

# FEED MY SHEEP

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## Joseph Arises from the Dunghill

*The Story of Joseph, Part 11*

We are now in the thick of the story of Joseph the patriarch, except that in this series we are calling him Joseph the Overcomer.

We left off last time in Genesis 41:41. As a quick review of the story, it began with Joseph as a young man of 17. He greatly angered his brothers, so they sold him into slavery. He is purchased by a high government official in Egypt by the name of Potiphar. By God's plan, Joseph's skills quickly bring him to the position of being overseer of Potiphar's household. But before too long, Joseph is unjustly accused of raping Potiphar's wife, and so he winds up in the Egyptian federal prison, as it were. There, too, his now gracious demeanor and his administrative skills cause him to rise to the position of the most trusted prisoner in the jail. He serves others with grace and humility.

In our last lectures we saw how Pharaoh's chief butler and baker were tossed in the can with Joseph, and after about a year they each have similar dreams which Joseph correctly interprets for them. He asks the butler to tell Pharaoh about his unjust imprisonment, but the butler—by God's sovereign plan—forgets, and so Joseph is left in prison for yet longer. Finally, one day Pharaoh is immensely troubled about a pair of dreams he had—dreams about seven skinny cows devouring seven fat cows and seven hale and hearty ears of grain being consumed by seven withered and fruitless ears of grain.

None of the wise men of Egypt can interpret the dream for the king, but it is at this very moment that God enables the butler to remember how Joseph could interpret dreams. So he mentions it to Pharaoh who orders that Joseph be brought to him immediately. Joseph tells Pharaoh that the two dreams are really a double witness to the same future event; namely, that there will

be seven years of abundant harvests followed by seven years of severe famine. Joseph advises that Pharaoh immediately choose someone to oversee a program of food storage. Pharaoh says to Joseph: "Well, you seem to be such a wise person; I choose you." But he didn't just appoint Joseph as Secretary of Agriculture, so to speak, he made him essentially the de facto ruler of Egypt, the CEO, the prime minister.

That is where we stopped in the story of Joseph, and from there we went on to discuss the phenomenon of dreams and whether or not dreams are *valid* means of hearing from God for New Testament Christians. We concluded that they were indeed a valid method of divine communication, even for us today. And we enthusiastically told you about a book which we have in stock, called *Surprised by the Voice of God* by Jack Deere. I believe it will help you to have a much closer walk with your heavenly Father. Now let us pick up reading in ...

**Genesis 41:41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.**

**42 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;**

**43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.**

**44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.**

...And just like that, Joseph has come out of the dungeon and has been elevated to almost the highest level of rulership in the most powerful nation in the

world at that time. Think about that! For us as Christians who are striving for the high calling of being overcomers, what can we learn from this? A couple of things come to mind, all interrelated. First, think of when Joseph was cast into prison. Remember how I described it as being lowered further into *Christ School*—that while there, he could choose either to sit and mope and bemoan his situation, and feel sorry for himself, and the time would seem to drag on as eternity. ... Or he could choose to find ways to stay busy, and that was in *being of service to others* in the prison, and by so doing, the time would appear to go by much more quickly. Ultimately, his patience and humility is rewarded. Have *you* been lowered into “Christ School” in one form or another? Are you using the time feeling sorry for yourself, or are you using it wisely to learn lessons of humility and patience? Are you finding opportunities to serve others?

I think of a typical family—and nowadays, we stipulate that a typical family *may* have both mom and dad present, *or* single-parent households are just as common. So for the typical family, that service to others would obviously be as provider for the family—to include all the domestic work of providing cooking, laundry, cleaning, teaching the children and all the myriad tasks that are necessary when raising children. I can assure you that God knows you have your hands full, and when you have that much responsibility, he does not expect *you* to volunteer for the Red Cross and travel halfway across the world (or the country) to help hurricane, earthquake or flood victims as your means of being of service to others. You have your plate full at home.

Your Father in heaven is pleased with you as His son or daughter when you do your level best to fulfill that parental responsibility. Even if all the kids don’t turn out all right...so far. You do your best with the knowledge you have at the time. God *bless* all the parents! Remember, Father’s first children, Adam and Eve, turned out to be “problem children” as well!

