

Place: Lurgan Baptist 10:1:2010

GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD (JOSEPH)

Readings: Genesis 30:22-24 35:23-26 37:1-4

1. SETTING THE SCENE

In every period of history there are leaders and statesmen and women who stand out and are long remembered for various reasons. In America, many look back to **President John F. Kennedy** as one of those. Historians have long speculated on how America might have been different had he survived his first term and gone on to win a second. Instead, he was assassinated in the third year of his presidency. Kennedy was the youngest men ever to be elected President. He was handsome, wealthy, and had a beautiful wife. Indeed his sort term in Washington was called by many Camelot and he was the popular President in the modern era. In the United Kingdom many look to back with gratitude to God to **Winston Churchill** who steered our nation through the dark days of the War. Now a statesman in the Bible seems to have enjoyed the same level of popularity as did Kennedy and Churchill. **His name was Joseph the son of Jacob**. He was born into prominence in Canaan, then he was sold into slavery in Egypt, but then rose to become the second most powerful man in the land. Joseph's story has everything. It has ambition, temptation, and a poverty to palace theme. He was certainly a leader who stood out in his day and has been remembered ever since.

Few were equal to him in character, perception, and consistency. My Joseph was to leave a mark for God which the sands of Egypt or the aeons of millennia cannot erase. His influence was to stretch from an Egyptians Pharaoh's palace to your heart and mine in this nuclear age. Now Joseph's biography falls neatly into three distinct segments.

1. From His Birth to Seventeen Years: (Gen 30:24-37:2)

During this time Joseph's family was in transition, everyone was unsettled, on the move. Bitterness was brewing as his family clashed and argued in jealousy and hatred.

2. From Seventeen to Thirty Years: (Gen 37:2:-41:46)

Here Joseph reaches young manhood. It seems as though his life spirals out of control. Enslavement, unfair accusation and imprisonment assault him.

3. From Thirty Years to Death: (Gen 41:46-50:26)

You see, the last eighty years of Joseph's life are years of prosperity and reward under God's blessing. He had the opportunity to get even with his brothers, to ruin them forever. Instead he blessed, protected and forgave.

Now it's interesting that one quarter of the Book of Genesis from (Ch 37 to Ch 50) is made up of the account of Joseph's life. More of Genesis is given to over to Joseph than is given to any of the other main characters.

That fact alone is proof of his importance in terms of Old Testament history. Now we can approach Joseph's life from many angles. We could look at it, *Historically*, for his life explains the development of the Hebrew race, we could look at it *Providentially*, for here we see the heart of God planning and the hand of God shaping, we could look at it *Devotionally*, for Joseph is an epitome of godliness, and we could look at it *Typically*, for Joseph is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus. This I want us to see that in Joseph we see,

(1) THE LINK THAT GOD ESTABLISHES

You see, Joseph serves as link between the books of Genesis and Exodus, a hinge on which the story of the descendants of Abraham turns. Joseph is a bridge in,

(a) THE CONTINUITY OF THE BIBLE:

Much is written about Joseph in the Bible, because his life explains circumstances. Without the record of Joseph we would be greatly puzzled about the circumstances described in the Book of Exodus. We would not why Israel was so firmly entrenched in Egypt, how they got there and why they stayed so long. We would know what Exodus meant when it says that the persecution of Israel began when a king arose who knew not Joseph. (Ex 1:8) All these and many other puzzles would be not be solved if we did not have the story of Joseph in the Bible. You see, without his story there would be a serious gap in the continuity of the Word of God and continuity is an important trademark in the Scriptures. (a)

(b) THE MULTIPLICITY OF THE NATION:

If you didn't about Joseph, how can you understand how Abraham's descendants go from being a family of shepherds in Canaan to a nation of over two million people in the Sinai wilderness ? *Do you recall that after Joseph was sold into Egypt as a teenager by his brothers that a famine came upon the land of Canaan and Egypt ?* Joseph had been elevated to a position of authority in Egypt and was wise enough to have the nation store grain for the seven years of famine. (41:48) When his brothers came into Egypt looking for food to buy they discovered the brother they had sold into slavery years before. After a tearful reunion Joseph brought his father, Jacob, and all his family seventy two in total (46:27 Ex 1:5) to Egypt to escape the famine in Canaan. They settled in Goshen where they lived for 430 years (Ex 12:40) increasing in number to more than two million souls. We read “ *And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen and they had possessions therein, and grew and multiplied exceedingly.* ” (47:27)

