



Lesson 25

The Family travels to Egypt

In our last lesson we saw Joseph thrown into prison, falsely accused of something he did not do. He suffered greatly, yet maintained his faith in God and told both the jailor and other prisoners about the Lord God.

Two years passed, he must have wondered if he would ever be released. Then Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had two dreams, sent to him by God. He dreamt of seven fat cattle which were eaten up by seven thin and starving cattle. Then he dreamt of seven fat stalks of corn which were replaced by seven dried up and withered stalks.

The next morning none of his magicians could interpret the dreams for him. However, his butler remembered his time in prison with Joseph and told Pharaoh about him.

Joseph released from Prison (41:9-16)

The king had Joseph released from prison and brought before him to interpret his dreams. Notice what Joseph said.

“Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favourable answer.”
Genesis 41:16

Joseph did not complain to Pharaoh about Potiphar who wrongly threw him into prison or about the butler who had forgotten him and who broke his promise to help get him released. All of Joseph's earlier years as a 'tell-tale' had gone and his experiences had left him a humbled man who understood that the Lord God had been at work in his life.

Sometimes when life is hard and people are unfair to us we want to complain about injustice. Yet the Apostle Paul wrote;

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”
Romans 8:28

This is how Joseph saw his experiences; looking back he saw that, although life had been very hard, God had been developing his character so that he was now prepared for whatever work the Lord had in mind for him.

A Famine is Coming (41:17-32)

Joseph told Pharaoh what his dreams meant. There would be seven years of plenty in Egypt – good harvests and much food. These would be followed by seven years of famine and all the food would be eaten up. Furthermore it was all about to happen soon – the fact that the dream was given twice was God's warning that this was the case.

Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be his deputy over all Egypt. His task was to save food during the seven good years so that the people did not starve during the great famine that would follow and he was very successful at this. The famine was in all the neighbouring countries as well as Egypt but only in Egypt were preparations made so that the people did not starve.

Sometimes in the Bible it is difficult to see why God does the things we read about. We can often find help by searching in the Bible to find another passage which helps explain matters for us. This famine is difficult to understand until we turn to Psalm 105.

“When he (God) summoned a famine on the land (of Canaan) and broke all supply of bread, he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.”
Psalm 105:16-17

The famine which spread over many countries was deliberately sent by God. He had work to do with Jacob's sons in the land of Canaan. When we read the record carefully it is apparent that they had become





self-sufficient in their lives, perhaps taking everything they had for granted and forgetting that all came from God. So the Lord took away their food supply and they did not know what to do!

“When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die."

So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.” Genesis 42:1-3

Just as Joseph needed his character developing, so did his brothers. They had to travel to Egypt to get food so that they could survive and unknowingly they met Joseph there!

The Brothers meet Joseph (42:7-38)

Jacob refused to send all of his sons to Egypt, he kept back his youngest, Benjamin, in case he came to harm there. We read of the great drama when the brothers came to Joseph. They did not recognize the richly dressed and supremely important man in front of them as the brother they sold into slavery 22 years before! But Joseph recognized them!

He made life hard for them – he accused them of being spies and put them in prison for three days. He demanded that they return to Canaan and bring Benjamin back to prove what they told him. He tied up Simeon and kept him as a hostage until they returned. Then he sold them corn and sent them on their way home. However, the last thing he did was to hide their purchase money in their sacks to look as if they had stolen it.

So they returned to Jacob and told him what had happened. What could the old man do? If he sent them back with Benjamin, the risk was that they would be accused of theft and he would never see them again. Jacob refused to let them return, he was prepared to leave Simeon in prison rather than risk the loss of Benjamin.

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned:

- Joseph’s character was developed through the things he suffered. After he finally left prison, he was never a ‘tell-tale’ again.
- God sometimes gives us difficult experiences to help develop a Christ-like character in us.
- It is easy to forget to put God first when all goes well in our lives. The brothers had begun to be like this. In coming to Egypt and meeting Joseph, they too were tested by God.

