing Joseph to get rid of that bratiness, to break his spirit. And when his spirit is broken, then his brilliance can shine, but not until. See, that's the tragedy, if you don't have this good kind of abuse you are really being unfair to a child because he can never develop the gift that God has put in his soul. And he goes through life perpetually thinking I've failed, I've failed, I've never been what I could have been, and just walks around just kind of in a zombie state, no sense of pride or dignity simply because he's never produced anything worthwhile.

Now Joseph is being favored by his dad. Every time the old man got out to buy clothes for this kid he fitted him out in the clothes of a prince. Now the lesson is to watch how God works and if you can watch how God works here in this situation it'll give you a powerful, hopeful mechanism so you can work in your family, no matter what the circumstance is, no matter what the pressure is. God has got to get rid of Joseph's bratiness, but He can't leave it up to just his parents because his parents aren't that wise, just as God can't leave your child's sanctification up to you, thank God, because if He did, the child would be permanently crippled. All we can do is follow the mandates of Scripture the best we can and trust God to work through us.

So, one day Jacob send Joseph to go check on his brothers, who are grazing flocks a good distance away. As they see him coming, they begin to plot amongst themselves, saying:

Genesis 37:20-22 *Come now, let's kill him, throw him into one of the cisterns, and then say that a wild animal ate him. Then we'll see how his dreams turn out!" (21) When Reuben heard this, he rescued Joseph from their hands, saying, "Let's not take his life!" (22) Reuben continued, "Don't shed blood! Throw him into this cistern that is here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." (Reuben said this so he could rescue Joseph from them and take him back to his father.)*

In other words, Reuben was conspiring by himself to have the brothers throw him into the pit, and then when they didn't know it, he'd go back and draw him out and send him back home. So Reuben was really trying to be a benefactor here. And he doesn't get away with it.

Genesis 37:-23-25 *When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him of his tunic, the special tunic that he wore. (24) Then they took him and threw him into the cistern. (Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it.) (25) When they sat down to eat their food, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying spices, balm, and myrrh down to Egypt.*

They threw him into a pit, and for all practical purposes, they were killing him and then they did what? They sat down! Now, what does that remind you of? When Christ was put on the Cross, what does it say they did? And they sat down and they watched him there.

This little incident is also interesting because this is part of grooming him for another little episode in his life; he's going to be thrown into jail. Poor Joseph spent half his life underground. Get this in your mind's eye to visualize the loneliness, the stark terror, the absolute defeat of this 17 year old as he's dumped into the cistern.

Genesis 37:26-28 *Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? (27) Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let's not lay a hand on him, for after all, he is our brother, our own flesh." His brothers agreed. (28) So when the Midianite merchants passed by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. The Ishmaelites then took Joseph to Egypt.*

They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; (although that number is a little different, they sold Christ for how much? Thirty pieces of silver. But, nevertheless, the analogy is so close that you can't avoid it.)

Here's the deal: what is God's ultimate call for this boy Joseph? He wants to get him down into Egypt. Now how do you suppose God's going to get him down to Egypt? He's got to create a situation, the circumstances of which are just perfectly timed to get the boy to hook up with the right people who will take him down here without getting him killed by his brothers, yet He's got to get him wrenched away from Jacob his father and down here into the house of Pharaoh.

It just so happens that in the area that the brothers are grazing the flocks runs a trade route, a highway that runs down to Egypt. God had to get Joseph into this area in order to get him to Egypt - it couldn't have happened if Joseph was at home. The incident has to take place up here right next to the highway, because there were caravans that used this highway to go to Egypt.

And the timing is perfect. Suppose he got there too early, what would his brothers have done to Joseph? They would have killed him. The timing can't be too late because if he gets there too late then the convoy of Ishmaelites that had come down the highway to take him down to Egypt will be gone. So God's timing has to be perfect. This explains why sometimes when you want to do something and you get frustrated with the delay, that's actually of God. That's for your good.

Genesis 37:29-30 *Later Reuben returned to the cistern to find that Joseph was not in it! He tore his clothes, returned to his brothers, and said, "The boy isn't there! And I, where can I go?"*

Reuben was responsible because he is the oldest. How can he dare go back to his father and tell him what had happened? I think God has to engineer this so that every detail works together for good. Now you notice in verse 22 it's talking about Reuben. The strange thing about this text is that Reuben disappears after verse 22; the text doesn't say where he goes, he just disappears, because had he been there, Joseph would have been brought back to Hebron. So God has to get Reuben out of the way, so Reuben just takes off somewhere, and when he comes back, it's too late - he's gone.

Genesis 37:31 *So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a young goat, and dipped the tunic in the blood.* Does that ring a bell? What did Rebekah use to deceive Isaac? A goat. What goes around comes around. What do the brothers use to deceive old Jacob? A goat! Now, I think little tidbits like this make this great Book so interesting. You can't escape some of these things. It's always going to come back, even in these old patriarchs.

Genesis 37:32-34 *Then they brought the special tunic to their father and said, "We found this.*

Determine now whether it is your son's tunic or not." (33) He recognized it and exclaimed, "It is my son's tunic! A wild animal has eaten him! Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" (34) Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days.

Isn't this a tragedy in the story? Here is a father who wanted more than anything else to hold on to his young son, and which of all the sons does God take? Exactly the son that the father wants. And how does this first family that God is going to build His kingdom out of wind up? Oh, it's in glorious shape now. The one son is now a slave in a foreign country; the other sons are guilty of meditated murder, though not executed, guilty of engaging in slavery, the father is in depression. Isn't that a great start to the kingdom of God in the Old Testament? It should encourage all of you. See what God works with? See the kind of family difficulties God works with and He stays working with them year after year?

Genesis 37:36 *Now in Egypt the Midianites sold Joseph to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.*

This is the other little cute thing about the story. God not only needs to get Joseph TO Egypt, he also has to get him into the house of Pharaoh, to be in a position of an advisor to him, his right hand. How does He do that? Egyptians don't like Jews. Could you have thought a neater way of doing this, getting him down in the right place and all sanctified by the time he gets in the right place. That's why he's sold as a slave because if he went down on a visa, as a tourist, he wouldn't be admitted to Pharaoh's presence. Pharaoh doesn't visit with Semites dropping in for coffee or something; that's not how you get to meet Pharaoh. He can't be part of the Egyptian army, really, because he's a foreigner and he wouldn't be respected. So that's not the way, he can't climb the social ladder. So there's only one way it can work and that is he's going to sneak Joseph into Pharaoh's house as a slave and it starts in verse 36. He gets him into Potiphar's house, who just happened to be the officer of Pharaoh's, and happens to be the C.O. of Pharaoh's body guards.

Now who's the unseen invisible hand in this entire story? Here's a boy who was a brilliant brat. God has a plan and purpose for his life, like He does for yours. He comes out of a home that is, at best, mediocre. There's no real peace in this home; he has a father that is not really a great father; he has brothers who hate him so much that they're ready to kill him. He experiences delays, he experiences frustrations; foreigners who don't care personally for the kid, and probably don't treat him too well. He has somebody try to rescue him and they're cut off. Who controls this environment? Who is conditioning this boy to be the kind of boy that He wants him to be? God is. Who's abusing this child? God is, the good way.

When Joseph gets through this abuse he's not a beaten whipped spirit; he becomes so powerful in history, that he becomes one of the two men in the Bible who ascend to the most powerful political office outside the land of Israel. That's not the result of a kid that's broken spirited; that's the result of a fantastic leader.

When Joseph was in that pit, 17 years old, thrown in there by a group of guys that wanted to kill him, you think of yourself walking around that deep hole in the ground and realizing that everything you have is gone, you are totally dependent on whatever comes through that hole, whether it's a rope or a sword or an arrow, it's whatever because you're totally helpless at that point. The only way Joseph could hack this, and we know from Genesis 50 he did, was to realize those guys up there, they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

What keeps this boy from getting bitter? He looks to the God who is acting behind the abuse and he begins to see the truth of Romans 8:28, that "All things," including this, "work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

Genesis Chapter 38

The mystery is why, after Genesis 37, which deals with Joseph, does Genesis 38 go off in a completely different direction? The answer is that Genesis 38 is an apologetic to explain why it is the Jews have to go to Egypt, because Genesis 38 deals with the Messianic son; it doesn't deal with Joseph. Joseph is not the Messianic seed. It's Judah that's the Messianic seed, and Genesis 38 shows you what's happened to Judah, he's degenerating. The theme of Genesis is working; this family that God has picked out to be the core nucleus family for His kingdom is already in such a bad state, has been so absorbed by the culture around it that the Messianic son is one of the most degenerate members of the whole family.