My had Joseph not been sent ahead to Egypt, there would be have no deliverance for Israel. Time passed and a new Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. Fearing the growing number of Hebrews might gain too much power he suppressed them into slavery. “ *But the more they (the Egyptians) afflicted them (the Hebrews) the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.* ” (Ex 1:12) Do you recall God's promise to Abram ? “ *Look now toward the heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them,*

and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be.” (Gen 15:5 22:17) And what God promises He is well able to perform. My do you know what it is to take God at His Word ? To rest on His promises ? To come into the presence of God and say, “ *Lord do as thou said ?*” Now do you see that Joseph is the indispensable link between the 72 who entered Egypt and the two million who left ? You see his life was pivotal, of crucial importance. Is your life pivotal ? Is it significant in the purposes of God ? (1)

(2) THE LESSON THAT GOD TEACHES

What is the overriding lesson in the life of Joseph ? Is it not the providence of God. Providence “ *is that work of God in which He preserves all his creatures, is active in all that happens in the world and directs all things to their appointed end.*” Joseph’s life was a demonstration of the providence of God. He could say with Paul “ *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God*” (Rom 8:28) David Jeremiah tells us that when Teddy Roosevelt was campaigning for President in 1912, he was shot in the chest while delivering a speech. The bullet was deflected by a folded fifty page speech and a metal glasses case that were in the inside pocket of his coat. The bullet lodged in his chest but did not permanent damage. Roosevelt later admitted that he had often complained about having to carry the heavy metal case around, but admitted that it had saved his life. What happened to Teddy Roosevelt was providential, and what happened to Joseph was providential as well. Did you ever think of,

(a) THE TRIALS THAT JOSEPH EXPERIENCED:

I mean he had lost his Mum when he was just a young boy. (35:19) His father was a cheat, a con-man, as slippery a deceiver as ever drew breath. He was born into a dysfunctional family, were rape, cruelty and incest stained the lives of his brothers and sister as they lived for themselves and the devil. What had Joseph experienced ?

- He had been **Forsaken** by his brothers:
- He had been **Framed** by Potiphar’s wife:
- He had been **Forgotten** by the butler:

There were years of one problem after another. Perhaps his life is a mirror of yours this ? Have you been forsaken by your family ? Have you been falsely accused ? Have you been betrayed by those whom you thought would stand by you ? Are you in some pit of despair where escape seems impossible ? You see, even though we know that “ *all things work together for good,*” it’s not always evident what God is trying to do in our lives. Joseph’s life shows us how God chooses and moulds a man in order to use him to accomplish His overall purpose. Joseph’s confidence was not in his ability to understand his circumstances, his confidence was in the God of all circumstances. For there was not only (a)

(b) THE TRUST THAT JOSEPH EXPRESSED:

Do you recall when his brothers met him for the first time since selling into slavery ? I mean they were terrified, thinking that Joseph would exact revenge upon them for

their former evil deed. But he tells them not to fear. He says, “ *God did send me before you to preserve life.* ” (45:5) Joseph tried to convince his brothers that behind their scheming God was at work. That didn’t make their actions right, but God used their actions for good. He says, “ *But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.* ” (50:20) Joseph saw the big picture of what God had done. He saw that God’s purposes were bigger than any man’s plans. He saw that God could take a bad thing and turn into a good thing. When Walt Disney pioneered the production of animated films in the 1930’s each film was labour intensive. We are told that every second of film that was viewed on screen was the result of 24 individual drawings moving faster than the human eye could detect. Major films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* required over one million individual drawings. Today, those drawings are done on computer. You see, when we look at a screen we see one image, not realizing that there are scores of individual images that our eyes can’t detect. Our eyes works at regular speed, while the film runs at “ *animator’s speed.* ”