I believe we will learn in the resurrection that there are many overcomers who never held any important or highly visible public role, but who simply did the best they could in the circumstances Father placed them in, and He will tell them on that day with the same fervor He tells Joseph: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” To summarize this point, it is that our suffering in *patience and humility will be rewarded*; rewarded by the Almighty One who sees all and knows all.

A second point is that when the time, according to God’s Plan, has arrived for a great change in your life, there is *nothing* in creation that can stop that Plan

from going forward. As we see here in Joseph’s case, God sometimes works very suddenly! For Joseph, yesterday was just like any other of the thousands of days of his twelve years in prison. Then the next day, *suddenly*, he is ordered to appear before Pharaoh, and within 24 hours he finds himself appointed to a very high position. This reminds me of a verse that I believe is a prophecy concerning the overcomers who have toiled in low stations, learning patience, humility and other character qualities of overcomers.

**1 Samuel 2: 7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.**

**8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory:**

That is precisely what your Father did with Joseph. He was set among princes and was given a throne of glory. In the book of Revelation, there are many promises made to overcomers. For example, ...

**Revelation 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:**

That is rulership! Overcomers rule. Now let’s look at 1 Samuel 2:7 again and read the last part of verse 8 which I omitted earlier.

**1 Samuel 2: 7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.**

**8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, and he hath set the world upon them.**

If you take that literally, as some have attempted to, it seems rather a stretch of the imagination. Figuratively though, if we see pillars as representing people of rock-solid character, it makes more sense, because an orderly world can be established upon people of rock-solid character. Let us compare that with another one of the promises to the overcomers.

**Revelation 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God,...**

Finally, if you drop down to verse 21, it reads:

**Revelation 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.**

Clearly then, overcomers are raised from positions of obscurity and humble stations in life to rule the *world* with Christ our Lord. From the dunghill of your present circumstances to the throne of glory. The throne of glory can also refer to the fact that your incorruptible body will be in a glowing, glorified state. It will radiate light! Your aura will be brilliant and visible to all inhabitants of the earth!

As we continue to expound the story of Joseph from the typological standpoint, we recall that Egypt is a type of the *world*. Joseph is a type of Christ. That makes this good Pharaoh then, a type of the Father, to the extent that it can be applied. For example, in Genesis 41, verses 41 & 44, Pharaoh appoints Joseph ruler over all Egypt.

In the same manner, the Father has committed all power and authority to Jesus the Son to judge and rule the world. Looking at verse 42, we see the ring, the fine linen, and the golden necklace. These were all symbols of authority. First, the fine linen. All the highest potentates in the ancient world were clothed in fine linen. It was a brilliant white. Once again, we find it relates to the overcomers described in the book of Revelation, because it says in...

**Revelation 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;...**

Secondly, Pharaoh gave Joseph a golden necklace. This, too, was an ornament signifying great power and authority. When Daniel correctly interpreted the dream of the Babylonian king, Belshazzar, Daniel was made the third ruler in the empire of Babylon, and to signify that, a golden chain was placed around his neck. Look at Proverbs 1. There we will find a clue as to why the gold necklace symbolizes authority. Most of us realize that the book of Proverbs, as elsewhere in the Bible, can be read both literally and figuratively or metaphorically. I believe that is the case here.

**Proverbs 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:**

**9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.**

On the literal level, this is King Solomon writing to his son. But on a metaphorical level, this is God writing to His/Her children. I said “his/her” because verse 8 mentions both the masculine and feminine aspects of God. I know that most of my audience are aware of that to some degree, but it may be new to some. It is one of the great hidden truths of the Scriptures: the fact that God has both male and female as-

pects. Please note: we are not declaring there are two Gods anymore than a belief in the trinity means there are three Gods. Our God is one. Incidentally, I hope that the analogies we used in our final installment in the Inner Space-Outer Space series, called *Stargates and the Hyperdimensionality of God* helped your understanding of how God can be both one and a trinity simultaneously. Same type of situation here.

He/she is both male and female. Yes, I know God is Spirit and thus in that regard there is no physical gender. But there *are* those aspects when we are speaking about how God relates to His/Her creation. And for convenience, I will not continue to say He/She and His/Her. It is understood. Just as when we say “mankind,” it is understood to include women as well.