And so Genesis 38 is an argument why something has got to happen to save this family from destruction; it is cratering under the forces of depravity. So how is God going to maintain it? God is going to put the family in quarantine and He picks out a place for quarantine. What society near Israel could be found that was segregationist? It's very interesting. Egypt was segregationist and God took advantage of that society to pick up Israel, drop them down where they would be discriminated against and then all this intrusion from the outside would be cut off because the society wouldn't have anything to do with them. The Egyptians refused to even eat with Semites and so you have this element that God uses for good to quarantine that family, keep them tight, keep them together and keep them going so that later He can deal with them and have an instrument for the start of His kingdom.

So, Genesis 38 is deliberately put into the text to demonstrate some problems. You'll notice it's quite realistic because the Bible, if anything, is realistic. I have very little patience with people that say the Bible gives an idealistic view of life. It does not; it gives a realistic view of life. Few pastors would dare even comment in the details we're going to go over in this particular passage. But the passages of Scriptures are written because life is really this way and we have to deal with these kinds of problems.

Here's the picture. First you have the generation of Abraham, the generation of Isaac, the generation of Jacob, and then Joseph and his generation, and you can see the downhill slide of that first family. It is to show us that God indeed uses sinful people because He can't get anybody else. Who else is He supposed to use for His program? So don't get so high and pious when you look down your long spiritual nose at people like Judah; he's made of the same stuff you are. And so the story is realistic; it simply shows that **if anything good is ever to come out of history, or of a depraved fallen human race, it has got to be by God reaching down and dealing with the depravity problems through His grace.**

So Judah goes out with no consultation whatsoever; keep this in mind because remember, Abraham was very particular about what kind of girl married Isaac, and Isaac was very particular about getting, somebody in the clan at least, that would marry Jacob. The men saw the dangers of marrying pagan women.

Now as Judah goes out and marries, unauthorized by his parents, we find there comes into play a kind of a principle of which God works in families. Later on when God gives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the second one says this:

Exodus 20:4-6 *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me, (6) and showing covenant faithfulness to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

What does this mean? It means that God has a built-in, and I believe this is a general rule of providence; it's not just true of Israel, that God has a built-in system of destroying families that become so hardened to His grace that it becomes essentially impossible for their children to become Christians; that God simply breaks the family line.

If you want history, you can go into the royal families of Europe where we can trace the genealogy and see this, but the most famous non-biblical family that you can check out for yourself is the Herod family. Old man Herod destroyed the babies in Jerusalem; that was Grandfather Herod. By the time you get to the end of the New Testament his grandsons are all dying. For example, his grandson is the one that dies in the book of Acts. How come? How do you explain this? Well, for four generations you had a family that went hostile to the grace of God. Not only did they not believe but they went out of their way to crush what God was doing in history and God says I am not going to tolerate that behavior pattern in a family; I'll tolerate immorality, I'll tolerate all sorts of foolishness and other things in homes because I have to work with sinful people. All that I'll tolerate but I am not going to tolerate this hardened, determined attempt to destroy Me and My program. And so by the third and fourth generation of families that do this, you will see things begin to happen. For example, in the third and fourth the grandson and the great-grandson, you'll find out maybe they don't marry, they never have any children. Or maybe they marry and their children die through mysterious accidents. Or maybe they die of disease or accidents. Or maybe they're just infertile and they can't have children. But you watch, something will happen and that line will be cut off. And the Bible points out that that line cutting off... it isn't always due to this but often it's due to rebellion.

Genesis 38:1-5 *At that time Judah left his brothers and stayed with an Adullamite man named Hirah. (2) There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. Judah acquired her as a wife and had marital relations with her. (3) She became pregnant and had a son. Judah named him Er. (4) She became pregnant again and had another son, whom she named Onan. (5) Then she had yet another son, whom she named Shelah. She gave birth to him in Kezib.*

Here's Judah doing his own thing and here's why God is going to cut him off in the first generation. Let's look what happens mathematically if you let a family go on for four generations and each couple has four children. We'll start out, of course, with two; then you go and each of their children marries so there's four couples. So in the first generation you've got 8 people under this influence. They go and they multiply by four and then in the next generation you have 32. Then in the third generation you have 128 people, and in the fourth generation you have 512 people, making a sum total of 680 people under the influence of somebody that wanted to do their own thing. You see, this is why God doesn't allow this to go on much longer. He's being very gracious here, allowing it to just spread out to 680 people. Remember, people were prolific at that point in history due to longevity.

So that's the background of verses 1-2; Judah is not going to listen to parental authority, period. So in verse 3-5, he produces three sons. Scripture gives the name of each son; only one problem, not one of those three sons is in the lineage of Jesus Christ. Not one of those three sons is a Messianic seed, and therefore not one of those three sons plays a major role in the Bible. In fact, they disappear after Genesis 38. Shelah goes on and he manages to behave himself but the first two get the ax. Why? **Because all of this is the production of a rebellious person that's going to do their thing, their way.** Watch how God deals with him. See, all of this is a thwarting of Judah's autonomy. That's the story of this chapter. Judah wants to do his thing; God says no Judah, I've got a plan for you and that isn't the plan. When I get through, you're going to do exactly what I wanted you to anyway except there's going to be a lot of pain, misery and heartache in your life because you rebelled against me.

Genesis 38:6 *Judah acquired a wife for Er his firstborn; her name was Tamar.*

The first son, Er, gets to marriageable age. Now you do notice Judah doing something right. He begins to give direction to his son in who he's going to marry. Now the irony is the introduction of the woman, Tamar, because Tamar is going to be God's woman. She's going to be the one God wants to bear the Messianic seed. Now by the time you get through Genesis 38 you're going to be

dizzy at all the intrigue and the moves that are made in this great chess game; but you watch, at the end of this story Tamar winds up as the woman in place; not the other woman.

Genesis 38:7 *But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD killed him.*

So now number one of the three sons is eliminated from history. Notice the phrasing, “the LORD killed him,” direct physical discipline. We don’t know, maybe he died of cancer or something else, the means isn’t important here, maybe he fell off a cliff, I don’t know, but however he died, it was a result of God’s interference.

Genesis 38:8-10 *Then Judah said to Onan, "Have sexual relations with your brother's wife and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her so that you may raise up a descendant for your brother." (9) But Onan knew that the child would not be considered his. So whenever he had sexual relations with his brother's wife, he withdrew prematurely so as not to give his brother a descendant. (10) What he did was evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD killed him too.*

This is one of those passages which I’m sure the more pious would wish wasn’t there! In verse 7 we have the elimination of an heir because he’s an ungodly seed, God doesn’t want him around so He eliminates him. And in verse 10, God doesn’t want Onan around either so he eliminates him. That’s the big picture.

Now incidentally, we must discuss the details of why Onan is wicked. There has been a great debate waged at least since the Protestant Reformation, an argument over these three verses has gone on for 500 years in the history of Western Europe. Verses 8-10 are the classic text that Roman Catholic scholars have used to say that contraception is against God’s will and therefore it is illegal for the Christian to use. You hear this pronouncement, you wonder where they get it; here is where it comes from. It’s the only text in the Scripture that it comes from. So therefore we’ve got to deal with what is the biblical view in this area; are the Roman Catholics right? After all, look for a moment, contraception is being used, coitus interruptus or withdrawal is being used in verse 9 and in verse 10 obviously that use of contraception was displeasing to God. So are the Catholic scholars who argue against all birth control right?

First of all, what systems of contraception were available in the ancient world? We don’t know all of them, we know some of them. Here are some that were used; they’re not technically all contraceptive systems because some of them are simply infanticide. If a woman had an unwanted child, particularly the temple priestesses who were nothing more than religious prostitutes, when they had children they’d simply throw the children into a little place around the temple and they’d just die there, sort of like you’d throw your garbage there.

Edith Schaeffer (wife of Francis Schaeffer) said that when she was a little girl in China as a missionary child, she’d walk by on her way to school, back and forth from the mission compound by a Buddhist temple, and she went by this temple one day and they were throwing babies in a pile and they were dying; they were just debris, and she became so upset she ran home to her mother and she asked her mother why, what are they doing to those babies. And she said this is Buddhism because in Buddhism the child doesn’t have value, he’s just absorbed into the nirvana, so if you don’t like them, just chuck them in a pile.

Edith said later she came back to the United States and she said you know, it’s interesting, 30 to 40 years later in our American hospitals children that survive the abortion process receive the same treatment, they are left on a shelf in the delivery room, some with a little tag around their heads, don’t feed them, and the child is simply left there until he dies and then he’s dropped in the ash can. So let’s not say that the Buddhists are the only ones that do it.

So, this was one way of getting rid of children, infanticide, a very cruel way but one very popular in the ancient world. A second method of use was abortion. We know abortion was used in the ancient world because there were laws against it. We don’t know the techniques but we do know that abortion is very, very ancient. A third system of birth control in the ancient world was sterilization. A fourth system of birth control was abstinence. And the fifth system of birth control is the one mentioned in verse 9, coitus interruptus or withdrawal. The Talmud, in Yebamoth 34b says: “A man must thresh inside and winnow outside,” which is a euphemism for this system. So we know that verse 9 is reporting something that was widely used.