Is this not how it is with God’s providence in our lives ? We see one “ *image,* ” of life from our perspective. It might be a troubling image, or a wonderful image, or a perplexing image . We may see a major problem looming in front of us. But what we don’t see are the rest of the images that represent God’s work behind the scenes. As David Jeremiah there’s the image of the reason, the image of the result, the image of the ramifications, short term and long term, and the image of the rest of our lives. God is orchestrating all those images that we can’t see to create

the complete picture that some day we will see. The challenge for us is to trust not only what our eyes see but what we don’t see, to walk by faith not by sight. Is this not what Joseph did ? From his earliest days as a child, he learned to believe that what he couldn’t see was more important than what he could. He never questioned what God was doing. “ *Why Lord ?* ” never passed through Josephs lips. He believed that God’s hand was at work in every event in his life. Do you ? My do we realise that God has a purpose even in the bad things that happen to us ? So much so, that we can say with hymn writer,

**With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted by His love
I’ll bless the hand that guided
I’ll bless the heart that planned
When clothed where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land**

(3) THE LIFE THAT GOD DEMANDS

You see, Joseph’s life is a pattern for us Christians today. Paul says, “ *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (examples) and they are written for our admonition.* ” (1 Cor 10:11) The greatest single characteristic of Joseph was his absolute faithfulness to God under all circumstances. He never yielded to the mentality that says “ *When in Rome do as the Romans.* ” He never complained and he never compromised. The Lord was always the chief and determining reality in his

life. Do you want to see the life that God demands ? Turn over to (2 Peter 1:2-8) I want you to see how Joseph added these spiritual graces to his life, even in the midst of adversity.

(a) FAITH:

Joseph had faith, there was a time when he trusted in a Coming Redeemer. He knew that he needed a substitute, he knew that God was holy and he was sinful, so he trusted in a Redeemer who was yet to come, have you ? And he grew in the Lord. Some believers never grow, but look at Joseph.

(b) VIRTUE:

Later on in the story of Joseph, Jacob says, “ *Joseph was separate from his brethren.* ” (49:26) Indeed he was. He did not get involved with the sins of his elder brothers. He was not a talebearer but a truth teller.

(c) KNOWLEDGE:

God gave him spiritual knowledge through the dreams. My when you are saved and growing in the Lord you should be coming to see things differently from others. You see be seeing things from heaven’s perspective.

(d) TEMPERANCE:

Self control. I mean Joseph was tempted continually by Potiphar’s wife to have sexual relationships with her. Who

would know ? Sure he was only a slave, it would not be his fault if he yielded. No, he added self control. He ran away. Is this how you exercise self control ? Do you flee from youthful lusts ?

(e) PATIENCE:

Think of the years he spent in prison. Completely innocent, falsely accused. He added patience.

(f) GODLINESS:

Time and again in his story we read that the “ *Lord was with Joseph.* ” (39:2) Then when he stands before Pharaoh, Pharaoh makes this remarkable statement, “ Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is ? ” (41:38) People recognized that Joseph was a godly man.

(g) BROTHERLY KINDNESS:

When his brothers came down to Egypt for corn, is this not what he displayed ? Brotherly kindness. My Are you beginning to see the life that God demands.

(h) CHARITY:

Love. The Bible says, love “ *thinketh no evil.* ” (1 Cor 13:5) It doesn’t keep a record done to you. Do you see those brothers ? They wanted to kill him, then they sold him to slave traders, who brought him down to Egypt. But see him as he weeps on their shoulders and

shows the love of forgiveness and cares for them and nourishes them and protects them. When old Jacob dies they suspect he will wreak revenge now on them, but when he realizes what they are thinking he weeps. (50:17) *Revenge was not in Joseph's mind.* Do you see how this man loved his brothers ? You see, he not only forgave their crimes, he spoke kindly to them, and sought to remove their fears. Is this the kind of love that you have for your brethren in Christ ? Is it a forgiving love ? Is it a caring love ? Is it a sacrificing love ? Well, this is the life that God demands. (1) (2) (3)

(4) THE LORD THAT GOD GLORIFIES

Do you recall what the Risen Lord did to those two despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus ? “ *And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* ” (Lk 24:27) That is the passages in Scripture which referred to Himself. No doubt He referred to Joseph as a type of Himself, for like our Lord you'll never read of anything that Joseph did wrong. There is no record of his faults. You see, when you look at Joseph, you see Jesus.

