

Sent: Wednesday, March 08, 2017 2:23 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Joseph

"By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones"! (Hebrews 11:22)

It's somewhat surprising that the author of Hebrews included only one verse in depicting the life and faith of Joseph! Particularly since there are 13 chapters recorded in the Book of Genesis (37-50) about the intriguing story of a life so well lived!

Every kid who ever attended Sunday school knows about the boy with a "coat of many colors" who was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and there--in Egypt under Pharaoh--rose to great prominence! But there's lots more to the story and it has great application for those of us who believe that the God of Joseph still reigns and is carrying out His plan and purpose in our chaotic world today!

Genesis 37:3 records that Jacob (renamed Israel) "loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age"--and showed it by making him a "multi-colored tunic" (or coat of many colors as we know it), which Joseph obviously flaunted before his brothers! Then the dreams he had and freely shared--suggesting that he would someday "reign" over them all! All of which led to jealousy and hatred from the brothers, and the plot to get rid of him! Eventually settling for selling him ("for twenty shekels of silver") to a group of Israelites (remember Israel!) headed to Egypt! While devising a scheme to deceive their father (who had himself, ironically, earlier deceived his father as well)!

Joseph ended up in the house of Potiphar, a high-up official of Pharaoh, and Gen. 39 says: "The Lord was with him... and blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; and the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field!" Wow!

But, as life would have it, Joseph's faith was tested! Potiphar's wife tried hard to seduce him, "catching him by his garment" which she retained and used to falsely accuse him of attacking her! Landing him in prison-- apparently for some years--where it just so happened (Ha!) that, later, two other servants of Pharaoh would also land! The chief cupbearer and the chief baker, who were also accused of offending "their lord"! Well, they both just happened (not!) to have a dream "on the same night" which they couldn't "interpret"! But Joseph, it turned out--having been given the gift of God for interpreting dreams--was able to do it! And his interpretations proved true! Good news for the cupbearer, but bad news for the baker!

"Then it happened," Gen. 41:1 says, that Pharaoh also had a dream (of all things!) which greatly "troubled his spirit"--and caused him to become "furious" when "the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men" couldn't interpret it for him! And, you know the story: the cupbearer remembered Joseph, still in prison, and he was called upon to interpret the dream--the answer of which he assured Pharaoh in advance--could only come from God! "God has shown Pharaoh," he said, "what He was about to do!" There would be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine! And thus, Egypt needed to prepare for it!

Well, you know the story! Joseph was put in charge of managing the whole affair! And so, grain for food in the "years of abundance" was "stored in reserve" for the later years of famine--and Egypt was able to survive it! And Pharaoh's response was: "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" And so, Joseph was placed over his house and made second only to himself! But Joseph was careful to give all the glory and credit to God!

Well, the famine also struck the land of Canaan which, in the providence of God, caused Jacob to send his ten sons (minus Benjamin his youngest) to Egypt for grain! And that resulted in them coming before Joseph and, after some interesting interplay, revealing himself to his brothers--much to their shock and fear! But with Joseph's firm assurance that while his brothers "meant evil for him, God meant it for good in order to bring about this result, to preserve many people alive!" (Gen. 50:20)

Upon hearing of Joseph's plight, Gen. 45:27 says the "spirit of Jacob was revived"--as you might imagine! And so, he no longer had to dwell on the despair of unfulfilled dreams! And, after "offering sacrifices to God," God reaffirmed His covenant, and Jacob "took all that they had" and set out for Egypt, where he was reunited with Joseph and blessed his sons, and others, and lived the rest of his years in the "land of Goshen," the best of the lands in Egypt, and "ate of the fat of the land"! With renewed confidence that the covenant promises of God would be fulfilled!

The lessons are many! Especially from the life of Joseph! How he trusted God during the good times and the bad! How he was a faithful servant and ministered to others, even in the darkest of times! How he always gave glory to God! How he chose to forgive and not seek revenge when treated unfairly! But, most importantly, how he recognized that God was in control, faithful to His promises, and working out His plan and purpose for the world! And he demonstrated that faith ultimately, at the end of his life (Gen. 50), by prophesying that "God would surely take care of his descendants and bring them up from this land (Egypt) to the land which He had promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob!" And then he made the "sons of Israel" swear that they would "carry his bones" back to the land of Canaan--where he would be identified with the "people of God"! And that would happen nearly 400 years later when Moses, during the exodus from Egypt would fulfill the oath! (Exod. 13:19)

What a story! I'd encourage you to read the full account of the life of Joseph, in Genesis 37-50, if you haven't already done so!

Well, what a God we serve! Who still reigns and is accomplishing His sovereign plan and purpose continuing to this day!

Have a great week, men! And have faith in God!

Lowell