Now what is the background for Onan's sin? Here's the question. Is Onan's sin because he used birth control or is it his motive in using this birth control? Turn to Deuteronomy 25 and we'll look at an institution that is described in Genesis 38 but not explained. The Mosaic Law had not been given yet, but this practice was already in place, called levirate marriage. It's something kind of strange to our modern ears but one used widely in the ancient world. In levirate marriage the attempt was made to preserve the property holdings of a family. Now this is not very romantic, but the purpose is preservation of the family's property. If a woman is a widow and she has no sons she loses title to the family holdings; it's that simple.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 *If brothers live together and one of them dies without having a son, the dead man's wife must not remarry someone outside the family. Instead, her late husband's brother must go to her, marry her, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law. Then the first son she bears will continue the name of the dead brother, thus preventing his name from being blotted out of Israel. (7) But if the man does not want to marry his brother's widow, then she must go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel; he is unwilling to perform the duty of a brother-in-law to me!" (8) Then the elders of his city must summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, "I don't want to marry her," (9) then his sister-in-law must approach him in view of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. She will then respond, "Thus may it be done to any man who does not maintain his brother's family line!" (10) His family name will be referred to in Israel as "the family of the one whose sandal was removed."*

Now this procedure occurs at several places in the Bible and you can see how God balances it; it's an escape clause, if the guy really doesn't like her he doesn't have to spend his life with her, but on the other hand, there's enough humiliation in the scheme that it shows the guy's responsibility. Now that is the process of levirate marriage. It's a system to take care of family.

Now you think, oh that's awfully unromantic. But, it wasn't 300 years ago in our own country that in Massachusetts and Connecticut and those areas where you have a strong Puritan community, there would be a funeral on Sunday afternoon and the young men of the church would be almost drawing lots to who would marry the widow of the deceased man. And the Puritans would encourage marriage within months of the death of the previous husband. It sounds strange to a very independent generation but let's not forget that was true in our country less than three centuries ago.

In Genesis 38:9 now we can define what the sin is. It is not the use of contraception per se that displeases God. What displeases God is explained in the first part of verse 9; Onan knew that the child wouldn't be his; that's what displeases God, it's the irresponsible use of contraception that God condemns and God slays him.

Genesis 38:11 *Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until Shelah my son grows up." For he thought, "I don't want him to die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.*

See, he's saying I've got to get rid of this woman, I've lost two sons and for sure I don't want my third son dead, so to save my home I'm going to ship her back to daddy. There's only one problem; which woman is God's woman? Tamar.

Turn to the New Testament and look at Matthew 1 and you'll see that old Judah hasn't seen the last of Tamar. He may try to get this woman out of his life but he just can't do it; she keeps coming back.

Matthew 1:3 *Judah the father of Perez and Zerah (by Tamar), Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,*

This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ; it's very interesting, look at verse 3. So here she is because she's God's woman. And Tamar is a woman who basically commits in-law incest and then in verse 5 we have Ruth who was a Moabitess, part

of a race condemned by the Mosaic Law; In verse 6 Bathsheba, with whom David committed adultery and so on, so you tend to wonder, why are the only women that are mentioned prominently here are all women who are Gentiles and who were, apart from one, was sexually promiscuous. Why is that put in the genealogy of Christ? It's simple, same thing as Genesis 38; what other kind of people have we got in the world except sinful ones? So that's the kind of people God is using. See, the Bible is real; it's not an idealistic document. Tamar is never rebuked, incidentally, for anything in the story; the only rebuke in the story goes to Judah. Judah is the one who's the Messianic seed, and what has Judah done? He's married the wrong woman; he has three sons by her.

Now God didn't tell him to marry this woman, or Shua's daughter. There's no evidence in the text that he ever consulted his father or mother. That's remarkable in the light of the fact that Jacob, Isaac and Abraham were very concerned about whom they married, and yet this man goes out unconcerned about who he marries; he doesn't care, which is an expression of his general attitude toward the will of God in his life. He doesn't care what happens, but God cares, God has a plan, and that plan is going to take place. The plan is to produce the Messianic seed through this boy. The boy may not like it; the boy may run, the boy may deviate but God's plan will come to pass.

So the boy marries the wrong woman, without consulting anyone and he produces three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. All three sons are rejected as the Messianic seed.

Genesis 38:12-14 *After some time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. After Judah was consoled, he left for Timnah to visit his sheepshearers, along with his friend Hirah the Adullamite. (13) Tamar was told, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." (14) So she removed her widow's clothes and covered herself with a veil. She wrapped herself and sat at the entrance to Enaim which is on the way to Timnah. (She did this because she saw that she had not been given to Shelah as a wife, even though he had now grown up.)*

Judah's wife couldn't have been over 40 when she dies, and this is a time in biblical history when there was great longevity. People were living a lot longer than they do now; for a woman to die at 40 would be like today a woman dying at 28. So there in verse 12 you have evidence once again of God's cursing on this whole entire family; two sons dead and his wife dead. Now an early death, obviously, is not always due to sin but in this particular story it is.

Now watch what happens. In verses 13-14 Tamar realizes that she's been cheated. The key to this story is the contract of verse 11. In the contract of verse 11 the deal was that the girl, if she went back to her father's house would stay there only as long as it took Shelah to become eligible to marry. Yes, there would be a tremendous age difference between the people but remember, the point was that the genetic material of the first family had to be transmitted. In verse 14 she saw that Shelah was grown and she wasn't given to him—broken contract. And in verse 26 when the story ends, when Judah acknowledges his sin; notice the sin that he acknowledges is not the half incest incident; the sin that he acknowledges in verse 26 is the broken contract. So the emphasis here is on the duplicity of Judah, not the shenanigans of Tamar.

Genesis 38:15-18 *When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute because she had covered her face. (16) He turned aside to her along the road and said, "Come on! I want to have sex with you." (He did not realize it was his daughter-in-law.) She asked, "What will you give me in exchange for having sex with you?" (17) He replied, "I'll send you a young goat from the flock." She asked, "Will you give me a pledge until you send it?" (18) He said, "What pledge should I give you?" She replied, "Your seal, your cord, and the staff that's in your hand." So he gave them to her and had sex with her. She became pregnant by him.*

I want to point out that it's obvious from the story that Tamar was familiar with Judah's inclinations, and she planned for this to happen. Now why was prostitution brought up here? It's to show the decline in the moral stature and character of the first family. Here you've got the Messianic seed and here you have him actively tolerating and getting involved with prostitution. Notice that verse 16 points out that Judah didn't know this was his daughter-in-law.

Now in verse 18 **this girl is very, very creative, a marvelous little tactic she pulls, and you don't catch it until you know the culture of the time.** She pulled a stunt on Judah that not only makes him look immoral but makes him look stupid because what she asks of him is the key identity that he would have. In the ancient world they didn't have checks, so when you wrote something out or you signed a document it wasn't on a piece of paper, it was on a piece of clay; and it was soft and you could mark on it. And these kinds of documents have been dug up by the tens of thousands. In the latest excavations up in Syria, up north of Ugarit, there's a big library that was found, and this library, just in one room had 55,000 to 75,000 of these things. And what they represent as far as they know from cracking the language is they just represent simple transactions that the townspeople were engaged in; they'd make the transaction and they would file the contract like we would file receipts. They didn't have paper to do it, they had clay.

So they picked up the clay and they would have it in soft blocks like this, and the man would come along and he'd sign his name on the block, except most men didn't know how to sign their name because writing, at that time in history wasn't alphabetized or they still didn't really know it, only professional scribes knew it. So you'd go to a professional scribe and have that scribe make you a little roll. And there'd be a hole in that roll and you'd put a string around it so it went around your neck, you carried this thing around your neck, and that was a little roll, it had a handle on it and when you came to sign your name you'd take that thing off your neck, put it on a piece of soft clay and roll it out and as it rolled out your name would be pushed into the clay. Then they'd take the soft clay and bake it and it would harden, and that's the contract.

So it would be like somebody pulling your Visa card or your credit cards; **she walks off with all his credit cards.** Not only does she do that but she is so shrewd that she takes his staff. Now what was his staff? The staff was the emblem of his business. What business was Judah in? The sheep ranching business. And what was the tool of his business? The staff. So she not only walks off with his credit cards, she walks off with the tools that he needs for his business. She's going to make sure she sees him again; a very smart girl.

