

The Exaltation of Joseph

Genesis 41:37-57

For the third time Joseph goes from the bottom to the top. First he was in Potiphar's house, then the jailhouse, and now he rises in Pharaoh's house (39:2, 20; 41:40). The bottom kept getting lower, but now Joseph is exalted beyond what anyone thought possible. This is not a random advance like a spiritual Powerball, but part of God's plan to bring life and salvation to the world.

Filled with the Spirit

Pharaoh acknowledges that the Spirit of God is in Joseph (v38). Before Joseph gives any interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams or advice for surviving the famine, he boldly states, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (v16). The Egyptian gods, magicians, and officers all fail, but Joseph's answer is different. Pharaoh receives it because God has opened his eyes. There's a lot of good advice in the Bible, but it always comes with good news. The Spirit testifies to the Son (Jn. 15:26). Christians tend to limit the fruits of the Holy Spirit to "spiritual" disciplines, but Joseph takes them into Egypt (Gal. 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit hovered over the waters at creation (Gen. 1:2), and Pharaoh sees Him at work in Joseph. The Spirit is going to finish the work of forming and preserving Egypt. Joseph is exalted because he delivers a 20% savings plan to Pharaoh (v34)! He sees the need for overseers and storage facilities (v35). Frugal and generous living is not at odds with the Spirit; it's the fruit of the Spirit. This wisdom is received by people who are not idolatrously entitled to stuff.

Trustworthy Servant

Joseph does not find the secret path to the big rock candy mountain. He has been working hard his whole life, and he now he tells Pharaoh how the whole nation must work and save even during the seven years of plenty. A discerning and wise man will have to implement this plan (v33). Joseph is only 30 years old, but he has already done 13 years of hard time, and now he faces his biggest challenge (v46). The cupbearer told Pharaoh about his ability to interpret dreams, but Joseph's reputation was already established in Potiphar's house, and Potiphar's wife's slanderous accusations never stuck. Pharaoh puts Joseph in a similar position to what he had in Potiphar's house, which means he has access to everything (39:9; 41:40-41). He gets Pharaoh's signet ring to stamp official documents, his fine linen to display his authority, and a gold chain to reveal his power and wealth (v42). Joseph took a trip to Egypt as a slave and now he takes a trip through Egypt as the one to whom everyone bows (v43). What does he do with all this strength? He goes through the whole land to get the job done (v47). It takes seven years to gather food in every city, more food than he can measure (vv48-49). Joseph's work causes him to rise, and once he is exalted, he still works. Joseph did what God gave him to do.

In Egypt, But not of It

Joseph says no to all the idols, but he also looks like an Egyptian. He shaves his beard and changes his clothes, gets a new name meaning "God speaks and lives", and marries Asenath, the daughter of a powerful priest from Hierapolis (vv14, 45). Pharaoh appears to convert and given Joseph's status in Egypt there's a good chance the priestly class does also. We know Joseph is trusting the Lord because he gives his sons Hebrew names, Manasseh and Ephraim, reminding himself of how God has swallowed up his pain and blessed him so abundantly in his affliction (vv51-52). Joseph becomes all things to all men so that he might win some (1 Cor. 9:19-23). He doesn't wall himself off from the superstitious Egyptians, nor does he start praying to Re. From the lowest place he trusts the Lord and serves the lost, becoming the most exalted man in the nation and a savior to all the hungry lands (v57). He foreshadows Jesus, the greater Joseph. Jesus wasn't taken captive, but became a man willingly. Jesus didn't just go to a dungeon, but to death on a cross. He didn't become a vizier, but God exalted Him to His right hand in heaven and has put His name above every name (Phil. 2:5-11). The nations are coming to Jesus for food, and as we eat and learn, we're building storehouses all over the world so they make come and eat. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. (Matt. 5:6).

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: **Genesis 41:39-41, 53-57**

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

53 Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do." 56 The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. 57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.

1. Joseph was a Hebrew living as a prisoner in Egypt. After he interprets Pharaoh's dream, who does Pharaoh say showed all this to Joseph? And what will happen to him (verses 39-41)?
2. Joseph was exalted in Egypt was in prison for thirteen years, and then he worked hard to during the seven years of abundance and the seven years of famine. What has God called you to work hard at?
3. Joseph is a small picture, what we call a "type", of Jesus, the "antitype" or fulfillment. Joseph went from servant to ruler in strange land and fed the world as a result (verses 55-57). What did Jesus do?
4. Draw a picture of Joseph riding around Egypt in his chariot and everyone bowing a knee before him.

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

*And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"
—Genesis 41:38*