

May 31st, 2020
Joseph's Rise to Power
Genesis 41-42

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

May 24 Neh 1-3	May 28 Neh 10-11
May 25 Neh 4-6	May 29 Neh 12-13
May 26 Neh 7	May 30 Esther 1-5
May 27 Neh 8-9	May 31 Esther 6-10

Lesson Introduction: *Our passage this week highlights Joseph's rise to power in the land of Egypt, and how that positions him to be in a place to provide for his family. As we study this section of Genesis, we will see how wisdom comes from the Spirit of God, and how God exalts his humble servants at the proper time for His glory.*

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS:

- **The Lord exalts His servants at the proper time (Ch. 41)**
- **The Lord is the giver of all good gifts (Ch. 41:38-39, 50-52)**
- **Our actions come from the overflow of our heart (Ch. 42)**

Read Genesis 41-42

Discussion Section 1: The Lord's Timing (Ch. 41:1-36)

- What triggered the cupbearer to remember Joseph?
- What was Joseph's demeanor as he was called upon? (V. 16)
- How did the timing of the cupbearer's remembrance actually work in Joseph's favor?

Note: *Chapter 40 tells how Joseph thrived while he was in prison, and how he had the opportunity to interpret the dreams of the Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. The cupbearer was supposed to put in a good word for Joseph when got out, but at the end of chapter 40, we see that he forgot about Joseph. What a tough life Joseph had up to that point. It seemed at every turn that God had forgotten him. Yet, we find out in chapter 41 that God's timing is perfect, and that at just the right time, Joseph would be remembered.*

The first several verses of chapter 41 tell of the Pharaoh's dream. None of his men could interpret the meaning of this strange dream, and Pharaoh was distressed. It was at this point that the cupbearer finally remembered his old cellmate, Joseph. Amazingly, when Joseph gets out, he does not seem vindictive toward the cupbearer, nor does he seek to exalt himself to the Pharaoh. Instead we see in V. 16 that Joseph humbly gives the Lord all the credit for being able to answer Pharaoh (just as he did in Ch. 40:8). Joseph could have tried to make it all about himself, but he simply recognized that God was in control of his life, and that any blessings or favor he might receive would come in the Lord's timing. Indeed, the favor of the Lord was on Joseph, and the timing was perfect. He was able to rightly interpret the dreams, which Pharaoh responded quite favorably to. God knew exactly what he was doing by having the cupbearer wait for just the right time to mention Joseph.

1 Peter 5:6 tells us, **"Humble yourselves... under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you."** We need not worry about when the Lord will exalt us, because He knows the proper time. Our approach to life should be one of humility, recognizing that we are under God's mighty hand, and that nothing that comes our way is out of His control or in our control. When we walk humbly before the Lord, we can trust that He will reward us at the proper time. Our reward may not be one of earthly power or wealth, but we can trust that one day God Himself will reward us in heaven. Until that day comes, may we follow the example of Joseph, and more importantly, the example of our Savior, by walking in humility and trusting in the Lord our God (**Philippians 2:3-11**).

Discussion Section 2: The Good Gifts of the Lord (Ch. 41:37-45, 50-52)

- Who does Pharaoh attribute Joseph's wisdom to? (V. 38-39)
- What does Joseph's response to gaining two sons tell us about his view of God? (V. 50-52)

Note: *In verses 37-39 it is amazing to see the Pharaoh acknowledge where it is that Joseph has gained his wisdom and insight from. He clearly credits God Almighty and recognizes that there is no one else in all the land with such wisdom and discernment as Joseph. This is right in line with Joseph's stance all along, that it was*

God Who was able to tell the meaning of the dreams. This section points so clearly to the reality that it is only by the Spirit of God that we can walk in true wisdom.

Proverbs 9:10 tells us, **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”** We see in James chapter 1 that if anyone lacks wisdom, they should ask God for it, and He will give it generously, without finding fault (**James 1:5**). Our passage today is a good reminder to us that in order to walk in wisdom in this world, it must start with a complete dependence on the Lord. Without His Spirit, we cannot win the battle against sin, nor can we discern spiritual realities at all (**Romans 8:5-8, 1 Corinthians 2:13-14**). To walk in wisdom is to know God and live in the power of His Spirit. We can know His will when our minds are renewed by His Spirit, through continual prayer and the study of His Holy (**Romans 12:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

We see in verses 50-52 that Joseph is thankful to God for the blessing of his two sons, and that he was able to overcome all the hardships that he had faced because of the Lord’s faithfulness. We have seen already that true wisdom and discernment come from the Lord, but these few verses remind us again that all good gifts are from God. **James 1:17** tells us that, **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”** As we see Joseph’s gratitude toward God for all that He had done for him, we should be moved to give thanksgiving to God for all that He has done for us. In the midst of difficult times it can be easy to lose sight of how often God has showered blessings on us, yet we can be sure that every good thing that we have is directly from Him. Take a moment to consider all the ways that the Lord has blessed you and give Him thanks for the good gifts in your life.

Discussion Section 3: Joseph Tests His Brothers (Ch. 42)

-Why did Joseph test his brothers so rigorously?

Note: Chapter 42 tells the story of Joseph’s brothers making the journey from the land of Canaan to Egypt. Famine had struck, and the Lord was using Joseph not only to provide for Egypt but had set him up to be able to deliver His people and continue the line of Christ. Throughout this passage we see Joseph testing his brothers and dealing with them in ways that may seem

harsh. Yet in all of this, the Lord was teaching the brothers a lesson they needed to learn.

First, we see that the brothers bow before Joseph, which is a fulfilment of the dream that Joseph had told them about back in chapter 37. Joseph recognized his ten brothers, but they did not recognize him. They would have thought he was either a slave or dead, not to mention that Joseph would have matured in appearance significantly and was presenting himself to them as an Egyptian ruler, even speaking with an interpreter. Joseph accuses them of being spies, then only allows them to leave under the condition that one stays imprisoned while he waits for them to bring back his youngest brother. It seems that Joseph’s primary motivation was to see if they had changed. He might have suspected that they had treated Benjamin in the same way they had treated him. He was testing them to see what their actions would be.

It seems that the brothers had come under conviction concerning the way they had treated Joseph. They even take the way they are being treated as punishment from God for the way they had handled their younger brother many years before. What we are reminded of in this passage is that our actions reflect the true condition of our heart. Joseph was not interested simply in his brother’s words, rather he wanted to see if their heart had changed by the way they acted. Similarly, the Scriptures are clear that it is out of our hearts that our words and actions spring forth (**Matthew 15:18-19**). We see in James that **“faith without works is dead”** (**James 2:17**). As we study this passage may we examine our own hearts and actions. Are we walking in obedience toward God daily, or do we only shape up when we want something out of Him? True Christianity reflects a love for God by our actions. If we are in Christ, we are new creations, thus our actions will reflect this reality (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).