Genesis 38:20-22 *Then Judah had his friend Hirah the Adullamite take a young goat to get back from the woman the items he had given in pledge, but Hirah could not find her. (21) He asked the men who were there, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim by the road?" But they replied, "There has been no cult prostitute here." (22) So he returned to Judah and said, "I couldn't find her. Moreover, the men of the place said, 'There has been no cult prostitute here.'*

Notice when Hirah asks for the girl he doesn't ask for the prostitute, he asks for the cult prostitute, a cult priestess. What is he doing asking for a priestess? The priestess was a girl that was kept in the confines of the temple and the religion at that particular time emphasizes fertility. In the spring time particularly they would have orgiastic rites and it would be with these priestesses, and the idea wasn't just for the sake of an orgy, the idea was that they were to get the process of fertility going so that when they planted the seeds in the field the same force, the fertility force that operated in the human body, would operate in the soil, and it's called the doctrine of sympathy; that is, one part of nature will be sympathetic and coordinate with another part of nature that operates in a similar way. So the priestesses were used in these fertility rites.

So what does that tell you about the relationship of Judah the Jew to the Adullamite, the Canaanite, in their business? These guys were business partners. Obviously the closest male friend that Judah had in the story isn't one of his brothers. By this time he lived away from his father, he lived away from his family. Hiram was assuming Judah had slept with a temple priestess. All of this would lead you to believe that Judah was, if not involved with the pagan religions, at least not keeping himself separate from them.

Genesis 38:24-26 *After three months Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has turned to prostitution, and as a result she has become pregnant." Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!" (25) While they were bringing her out, she sent word to her father-in-law: "I am pregnant by the man to whom these belong." Then she said, "Identify the one to whom the seal, cord, and staff belong." (26) Judah recognized them and said, "She is more upright than I am, because I wouldn't give her to Shelah my son." He did not have sexual relations with her again.*

Now that's interesting. If the girl's in her daddy's house, what right does Judah have to come over to this other guy's house, take his own daughter out of the house and kill her? It's the contract of verse 11; she is living in her father's house but she's under contract with Judah to stand by for future marriage with the seed of Judah. But Judah had already broken the contract. Judah had no

intention of fulfilling the contract; now all of a sudden in verse 24 he gets very pious, now he wants to enforce the contract.

And so verse 25, the clever girl whips out the Visa card and the tools. I would have loved to see his face when that happened! And he comes to the point of repentance over the sin of verse 11. I want you to see what the story emphasizes; it doesn't emphasize what we would consider the bizarre means that Tamar used but it emphasizes Judah, the leader, and why he set up a situation in which Tamar almost, you could say, was forced to do what she did.

Genesis 38:27-30 *When it was time for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb. (28) While she was giving birth, one child put out his hand, and the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." (29) But then he drew back his hand, and his brother came out before him. She said, "How you have broken out of the womb!" So he was named Perez. (30) Afterward his brother came out -- the one who had the scarlet thread on his hand -- and he was named Zerah.*

Again we have a set of twins. One and only one of these twins is going to be in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. This kind of birth is evidently a very rare kind of thing to the midwife, because she exclaims surprise over this happening. It's an unusual thing. Why did this happen? Because God wanted His Messianic seed to be born first. This is another example of God being very intentional about who he has chosen. God is controlling all the circumstances, all the genetic and environmental features.

Genesis Chapter 39

Genesis 39:1-7 *Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt. An Egyptian named Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard, purchased him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. (2) The LORD was with Joseph. He was successful and lived in the household of his Egyptian master. (3) His master observed that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he was doing successful. (4) So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal attendant. Potiphar appointed Joseph overseer of his household and put him in charge of everything he owned. (5) From the time Potiphar appointed him over his household and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's household for Joseph's sake. The blessing of the LORD was on everything that he had, both in his house and in his fields. (6) So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; he gave no thought to anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well built and good-looking. (7) Soon after these things, his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Have sex with me."*

Now there is some reason why perhaps this woman was attracted to Joseph besides the fact that he was a handsome guy. One of the reasons may have been that her husband was a eunuch and in the ancient world this meant castration. So very obviously this woman was in a position of sexual deprivation in her marriage and therefore she was vulnerable to these kinds of things. And we get hints later on in the text that it wasn't the first time. So if that's the situation then it's understandable what a highly flammable situation it is, a young good looking guy, put into this kind of a position. Talk about a crucible of testing!

"She lifted up her eyes to Joseph" is the way the Hebrew reads in verse 7. Now the eye is again and again mentioned in connection with sexual temptations. To show you how consistent the theme is,

remember in the Garden of Eden, though it wasn't a sexual temptation it was a temptation, Eve, it says, she looked with her eye and she saw the fruit that it was good and it was attractive. Job 31:1, Matthew 5:28, Matthew 6:22-23, 2 Peter 2:14 continue this theme. In the battle of sexual temptation, that's the center in the body where the battle takes place, right here in the eyes, to control the eyes.

Genesis 39:8-12 *But he refused, saying to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not give any thought to his household with me here, and everything that he owns he has put into my care. (9) There is no one greater in this household than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. So how could I do such a great evil and sin against God?" (10) Even though she continued to speak to Joseph day after day, he did not respond to her invitation to have sex with her. (11) One day he went into the house to do his work when none of the household servants were there in the house. (12) She grabbed him by his outer garment, saying, "Have sex with me!" But he left his outer garment in her hand and ran outside.*

In verses 8-9 Joseph's defense to the woman is a plea that he wants to be responsible. But then he takes concrete action, he doesn't just talk. He avoids her. He keeps from being with her. Now that's not shameful to do. The Bible says stand against Satan, resist the devil and he will flee from you. But when it deals with problems of the flesh, interesting, the Bible teaches a different tactic and the tactic is to avoid the situation. If you can't handle the situation then get out, and that's what Joseph does.

Genesis 39:13-20 *When she saw that he had left his outer garment in her hand and had run outside, (14) she called for her household servants and said to them, "See, my husband brought in a Hebrew man to us to humiliate us. He tried to have sex with me, but I screamed loudly. (15) When he heard me raise my voice and scream, he left his outer garment beside me and ran outside." (16) So she laid his outer garment beside her until his master came home. (17) This is what she said to him: "That Hebrew slave you brought to us tried to humiliate me, (18) but when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his outer garment and ran outside." (19) When his master heard his wife say, "This is the way your slave treated me," he became furious. (20) Joseph's master took him and threw him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. So he was there in the prison.*

Notice the racial slur in verse 14. I would suggest that Potiphar isn't necessarily angry at Joseph, but frustrated with his wife and the situation. He's high up and associated with Pharaoh, so he can't permit a scandal on his estate, so what he's got to do is somehow take care of Joseph and get him out of there, but he doesn't like that because Joseph caused his estate to prosper. I think this is why he sentences him to prison.

This prison is a place where the king's prisoners were bound which means it would be equivalent today to minimum security compound, like your government and white-collar criminals; it's not the regular prison. Why was Joseph confined in a minimum security for VIP's - that was a mild sentence. Realize that in the ancient law codes the punishment for adultery was capital punishment. Why wasn't capital punishment administered to Joseph? It shows you that Potiphar really isn't that hostile to Joseph.

Genesis 39:21-23 *But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him kindness. He granted him favor in the sight of the prison warden. (22) The warden put all the prisoners under Joseph's care. He was in charge of whatever they were doing. (23) The warden did not concern himself with*

anything that was in Joseph's care because the LORD was with him and whatever he was doing the LORD was making successful.

The stories always want to leave you on the note of the sovereignty of God, that finally after all is said and done, don't get upset, Joseph isn't out of the picture, God is still carrying forward his program. You see it's a repeat of the same theme that Joseph, being given responsibility, responding, doing his best wherever he is, even if it's in a prison.

Now out of this we gain another principle for living; a very general and very encouraging principle. It's deeply embedded into the philosophy of history. Joseph was a boy in his father's house, a shepherd boy, he descends and now he rises to be at the right hand of Pharaoh himself. That pattern is found in Romans 6-8 as part of the parcel of the Christian life. You don't get the crown without the cross; in your experience as a Christian there will be many crosses and many resurrections. The resurrections always come after the cross, not before them. We wish our lives could be different, we wish that we could just simply ascend in a smooth line, but there's always the heartache and always the trials, but that you see is part of how the whole universe works. It's not abnormal with you, that's the way life is and this is the way it was with Joseph. You see how these historical stories are designed? They have a pattern to them and the pattern is God's pattern, it's going constantly into humiliation and then upward to resurrection, over and over again.

Genesis Chapter 40

Genesis 40:1-4 *After these things happened, the cupbearer to the king of Egypt and the royal baker offended their master, the king of Egypt. (2) Pharaoh was enraged with his two officials, the cupbearer and the baker, (3) so he imprisoned them in the house of the captain of the guard in the same facility where Joseph was confined. (4) The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be their attendant, and he served them. They spent some time in custody.*

Now here is the interesting story. How does God take a Hebrew shepherd boy and get Him up into the political system? The reason this is important is because if you're a Christian today your effectiveness for Christ in society around you is going to be a function of your position. And you want to be sensitive as to how God will maneuver you to have greater witnessing opportunities. Now some people would say, you get a flaming chariot, pick him up and bring him down to Egypt and drop him in Pharaoh's lap, instantly; in other words, short-circuit all the social processes and cultural forms.

