

January 24

Scriptures: Read Genesis 41:37-57; 42

Key Verse: “And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.’” (Genesis 41:39)

Overview

The kindness and grace of God is beyond our imaginations. Probably no one else in history has risen to wealth and power in such a short period of time as did Joseph. When God exalts someone, He does it to the fullest. Joseph had given all the glory to God for his interpretation of Pharaoh’s dreams, and Pharaoh believed what Joseph had said as truth and confessed that it was God who had shown him (41:38). We are told in the book of James that if anyone asks God for wisdom, it will be given liberally (James 1:5, 6). Pharaoh also exclaimed that Joseph was “discerning and wise” (41:39). We know that he was a man of faith and most assuredly he had prayed that God would give him wisdom, not only for when he faced Pharaoh, but for everyday life. Pharaoh gave Joseph the highest position under him in his kingdom, arrayed him in royal fashion, and paraded him through the city in a beautiful chariot with all the people bowing before him to show him honor (cf. Esther 6:7-9). Joseph’s patient suffering was not in vain, for the Lord rewarded him. However, any earthly rewards we might receive are nothing in compassion to the coming heavenly rewards for faithful believers.

Joseph became fully integrated into the Egyptian culture. He was given an Egyptian name, and married an Egyptian girl, the daughter of the Priest of On. During the time of abundance, she bore him two sons whose names were significant in expressing the life of Joseph and, in naming them, God was referred to and given the glory. God is to be central in every area of our lives. We should continually think of Him and his praises should continually be on our lips (Psalm 34:1). Joseph’s sons’ descendants came to be included as a tribe among the children of Israel.

We see Joseph’s cleverness, great wisdom, and extraordinary administrative abilities in his preparation for the famine. Again, God gave him success and favor, as He had done in Potiphar’s home and in prison. During the seven years of plenty Joseph collected a huge quantity of grain. It has been suggested that there would have been enough gathered to last for 15 years, so in this way, not only Egypt could live during the famine, but many other countries as well. Just as Joseph had told Pharaoh, after seven years of plenty a great famine did indeed strike Egypt and the whole known world. Joseph’s wisdom once again brought success and prosperity. Many people from other countries came to buy from him and so during this time Egypt would become tremendously wealthy.

Famines have always played a role in history. Abraham went to Egypt during a time of famine in Canaan, but the grace of the Lord brought him back to his land. There was another famine in the time of Isaac, but he was told by God not to go to Egypt, and because of his obedience, God blessed him greatly that year. With this great, extensive famine, God caused Joseph’s ten brothers to leave for Egypt and be among those who came to buy from him. The dream Joseph had when he was 17 years old was now fulfilled when he was about 38 as they bowed down before him (42:6). After 21 years, Joseph would have looked quite different, shaven, speaking and

dressing like an Egyptian, they did not recognize him. He spoke harshly to them, not out of anger or cruelty, but because he had a plan to test whether they were repentant for what they had done to him. He gave them a hard time, dealing with their consciences, so that they might have the fear of God in them and be reminded of how they had treated young Joseph. They did express their guilt and anguish for that sin and said what was happening to them was punishment for their evil deeds.

God, in his justice, never lets sins go unpunished, but He is also merciful and forgiving when there is repentance. Sometimes what may seem as a punishment actually works out for our own good so that we may come to repentance, without which there will be eternal punishment – a lot worse than any earthly punishment. When their father Jacob heard that Simeon had been left there in prison until they would bring the youngest brother Benjamin (Joseph's only full brother), he was in great sorrow, for after losing Joseph, he was not willing to let his precious, youngest son go.

Joseph was very wise in his dealings with his brothers. They were to become better people because of it. When we learn from our mistakes, we can increase in wisdom and the Lord can teach us many things.

Prayer

Wisdom, O Lord is Your gift to those who ask. We are asking and claiming Your promise to give wisdom liberally. (James 1:5)