Thus, the father aspect in verse 8 speaks of the parent who administers the discipline, the chastening and correction. The Hebrew word here translated “instruction,” is exactly what the word means: discipline, chastening and correction. The word *law* includes the concepts of direction and instruction, which mothers are very good at doing by nature. When we then combine those ideas, we find in verse 9, that they are symbolized by “chains about thy neck.”

So it was, that when Pharaoh put a chain of gold around the neck of Joseph—and it undoubtedly had some kind of medal or medallion as a special royal identification—but it signified that its wearer had the authority to make laws and to chasten and discipline anyone who broke the laws. The third item is the ring which the king of Egypt removed from his own hand and placed it on Joseph’s. This was no mere trinket ring, or decorative jewelry. This ring was unique and probably the most powerful symbol of royal authority.

It was a *signet* ring. In other words, on its face was embossed the king’s seal. When any decree was written, they poured some warm wax on the document, and then the king—and now in this case Joseph— would take the ring and press it into the warm wax, thus authenticating this decree as the law of the land. As I said, Joseph was not merely appointed Secretary of Agriculture. By being given the Pharaoh’s signet ring, Joseph was given the authority to make and enforce any law he deemed necessary. Then to make sure Joseph could get around Egypt as quickly as possible, Pharaoh gave him the second chariot, which I guess would be comparable to an “Air Force Two,” except I don’t think there is an Air Force Two, but you get the point.

**Genesis 41:45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnathpaaneah {pronounced: tsof-nath’**

pah-nay'-akh} ; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

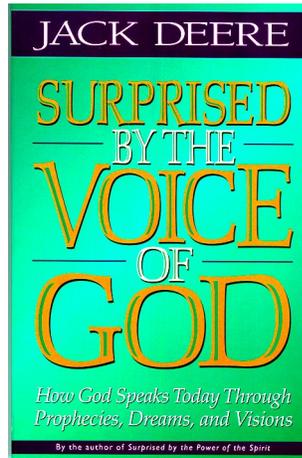
Since Joseph was a Hebrew who had come to Egypt as a slave, then as a prisoner, Pharaoh of necessity had to make him a naturalized citizen, as it were, and thus he gave him this Egyptian name. There is some variation as to the exact meaning of the name. Bullinger gives its meaning as "abundance of life" or "food for the living." That is fitting for Joseph, isn't it? My Hermeneutika Bibleworks software gives definitions based upon Strong's lexicon, combined with the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon, and they give the meaning of Joseph's Egyptian name as "treasury of the glorious rest."

What is the glorious rest? Does that not refer to the time when the overcomers are awarded immortal bodies? They then enter into *glorified* bodies and have a 1,000 year sabbath *rest* period known as the millennial kingdom. Joseph as a type of the overcomers is the treasurer or keeper of that promise of a glorious rest, so that is a fitting name for Joseph as well. Other commentators, such as Poole and the Jamison-Fausset-Brown commentaries say that it means: "the revealer of secrets," and it is obvious why Pharaoh might give him that name. Other commentaries say that the Egyptian words mean "sustainer of life" [Keil & Delitzsch]. Still another gives the meaning "salvation of life," or "salvation (or savior) of the world" [Barnes' Notes]. In any event, we can see how that no matter which of them is the correct meaning, it is a very appropriate title for Joseph, even "savior of the world." For so he was, in the sense of saving many nations from starvation. And of course, as a type of Christ, who is indeed savior of the world in the spiritual sense.

It says that Pharaoh also gave Joseph a woman to be his wife, whose name was Asenath. There is widespread agreement on the meaning of Asenath; that it means "belonging to the goddess Neith." In Greece, the name of that goddess was Athena and in Rome, she was known as Minerva. Incidentally, just in terms of our own attitude checks again, did you notice that even though this woman was not a believer in the Hebrew God, and that she was even named "she who belongs to the goddess Neith," that despite all that, Joseph did not refuse her. There is no record that he asked her or ordered her to change her name to something "less heathen." No, Joseph took the attitude here that this was not an issue that required any refusal or rebellion to the status quo on his part. Can we apply that today? I leave that to each reader to ponder.

(to be continued)

**Surprised by the Voice of God** by Jack Deere • 384 pages, bibliography, indexed. \$13 plus \$4 shipping, unless ordered with other items from fliers enclosed with this mailing, q.v.



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