God doesn't do that; when God the Holy Spirit works, even with Joseph, the pathfinder, now, of the family that will come down to Egypt and be the nucleus for His own kingdom, even with this man He doesn't just pick him up and drop him over here; he maneuvers, he makes the contact, he puts him through circumstances, and in touch with this person and then in touch with this person and then He develops an incident that puts him in touch with another person. And so Joseph climbs up through the system.

This is the Bible telling us that's how God the Holy Spirit works. Yeah, sometimes He brings a flaming chariot along but don't hold your breath. The main way God works is through the system, not against the system. While Joseph is in prison he's going to meet two other characters that on the organizational chart that are very close to Pharaoh. Cupbearer means he was in charge of the liquor cabinet. Pharaoh probably had all kinds of drinks from all over the world, and of course the central kind of drink at that time was wine; he probably had hundreds and hundreds of different kinds of wine. He had a very expensive collection and this was the administrator of his collection.

The next man is the baker. Now why are these two officials picked out, do you suppose, by God? What do you notice that's peculiar about both of these officers in this kind of an organization, where the man who is the leader of the organization is making god-claims? Well, **these two men are the food handlers**, his food and his drink; they are very critical in the organization because if there's any assassination attempt we know in history that it usually comes through the food. The offense in verse 2 is never specified, but we could guess that it might have had something to do with a possible assassination threat. Apparently they couldn't pin it down to which of these men did it; at least not yet. So apparently if poison was used it wasn't obviously in either a glass or a dish.

But something caused a little investigation to take place in Pharaoh's court. There was a security threat to Pharaoh and that immediately alerts his security chief, Potiphar. So Potiphar comes and he takes both of these guys to this prison for VIP's. And he sticks them there until he can finish his investigation. So chapter 40 takes place all during the investigation and you don't read about the end of the investigation until the end of the chapter. Meanwhile, while all this is going on, Joseph is getting the contacts he needs.

Joseph comes from an entirely different people group, Hebrews. Pharaoh comes from the Egyptian people group. More than that, Joseph comes from the common rank; Pharaoh comes from the nobility. Now how is Pharaoh going to get the gospel? Joseph can't just say hey Pharaoh, I've got a tract for you. That isn't the way it's going to work. Well, God has got to bridge it and what you are seeing is God the Holy Spirit bridging carefully from one people group to the other. These two guys, who would be part of Egyptian nobility, and this Jewish slave boy becomes a common people group in the prison. So they function in a new people group and in that group we have a transmission of information which then is broadcast up to the other people group. This is why Bible-believing churches have got a long arduous road ahead. We are not reaching into many people groups in our own society.

God works with people groups, not against them. That's what Paul meant when he said I am all things to all men. You've got to be, **you cannot reach all people acting like some bizarre nitwit, and this is the way it's got to go if the message is ever to have an impact in our society.**

So God is going to use this in Joseph's life. Joseph's boss, the chief of security, recognizes Joseph's skills and promotes Joseph again. For the third time we've seen this young boy promoted on the basis of merit, that he does a good job, he's a responsible kid, you tell him to do a job it's always done, no slack, he just assumes responsibility and does it. Here he's these two guys' personal servant

Genesis 40:5-14 *Both of them, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream the same night. Each man's dream had its own meaning. (6) When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were looking depressed. (7) So he asked Pharaoh's officials, who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?" (8) They told him, "We both had dreams, but there is no one to interpret them." Joseph responded, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me." (9) So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph: "In my dream, there was a vine in front of me. (10) On the vine there were three branches. As it budded, its blossoms opened and its clusters ripened into grapes. (11) Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, so I took the grapes, squeezed them into his cup, and put the cup in Pharaoh's hand." (12) "This is its meaning," Joseph said to him. "The three branches represent three days. (13) In three more days Pharaoh will reinstate you and restore you to your office. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you did before when you were cupbearer. (14) But remember me when it goes well for you, and show me kindness. Make mention of me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this prison,*

This boy, who was 17 and he may be very close to 30 by the time of verse 8, has by now gotten his spiritual gear together. Joseph witnesses to him, because the cupbearer wants to understand his dream, and we know from Egyptian literature that you just go to your local corner magician and give him a few coins and he'd interpret your dream for you. Well, Joseph says I am not a magician. I will interpret your dreams but gentlemen, I want you to understand one thing, I am not trying to do this in my own power. What I am about to do for you is a gift that is through me to you from my God.

Genesis 40:16-19 *When the chief baker saw that the interpretation of the first dream was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also appeared in my dream and there were three baskets of white bread on my head. (17) In the top basket there were baked goods of every kind for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them from the basket that was on my head." (18) Joseph replied, "This is its meaning: The three baskets represent three days. (19) In three more days Pharaoh will decapitate you and impale you on a pole. Then the birds will eat your flesh from you."*

This is the second interpretation and it has to do with the baker, but the baker is evidently the guilty man in whatever the assassination plot was. These two men were suspects and it turns out this guy is the guilty one and we get a hint of it in the way verse 16 occurs. Only when he saw the first interpretation was good did he ask for an interpretation. Now why do you think he did that? Probably because he had this ominous feeling (his conscience?) that no good thing was coming his way and so he hesitated, he was actually nervous about it.

Genesis 40:20-23 *On the third day it was Pharaoh's birthday, so he gave a feast for all his servants. He "lifted up" the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker in the midst of his servants. (21) He restored the chief cupbearer to his former position so that he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand, (22) but the chief baker he impaled, just as Joseph had predicted. (23) But the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph -- he forgot him.*

And so the chapter concludes with the result of the investigation. Seventy-two hours later it's Pharaoh's birthday party. Pharaoh invites the two key officials to the banquet; they are called up to the head table; he made a feast to them. The cupbearer is restored, and the baker, the guilty one, is executed.

But notice verse 23. Have you noticed these stories don't wind up where you think they would? At the end of the previous chapter, Genesis 39, those last three verses of that previous chapter did the same thing; it told the story, Joseph was cast into prison and you'd think that would be the close of the story, but no, the author tacks on that last bit about Joseph being raised to a position of authority in the prison. Going back to chapter 37, Joseph is thrown into the cistern by his brothers and you'd think that's where the story would end but no, the author adds that he was sold to Ishmaelites and taken to Egypt. Why does the author do this? Because he wants us to see the grand scheme of the working of the invisible hand of God. See how powerful it is? Each step of the story he gets higher and higher to his objective.

We could diagram the career of Joseph with a curve that shows a connection with the resurrection of Christ. It's a curve that I think can be generalized to almost every trial in the Christian life. It can diagram the human race, it starts off in innocence with Adam and Eve, it plunges into the fall and despair, then through Christ is resurrected, and its resurrection is at a higher plain than it was at first. It is true of Jesus Christ, He was born in a mortal body, sinless but mortal; He died, ascended into heaven, He rose the third day and now sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty; He sits at a higher place with an immortal body. Now you can generalize this. Look at Joseph, same thing isn't it? He starts out as a shepherd boy, he starts out brilliant but a brat; he gets cast into a cistern, cast into a prison, he stays here 13 years because he's 17 when he starts the trial and he's 30 when he comes out of the trial and what happens at the other end of the trial? He gets promoted to the vice-regent of the mightiest kingdom on the face of the earth, Egypt. So his latter end was better than his first; he endured the testing, he endured the pressure.

You see, every time you go through this kind of a thing in your life look upon it as a minor crucifixion and a minor resurrection and if you were to diagram your growth curve as a Christian, it would be trial, elevation, trial, elevation, trial, elevation and **this is just an inherent philosophy, sort of a curve of glory that occurs during sanctification** and we see it most graphically illustrated with Joseph.

Genesis Chapter 41

We can demonstrate this principle of falling and rising in our own Christian lives. There are three points:

- The Initial Point - when God has made it perfectly clear what it is He wants you to do, and you have a pretty clear idea of what it is.
- The Point of Fall - a realization of your shortcomings, your sin - this is not a very pleasant point to be at but it is a point that every person has to go through, the point of realizing where and how your sin nature operates. Everyone has one. The fall point is when you personally become acquainted with your own sin pattern.
- The Rising Point - Every Christian is interested in this one; this is when the pressure stops; this is when finally you have at least momentary relief, this is a time when sanctification has been accomplished at least in one area so you can pick up the pieces and move on to another area; it is a time after prolonged trial perhaps, but at least where there has been some substantial healing, some changes that are made in the depths of the soul.

