

## JOSEPH—THE YOUNG MAN WHOM GOD USED TO SAVE HIS PEOPLE

Presented by

**Tyler Mullins**

In a previous two-part series that Blake and I presented, titled, “Jacob—A Man Who Learned the Hard Way How to Trust in God,” we ended our discussion about Jacob with these comments: “Included among Jacob’s twelve sons was a young man by the name of Joseph, who was going to be favored by his father, despised by his brothers, imprisoned by his employer, and forgotten by everyone else—**except God**. That series of events comprises an incredibly fascinating story—but one that we will have to save for another time.”

This is that “other time.” In Genesis 12:2 God had promised Abraham, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great” (Genesis 12:2). Later in Genesis 26:3 God told Abraham’s son Isaac, “I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands.” Still later, in Genesis 28:15, God’s pledge to Isaac’s son Jacob was, “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

But what God did **not** tell these patriarchs was **how** He was going to accomplish all of those things. In fact, if He **had** told them, they probably would not have believed what they were hearing! Nevertheless, as God once said through the prophet Isaiah, “My word that goes forth from My mouth shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). As you are about to see, truer words were never spoken!

When Blake and I last spoke to you, one of Jacob’s twelve sons, Joseph, had been sold to Midianite slave traders by his jealous brothers. Joseph’s wicked siblings thought they were getting rid of a 17-year-old brother whom they envied and despised. Little did they know that God was going to use their evil plot to save the entire Israelite nation that was soon to sprout from the loins of their father Jacob! In our Sunday-morning Bible class here at Mill Creek, Blake and I recently finished studying this fascinating story. And we thought that you might enjoy learning as much from it as we did. Here is what happened.

As we begin to investigate the tragic series of events that repeatedly befell Joseph after his brothers betrayed him, we first learn that he had been taken to Egypt, where he was sold to a man by the name of Potiphar who was the captain of pharaoh’s guard. Genesis 39:2 tells us that even though Joseph was young, all alone, far away from home, and a slave, “the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man in the house of his master the Egyptian.” But, as most knowledgeable Bible students are aware, Potiphar’s wife tried to convince Joseph to commit adultery with her. On one occasion when he refused, she fabricated a lie, and accused **him** of being the one who had tried to tempt **her** to sin. Potiphar believed his wife, and as a result threw Joseph into prison. Yet, as Genesis 39:21 informs us, “The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

While in prison, Joseph met two of pharaoh's servants—a butler and a baker, both of whom had experienced strange dreams. Joseph interpreted those men's dreams, and explained that the butler would be restored to his previous position at pharaoh's side, while the baker would be executed. Joseph's prophecies came true just as he had predicted. In Genesis 40:14-15 we see Joseph making a request of the butler: "Remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house...for I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon." Genesis 40:22 provides us with a sad piece of information when it says simply, "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."

As Genesis 41 opens, two years have passed, and pharaoh himself has now experienced a strange dream—at which time the butler finally remembered his failed promise to try to get Joseph out of prison. Pharaoh, on the recommendation of his butler, removed Joseph from prison and asked him to interpret the dream—which Joseph promptly did. To pharaoh's surprise, he learned that Egypt was going to have seven years of good harvests, and seven additional years of famine. Pharaoh not only believed Joseph, but even went so far as to place him in a position where he was second in command in Egypt. He then told Joseph to do whatever it took to produce and store enough food during the seven years of good harvests to carry Egypt through the seven years of famine. Joseph succeeded in his task. And when the seven years of famine came, the Egyptian people had plenty of food to eat.

But the people of Canaan did not! Because of that, Jacob, Joseph's father, sent ten of his eleven sons to Egypt to beg for food. When they arrived before Joseph, he recognized them, but they did not recognize him. In fact, even though Joseph could have spoken to them in the Hebrew language, he spoke to them in Egyptian by using an interpreter—in order to keep his identity a secret for a while. He asked them if they had any other brothers, and they said that they did—Benjamin, who had remained at home with their father. Benjamin was Joseph's little brother. And oh, how he longed to see him again! So, Joseph put one of the ten brothers—Simeon—in prison, and told the other brothers to return to their father to bring Benjamin back to Egypt, at which time Joseph would release Simeon.

Eventually all of the brothers, including Benjamin, returned to Egypt. And soon afterwards Joseph revealed to them who he actually was—and why he had done what he had. Of that emotional reunion, Genesis 45:1-2 says, "Joseph could not restrain himself before those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Make everyone go out from me!' So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it." When that happened, the Bible tells us in Genesis 45:3-5 that Joseph's brothers "could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come near to me.' So they came near. Then he said, 'I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life'" (Genesis 45:3-5).

Joseph then sent his brothers back to Canaan with carts full of food and clothing. He told them to bring their wives, their children, and their father Jacob back to Egypt, where all of them would live happily in Goshen, the richest part of the land near the Nile River. And that is exactly what happened!

Who could have guessed that God had been working quietly behind the scenes during Joseph's life in order to save the people of Israel—from whom, one day, Jesus Christ would come to “take away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)? Yet that is exactly what God did!

Many years earlier, God had told Abraham's wife Sarah that even though she was past the age of child bearing, she would give birth to a son. Sarah laughed at the very idea of such! Genesis 18:14 then records the question that God asked her on that occasion: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” The answer to that question, of course, is **no**, because “with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). Amazingly, God even was able to use a 17-year-old boy to save the entire Israelite nation.

Yet as remarkable as that is, the story does not end there—as Blake is going to show you in his sermon on Moses. I invite you to listen carefully to what he has to say as he relates to you what the late broadcast journalist Paul Harvey would no doubt have called “the rest of the story.”