(a) WE SEE JOSEPH REVERED BY HIS FATHER:

He was the beloved son of the father. (37:3) He was held in high esteem by his father. He was shown honour by his father. He was given the “ *coat of many colours.* ” (37:3) This was a long sleeved coat or robe or tunic reaching to the ankles. But what did it signify ? It signified **rank**. It indicated that the wearer was an overseer or master. It was

a coat of nobility. The coat that Jacob gave to Joseph indicated that he had pre-eminence among all his sons. Reuben, through incest, had forfeited his rightful place as the firstborn (35:22) Joseph was to be the pre-eminent one. He was revered by his father. When the Lord Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist a voice was heard from heaven saying, “ *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* ” (Matt 3:17) On the Mount of Transfiguration that voice was heard again, “ *this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* ” (Matt 17:5) Moreover, Christ is the pre-eminent One. Paul says to the Colossian believers who were being threatened by false teachers “ *that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.* ” (1:18) My The answer to your life and the answer to my life, and the answer to the life of the church, local and universal is a recognition afresh and anew of the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know what the word “ *pre-eminence,* ” means ? Number one. Is He number one in your life ?

(b) WE SEE JOSEPH REJECTED BY HIS FAMILY:

He left Hebron (37:14) the place of “ *fellowship,* ” and was sent by his father to go to Shechem, the place of wickedness. (33:18 34:2) Yet to his Father's will Joseph's says, “ *Here am I.* ” (37:13) My there was a day when God sent His only begotten, beloved Son into this world of sinfulness, and He was the Son that said, “ *Here am I.* ” You would think that someone would appreciate someone going to all the trouble to check on them but not Joseph's brothers. They rejected him, they despised him, they stripped him of his robe (37:23) they

sold him for twenty pieces of silver (37:28) the Old Testament price of a slave. It was Judah that suggested the selling of Joseph and Judah is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament Judas. Do you see the parallels in relation to Christ ? The Bible says, “ *He came unto his own and his own received him not.* ” (Jn 1:11) We read that when the Lord Jesus was brought into the common hall the soldiers “ *stripped him and put on a scarlet robe,* ” (Matt 27:28) and of course He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, (Matt 26:15) the New Testament price of a slave. My ..., the revered Son became the rejected servant. Are you still rejecting Him ?

(c) RULING BY HIS FAITH:

His faith in what God had revealed to him. Do you recall that Joseph had two dreams ? One involved the **harvest**, the other involved the **heavens**. In one there is **sheaves**, and in the other there is **stars**. The dream that involved the harvest had all the sheaves of the field being obeisant to Joseph’s sheaf. This dream indicated that all the **resources of the land** would be under Joseph’s control. The dream that involved the heavens had all the stars, sun and moon being obeisant to Joseph. This dream indicated that all the **rulers of the land** would be under Joseph’s control. Joseph’s dream declared that he would one day rule and reign. My is this not exactly what happened ? Do you recall that the man who was placed in the prison was promoted to the palace ? That the rejected one became the reigning one. “ *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon*

Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck, and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had and they cried before him, Bow the knee, and he made ruler over all the land of Egypt. ” (Gen 41: 41-43) Do you know something ? Everyone in Egypt bowed the knee. My there is coming a day when every knee shall bend before Christ, and every tongue confess His Lordship. (Phil 2:10-11) At the coronation of Elizabeth II, on 3rd June, 1953, this is exactly what happened. She was placed in the royal chair of King Henry. One bowed before her and then placed in one hand a golden scepter. Another bowed before her and placed in the other hand a golden rod. Then a crown was placed on her head and everyone shouted, “ ***All hail the Queen, all hail the Queen.*** ” Even her husband bowed before her and cried, “ ***All hail the Queen.*** ” One of these days the cry will go out, “ Bow the knee,” and from every part of the universe the shout will go up “ ***All hail the King.*** ” The rejected Saviour will become the reigning Sovereign.

**Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall
Join in the everlasting song
And crown Him, Lord of all**