This process can occur over and over in the Christian life. The Christian life is not a mystery, if you take the time and effort to look at some of the obvious things that are going on in your life and your relationship with God you should be able to figure out what's going on. The obvious question is, when you in the Point of Fall, when do you get out? Well, you can take a lesson from Joseph and realize that **you're going to get out when God wants you to get out, not when you think you're ready to get out.**

That's the place we're at in Genesis 41. Joseph is going to be promoted at long last. All the trials and pressures in Joseph's life that have occupied his mind for the past 13 years now come to a stop. At the fall point Joseph was a 17 year old adolescent; at this rising point he is a 30 year old young man. For 13 years God has put him under pressure.

Let's discuss the doctrine of faith for a moment because what is at issue here is that God wants to develop a grace oriented believer and God can't do that unless there is faith functioning in exactly that part of the life that's under trial. We'll go through this doctrine of faith point by point to show how it applies to Joseph and then to us.

- We respond to God in faith how? It is because, according to Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." It is the work of God the Holy Spirit operating inside you through the outside and you start to hear the message of Scripture, either directly, you read it yourself, you read what some other Christians has written or you read or hear what some other Christian says. **But there never has been a Christian who has become a Christian just because he wanted to; it always was the calling of God, the beckoning of God to him.**

It is sloppy evangelism that puts emotional pressure, upon an audience to manipulate it. There are books you can read on how to do it, and there are many speakers that have held audiences captivated, but it's an emotional captivation and we can get people to do all kinds of things by emotional gimmicks. But that is not generating real true Biblical faith; that is developing only an emotional response, signing a card, raising the hand, these may be legitimate or not legitimate but left by themselves they are not what produces faith.

So in the doctrine of faith we have this, that **God calls faith into existence**, God has to do it. God has to work on Joseph so that Joseph can believe and until God works on Joseph so he can believe, until that point is reached then Joseph can't believe. That is Point One.

- The second point is, I have faith when I try to conform my thoughts, words and deeds, to God's words. Joseph can't show his faith except in works. And **you can sit and talk, talk, talk, all your life about your great faith and yet the Bible consistently holds that if you have faith it's got to show up some place somehow.** And in Genesis 39 with Potiphar's wife and the incident of seduction, Joseph successfully resists it, contrary to chapter 38 when Judah does not. Which of the two men has faith? Judah or Joseph? Answer: Joseph. Why? Because Joseph shows fruit of his faith, that's why.

So we have in the second point the fact that I have faith when I at least try, not perfectly, but I at least try to conform my thoughts, words and deeds to God's words. Joseph tried over and over and for 13 years, and he showed the results of the faith working in his life by specific victories.

- The third point in the doctrine of faith is I can show my faith actively or passively. The last verse of chapter 40 was Joseph's attempt to show his faith actively when he should have shown his faith passively. God wanted him to relax and trust God to promote him on God's timetable, but no, Joseph wanted to manipulate the process and work out a deal where through the cupbearer he could get out of that jail. No, said God, you will get out of jail when I want you to get out. Joseph had not yet learned the skills at when to be active and when to be passive.
- Most important of all the principles of faith is that faith is not in itself a good work; faith can be defined as the anticipation of God meeting all my needs as a sinner... Note "as a sinner." It means that I need grace.

Now we could divide suffering into three parts. We could say you can physically suffer, fever, broken bones, illness, disease, etc. We could also say that you can mentally suffer. And then there is spiritual suffering.

Spiritual suffering is when I recognize that I am a sinner and I need God's grace personally. The reason that is spiritually painful is that it's very painful to the prideful spirit. Because **some people, even Christians included, refuse to go along with what God wants in their life at certain points.** Some areas they have agreed with God and admitted their rebelliousness and their need for God's grace. But other areas they refuse to give up. And because they refuse to admit that I am a sinner at that point then they cannot be oriented to grace and cannot, therefore, believe. It is as impossible for faith to grow in that kind of rebellious attitude as it would be for palm trees to grow in Greenland. There's no way that it can take place; there has to be that spiritual pain of admission of my depraved situation. Then when I have admitted that, and I look to God to meet my need as a sinner, then I'm oriented to grace, now I'm on the way.

That's what Joseph did and we will see a rather spectacular proof that Joseph, at the end of his 13 year period reached exactly that point and that's why he got out of prison. Maybe this will take some of the mystery out of the Christian life for some of you, why God keeps us down in the doldrums, why we're on the low end of that curve for so long sometimes and it seems like the trials keep going on and going on and we never get to the rising point until we admit our need for God's grace at the particular point He wants. We can admit we need God's grace here at this point, or that point, but that's not interesting to God; God does not care about this point and that point, He cares about the point He wants, the point that He is shoving in your face at this hour; that's the point and that's the struggle ground.

Now what often times happens is a person will think they are there and they think it's just time for the pressure release, and it never seems to do it, it just seems to start like a rocket, it goes off and then fizzles. Why? It can be illustrated by a rowboat and a dock. If you think of a rowboat next to a dock and somebody gets in with one foot in the boat and one foot on the dock and that's the way a lot of Christians are, the boat representing complete trust in God, the dock representing a work of man. And rather than wholly trust with God with something I'll kind of lean out there, see God, I'm really trusting you, see look at that, one foot out there. But just in case Your plan doesn't work I've got a way out, an escape device and so I keep the other foot solidly planted on the dock. And from God's perspective this is not yet belief. It's this half and half thing that's going on.

So, in Chapter 41 Pharaoh has a dream...

Genesis 41:8-16 *In the morning he was troubled, so he called for all the diviner-priests of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. (9) Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I recall my failures. (10) Pharaoh was enraged with his servants, and he put me in prison in the house of the captain of the guards -- me and the chief baker. (11) We each had a dream one night; each of us had a dream with its own meaning. (12) Now a young man, a Hebrew, a servant of the captain of the guards, was with us there. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted the meaning of each of our respective dreams for us. (13) It happened just as he had said to us -- Pharaoh restored me to my office, but he impaled the baker." (14) Then Pharaoh summoned Joseph. So they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; he shaved himself, changed his clothes, and came before Pharaoh. (15) Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard about you, that you can interpret dreams." (16) Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "It is not within my power, but God will speak concerning*

the welfare of Pharaoh."

The cupbearer finally remembers to recommend Joseph - after two years! According to what we know from historical records any person in the presence of Pharaoh was considered to be in the presence of God Himself. And so therefore they had to be... Yul Brenner was very close when he played Pharaoh in the movie "The Ten Commandments", with no hair, because the men around Pharaoh were completely shaved. So that's what happened to Joseph.

But now the triumph comes in Joseph's answer in verse 16. You see, we've looked at this curve of rising; we said that rising point will occur when you've learned the lesson. Think of what it must have been; here you get invited to the personal room of the most powerful man on earth. Now you remember how Joseph acted with his own father and with his own brothers 13 years ago? Oh look at me, I'm a hot shot. Well, after 13 years he was carefully groomed by all the adversities in his life so this moment he could shine, and when he walks into Pharaoh and he's given this tremendous temptation to blow up his ego he says, "It is not within my power." There's the triumph; it looks like a little triumph, it's a very short sentence but 13 years went into that boy's soul so he could say those few short words with a godly attitude.

Genesis 41:17-32 *Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing by the edge of the Nile. (18) Then seven fat and fine-looking cows were coming up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the reeds. (19) Then seven other cows came up after them; they were scrawny, very bad-looking, and lean. I had never seen such bad-looking cows as these in all the land of Egypt! (20) The lean, bad-looking cows ate up the seven fat cows. (21) When they had eaten them, no one would have known that they had done so, for they were just as bad-looking as before. Then I woke up. (22) I also saw in my dream seven heads of grain growing on one stalk, full and good. (23) Then seven heads of grain, withered and thin and burned with the east wind, were sprouting up after them. (24) The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads of grain. So I told all this to the diviner-priests, but no one could tell me its meaning." (25) Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Both dreams of Pharaoh have the same meaning. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. (26) The seven good cows represent seven years, and the seven good heads of grain represent seven years. Both dreams have the same meaning. (27) The seven lean, bad-looking cows that came up after them represent seven years, as do the seven empty heads of grain burned with the east wind. They represent seven years of famine. (28) This is just what I told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. (29) Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the whole land of Egypt. (30) But seven years of famine will occur after them, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will devastate the land. (31) The previous abundance of the land will not be remembered because of the famine that follows, for the famine will be very severe. (32) The dream was repeated to Pharaoh because the matter has been decreed by God, and God will make it happen soon.*

In verse 32 we see him witnessing again. Now this was a message that Pharaoh had never heard before. Pharaoh was raised in a wholly pagan society. It was an Egyptian idea to worship the nature forces. The idea was that there are these forces that somehow automatically operate in nature and so we must bow down to them. And here is this young boy, he walks into the presence of Pharaoh, he doesn't recognize the pagan Gods; he says it's Elohim, the God of the Jews. And He has given you this dream, sir, and He will bring it to pass. Now what clearer gospel witness can you have than Joseph's invitation to Pharaoh?

Genesis 41:33-36 *"So now Pharaoh should look for a wise and discerning man and give him*

authority over all the land of Egypt. (34) Pharaoh should do this -- he should appoint officials throughout the land to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. (35) They should gather all the excess food during these good years that are coming. By Pharaoh's authority they should store up grain so the cities will have food, and they should preserve it. (36) This food should be held in storage for the land in preparation for the seven years of famine that will occur throughout the land of Egypt. In this way the land will survive the famine."

Now, this advice Joseph gives seems to make sense, doesn't it? However, there are some problems here for some people. The chief problem is that it looks like Joseph becomes the architect for the most centralized government the world has ever seen. The kind of centralized total state ownership that Joseph proposes makes Soviet Russia look like a Sunday school picnic. This was one of the most thorough dictatorships the world has ever seen, and without doubt the longest lasting. The Egyptian government lasted 3,000 years. Our country hasn't even lasted 300 and the rate we're going we won't make it. The Egyptians lasted 3,000 years, and Joseph was one of the architects of their organization.

Now how can this be, a dictatorship organized by a believer? We have confiscation of private property here. Is this clear proof that the Bible backs socialism and confiscation? It looks that way because that's exactly what's said in verse 34, we are going to confiscate all private wealth in this country and we are going to control it.

Actually, it's an argument against communism, against socialism and against centralized power. Why? Joseph sits under God. What did Joseph bring to the government that every other government doesn't have? **He brought the omniscience of God.** Joseph had the key to the future because God is omniscient, sovereign, and God revealed His word to Joseph, therefore the state was the recipient of omniscient wisdom. So before you can argue for socialism or communism, you'd better be prepared to show how Washington D.C. is going to get omniscience.

Governments are run by people, and people are fallen, sinful, they make mistakes, and they are easily corrupted. This is why communism and socialism will never work, and even our government, which I believe is still the best system on earth, has trouble, even though it was set up by founders that knew they were not omniscient, knew they were corruptible. Whenever you have a few men making the decisions over a large group of people you run the risk of major errors.

What you are going to start to see in the Genesis series is one of the most awesome solutions to a human problem that has ever been seen on the face of the earth that leads people to the first great type of the antichrist in history. The wheels that begin to turn with this tremendous awesome controlled economy under a centralized government becomes that same government that crushes the Jew and that God must smash in the Exodus to release His people. And this is used again and again in the prophets to be an example of what's going to take place before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ on a worldwide scale.

In verse 25, 28 and 32 of this passage we see how God's sovereignty is asserted. It took a lot of courage for Joseph to say what he did in those three verses because he's not just giving the interpretation of the dream, because in verse 25 he says, "God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do." Now for us, reading this in the comfort of 21st century America that sounds just normal nice religious language. Except that wasn't the way it came across that day in the court because here was a 30 year old foreigner, a Jewish shepherd boy, walking into the presence of this awesome monarch and saying to him, Pharaoh, though you may be what you claim to be, I say to you that there's a law over you and Elohim, the God of the Hebrews, He's the One who is your Lord; He's the one who is over even Pharaoh and He is the One that will bring this dream to pass.

Joseph at this point has been prepared by God to witness, to present the gospel. Now before anyone can become a Christian and trust in Jesus Christ they must know what God it is we worship. That's hard today; you may spend 95% of your time over just that first point because modern man simply does not understand the God of the Scriptures. **The God of the Scriptures is foreign to today's person.** What man wants today is a grandfatherly, Santa Claus type of God and the God of the Scriptures is not that at all. The God of the Scriptures is the Lord over all, and he doesn't share His lordship with anybody. We don't have cozy relationships with God; we have proper Creator/creature relationships with God.

And we find Joseph here witnessing to Pharaoh in this dream. He's trying to say to Pharaoh, Pharaoh, you're not God; Pharaoh, it's not like you Egyptians think; Elohim is over everything. But Pharaoh doesn't buy it, he politely sees a way out, he thinks, for his country in this dream and the answer to it and he goes on from there and he never thinks, so the gospel presentation of Joseph stops.

Make sure to test yourself, to see if you have the biblical view of God, from time to time we should review His attributes. The God of the Bible is:

- **Sovereign** - over everything. There is no natural process that is out beyond the umbrella of God's control.
- **Righteous** - holy, sinless, perfect
- **Just** – perfectly fair and equitable - moral standards are not produced by man; they are God's revelation of His own character.
- **Love** - no one has ever loved any object more than God has loved the human race when God died, in Christ, that whosoever would believe would have eternal life.
- **Omniscient** - God never has learned anything, never will learn anything because he knows everything forever. He not only has a knowledge of what exists but He also has a knowledge of everything that could happen in the past or future.
- **Omnipotent** - God never gets tired; He can go on and on and on and on like a perpetual motion machine and never require outside energy.
- **Omnipresent**; He is fully present everywhere, not partly present here and partly present there but wholly present at every point.
- **Immutable** - God never changes, He is the backbone of the universe, He is why physical law and history flow without chaos.
- **Eternal** - He preexisted the creation.

That's the God of the Bible and that's the God who has to be communicated, no matter how much it takes. And **it's useless to go on and talk about Christ dying for your sins; it's useless to go on and talk about trusting in Christ if we don't have clearly in mind the God of the Scripture.** Do you question this? Look carefully at how the gospel is presented in the Bible. Paul on Mars Hill stopped his gospel presentation (Acts 17). Paul never finished on Mars Hill; he walked up on Mars Hill that day, spoke to the elite of Athens, the men who represented the core of Greek philosophy of the day. Paul got to the first point and he stopped because it was too much for them. They could not tolerate an interfering God who was alive in history and resurrecting people. It was just too much for their philosophical system. And so they just tuned him out and Paul said I'm sorry, I can't go any further; I can't tell you any more of the gospel until I have explained this point. If you don't want this, I'm sorry.

Beginning in Genesis 41 on through Genesis 50, instead of election of individuals, we now have election of a nation over against another nation. Now the drama is no longer centered on individuals that do this or don't do this, now they're part of a bigger thing and that is the nation of the Jews versus the nation of the Egyptians and there is a growing tension between the two. One is going to be elect, one is going to respond to the Scripture; one is going to be reprobate, hears the Word and departs from it. And that's the big picture of this scene.

Deuteronomy 4:19-20 *When you look up to the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars — the whole heavenly creation — you must not be seduced to worship and serve them, for the LORD your God has assigned them to all the people of the world. (20) You, however, the LORD has selected and brought from Egypt, that iron-smelting furnace, to be his special people as you are today.*

Here in verse 19 you have the political philosophy summarized. This is a revelation of the mind of God as He works over those many centuries to separate the Jews as a national entity. Verse 19 is spoken by God through Moses, and it's spoken to the Jewish people as to why He's given them all of the Law. Look at the end of verse 19 and the beginning of verse 20; notice the two actions; one it says, "The LORD your God has assigned them to all the people of the world." Now isn't that strange? Do you know what that's really saying in verse 19? It's saying these nations all want to worship the creation. **Fallen peoples want to worship the creature more than the Creator.** You

see this in some of the hyper-environmentalism today. They don't want to believe in the God of the Bible, so they worship the earth. That's all they have left.

Genesis 41:37-41 *This advice made sense to Pharaoh and all his officials. (38) So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find a man like Joseph, one in whom the Spirit of God is present?" (39) So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Because God has enabled you to know all this, there is no one as wise and discerning as you are! (40) You will oversee my household, and all my people will submit to your commands. Only I, the king, will be greater than you. (41) "See here," Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I place you in authority over all the land of Egypt."*

What God is doing here is giving the Egyptians a plan they themselves really like, and they themselves really go for, which condemns them forever. We'll see later in chapter 47 just how bad it gets.

Pharaoh knows that God is involved but he doesn't change his philosophy at all, there's no indication in the text, just a polite pragmatic application. Now can you remember that boy back when he was 17? Remember how arrogant he was when he dreamed his dream, he walked up to his dad and said hey dad, you're going to worship me. All the cockiness and arrogance is gone now; 13 years in the dungeon, 13 years under pressure, 13 years under trial, learning, transformation of the heart and mental attitude. **See how painful that kind of learning is. The trouble with it is, you can't go to school and learn it like you can other subjects.** It takes time and it's hard; much harder than school. And if you're a Christian you know you can't flunk the course permanently, which means guess what, you take it over and over until you pass it. This is how the doctrine of election works in sanctification.

Genesis 41:42 *Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his own hand and put it on Joseph's. He clothed him with fine linen clothes and put a gold chain around his neck.*

Well Joseph is ready; now the grand finale to his sanctification. Remember this boy twice before he's had fine clothing put on him. Remember the coat of royalty his dad gave him. Remember what happened to it; it was ripped off and he was cast into that dirty cistern, that hole. Remember the second time he was arrayed in fine clothing again in Potiphar's home as the manager of the estate, and Potiphar's wife, when she was trying to seduce him, she grabbed it off of him and he was thrown in jail. Now for the third time in his life he gets fine clothing, better than everything else that he ever had in his life before. Was it worth waiting 13 years for? You bet it was. Now he becomes next to Pharaoh, the second most powerful person on the face of the earth.

Genesis 41:43-49 *Pharaoh had him ride in the chariot used by his second-in-command, and they cried out before him, "Kneel down!" So he placed him over all the land of Egypt. (44) Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your permission no one will move his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." (45) Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah. He also gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. So Joseph took charge of all the land of Egypt. (46) Now Joseph was 30 years old when he began serving Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph was commissioned by Pharaoh and was in charge of all the land of Egypt. (47) During the seven years of abundance the land produced large, bountiful harvests. (48) Joseph collected all the excess food in the land of Egypt during the seven years and stored it in the cities. In every city he put the food gathered from the fields around it. (49) Joseph stored up a vast amount of grain, like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it because it was impossible to measure.*

Joseph was given authority, a new name, and a wife! So God blessed Egypt with seven years of record-setting crops.

Genesis 41:50-52 *Two sons were born to Joseph before the famine came. Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, was their mother. (51) Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, saying, "Certainly God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's house." (52) He named the second child Ephraim, saying, "Certainly God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."*

Look carefully at these verses because it's an example of one of those times that can happen in your life. You go through this curve of being down and you go through all the trials, you feel like you're stalled and stymied, not going anywhere, but keep faithfully plugging away, you keep faithfully doing your job as unto the Lord, and someday bam, you're on the up curve, you get promoted.

Joseph is right there now and he's going up, and verse 51 shows you a mental attitude transformation that has occurred. He realizes it wasn't through his efforts, it's something God did. He thinks back, and he doesn't literally forget his father, but he forgets the resentment that he had toward his father and toward his brothers.

I suggest something like this happens to him. When the thought comes to him to resent his father or brothers, he says to himself, well, you know, they mistreated me, I know that, but you know something, I no longer resent it. I've got the bigger picture now and that enables me to absorb injustice without getting bitter. I see that under God's sovereignty my brothers when they were cruel to me actually helped me; I see that when my father wasn't perhaps the smartest dad that ever walked the face of the earth, even in his mistakes it was used by God to help me.

Now if you can look back and take the disappointments and heartaches of your life, the things that really stick in your craw, the things that cause you to be bitter and resentful of your past, maybe things that occurred in your home, in your family, and you can get to the point in your life that Joseph is right here, where you can look back and say hey, I see the hand of God, God took this, God took that, and He tied these things together and through those things He molded me spiritually and I'm thankful for that. Now that doesn't mean that you forget it; it's seeing a bigger dimension to the whole thing and that gives you peace. That's what Joseph's talking about, the peace that he has, so he names his son Manasseh, he says He made me forget all that irritation, all that resentment, I'm not carrying that around any more.

Genesis 41:53-57 *The seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end. (54) Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. There was famine in all the other lands, but throughout the land of Egypt there was food. (55) When all the land of Egypt experienced the famine, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food. Pharaoh said to all the people of Egypt, "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you." (56) While the famine was over all the earth, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians. The famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. (57) People from every country came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because the famine was severe throughout the earth.*

You see what he did here? He bought grain when the price was low and then he sold it out and the people lost their money and they could no longer sell back to him and so they had to make this horrible choice. Now here's another little axiom of truth that we get from Genesis: When people have to choose between physical survival or comfort and their freedom, which way do they usually choose? You know the answer; it was epitomized in the days of World War II when Mussolini's acceptance among the Italian people was justified by saying well, Mussolini made the trains on time. Well, if you want to get to work on time and don't want to be discomforted, freedom doesn't mean that much to you, sure, let Mussolini reign.

In the history of our country, however, there was a Christian publisher of evangelistic literature in Colonial America; he used to take tracts by the preachers of his day. He wrote those tracts, he abbreviated them, he published them and he

distributed them all over western Virginia. That was the man God used to forever challenge that axiom in the history of our country; the man's name was Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death." Henry saw the worst case scenario and as a Christian man he said no, if I ever have to face that I will take death; I will never give up my liberty. And liberty was not the freedom that we think of autonomously, notice it was liberty, not freedom. The Colonials know exactly what liberty meant; it meant freedom within the law. Today what would you find? Give me security or give me death.

And so we have the population selling itself out to ever increasing government power, and the only way you can keep free is the way that Joseph kept his family free of this. The Egyptians sold away their bodies, their land and their freedom and from this point forward in Egyptian history never once was there freedom again.

But who was this Joseph? If we were to go back in history and this famine really occurred and I'm not just telling you a Sunday School story, surely there ought to be evidence from history that such a famine really did occur.

Fortunately there is. Archeologists that were working in the Nile River years ago came across the Sehelan Inscription; it was carved in a rock in the middle of the Nile and it reads this way; some Egyptian inscribed it here in hieroglyphics. "I was in distress on the royal throne, and those who are in the palace were in harsh affliction from a very great evil, since the Nile had not come in my time for a space of seven years. Grain was scant, fruits were dried up, everything which they eat was short, and every man robbed his companion."

Now he's describing the result of that famine and there were other men who wrote. One man wrote in the 12th dynasty under Sesostris I, a lesser prince. "No child of the poor did I afflict, no widow did I oppress, no landowner did I displace, no herdsman did I drive away; from no farmer did I take away his men for my own work, no one was unhappy in my days, not even in the years of famine, for I had tilled all the fields of the province of Mah up to its southern and northern frontiers. I prolonged the life of its inhabitants because I saved the food which it had produced." Sounds again like Joseph's program. "No hungry man was in my province; I distributed equally to the widow as to the married woman; I did not prefer the great to the humble in all I gave away."

In the 13th dynasty, which by some chronological adjustments may be simultaneous with the 12th dynasty, there's the inscription that says: "I collected grain as a friend of the harvest god; I was watchful at the time of sowing, and when the famine finally arose, lasting many years, I distributed grain to the city each year of the famine." So we have evidence that such a famine did occur; there's a debate among scholars as to whether there's one or two famines.

But do we know who the real Joseph was? Does he have another name by which he was known in secular history? We know one of his names, in verse 45. Joseph had at least two names and in keeping with the ancient world he had others. We can't be dogmatic but Joseph looks like the vizier, the number two man, under Pharaoh Sesostris I. He was known in history as Mentuhotep, and the peculiar thing about Mentuhotep is that he had a list of unusual titles.

Let's look at some of his titles and compare them to the titles of Joseph in the Bible story. Mentuhotep was called the overseer of the double granary; Joseph we know was the manager of the grain storage program of Egypt, Genesis 41 and 47. Mentuhotep was the chief treasurer under Sesostris I; Joseph was the accountant and he was the one that bought and sold the grain. He was the one who wore the royal seal, and where was the royal seal, it was on the ring. Joseph wore the Pharaoh's ring, Genesis 41:42. Mentuhotep was chief of all there was to the king; Joseph was over all the land, verse 41. Mentuhotep was giver of goods sustaining alive the people, that's just a hieroglyphic literal translation; Joseph's name in verse 45 in Coptic, which is the Ethiopian language in southern Egypt, in Coptic it means supporter of life. Mentuhotep was a favorite of the king; he was the greater over all except Pharaoh, verse 40. So there's a strange similarity of titles.

We can't be sure but we just simply say if you're looking for evidence that the story is real, look in the reign of Sesostris I of the Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, and look up the life of Mentuhotep, and see if you don't see a remarkable correlation in title, a remarkable correlation in events.

There are some other miscellaneous evidence that we could confirm this. During Sesostris I reign a gigantic irrigation project was begun. It wasn't finished for many centuries but it was a ditch that was dug parallel to the Nile. Today that ditch, is known by Arab Bedouins that have lived next to it for many, many centuries, as the canal of Joseph. Is this just a story or is this a Bedouin tradition that comes down from pre-Christian times? We also know that Joseph could have lived and administered some 80 years in the administration because Joseph lived 110 years. And if he was 30 when he started we at least have 80 years of his reign; maybe he retired early but nevertheless, there is a possibility. If he lived that long at least he could have lived through the reign of many Pharaohs; Sesostris I, Sesostris II, and Sesostris III is known in Egyptian history forever changing the entire administration of the land; from that point forward in Egyptian history the minor princes had very little power; Pharaoh had all.