

“Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?”

Acts 7:9-16/Genesis 40:8-19; 50:1-22

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June 11, 2023

Teaching Aim: To recognize God’s providence at work in Joseph’s life, no matter what trials he had to walk through in life. To realize life doesn’t always go the way we want, but in Christ, we can know with certainty that God is working behind the scenes for our good (See **Rom. 8:28**). To examine Joseph’s character and see how he dealt with the many challenges he faced in life. To recognize the similarities between Joseph and the Lord Jesus Christ!

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: Joseph finds favor in Potiphar’s household, only to be sent to prison because of a lie (Gen. 39:4-16, 20-23)

1. Little did Jacob realize that “*the coat of many colors*” he presented to Joseph in **Genesis chapter 37** would become part of God’s sovereign plan to save the Hebrew people and the line of the coming Messiah. The jealousy of Joseph’s brothers led to an intense hatred for Joseph and their decision to sell him into slavery. In God’s providence, Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard in Egypt. What can we learn about Joseph’s relationship with God from **Gen. 39:4-5**? What does the Bible teach us about his relationship with Potiphar?
2. According to **verse 6**, to what degree did Potiphar trust Joseph? What can we learn about Potiphar’s leadership style from **verse 6**? It is a rare occasion when an individual’s looks are described in the Bible, what can we learn about Joseph’s looks from **verse 6b**? How did Joseph’s appearance affect Potiphar’s wife (**vs. 7**)?
3. How did Joseph respond to the improper advances from Potiphar’s wife (**vv. 8-9**)? In what way was Joseph’s character different from that of his brothers Reuben (**35:21-22**) and Judah (**38:11-16**)?
4. People often justify immoral sexual acts in the moment of passion. Did Joseph take advantage of this unexpected opportunity? Did King David take opportunity of his? Do you think King David somehow justified his actions when he committed adultery with Bathsheba? What truth was David later forced to face after being confronted by Nathan the prophet? (See **Psa. 51:3-4**) How does David’s confession relate to **Gen. 39:9**?

5. How did Joseph respond to the advances from Potiphar's wife (**vs. 12**)? Was Joseph being cowardly by getting out of there or wise? What did Potiphar's wife do once Joseph fled (**vv. 14-16**)? Did Joseph do the right thing, or should he have stuck around and attempted to defend himself? What instruction would the Apostle Paul have given to Joseph? (See **2 Tim. 2:22**) What are some ways that we can apply **2 Tim. 2:22** to our lives today?

6. How did Potiphar react to the false accusation of his wife against Joseph (**vs. 20**)? If Potiphar had the power to execute Joseph, why didn't he? This is the second time a coat has been used to propagate a lie about Joseph, when was the first? (See **Gen. 37:31-33**)

7. According to **verse 21**, who was there in prison with Joseph? Why should this truth be an encouragement to every believer today? What do we learn from **verses 21-23**? Have you ever seen God at work in your life behind the scenes during difficult times? If so, how? How did the situation turn out for good?

Part II: The receiver of dreams now becomes the interpreter of dreams (Gen. 40:8-19; 41:17-34)

1. What significant prisoners was Joseph in jail with? (See **Gen. 40:5**) What unique circumstances surrounded the meeting in **Gen. 40:5-8**? What revelation had God given to Joseph when he was a youth through dreams? (See **Gen. 37:5-10**)

2. When a person is uniquely gifted by God, it is easy to become prideful. What can we learn about Joseph from **verse 8**? According to **verses 9-12**, what dream did the chief butler (or Pharaoh's cupbearer) have? Notice how quickly Joseph was able to interpret the dream. How was he able to do this? Why is it important for each of us to be on praying ground?

3. What was the interpretation of the butler's dream according to Joseph (**vv. 13-15**)? Who did Joseph ask the butler to remember once he was released from prison (**vs. 14-15**)? Did he (**vs. 24**)?

4. Hearing Joseph's encouraging interpretation of the chief butler's dream, the chief baker asked Joseph to also reveal the meaning of his own as well (**vv. 16-17**)? What did the chief baker dream? How did Joseph interpret this dream (**vv. 18-19**)? What happened to the chief butler and the chief baker?

5. What two dreams troubled Pharaoh a couple of years later? (See **Gen. 41:17-24**) What was Joseph's interpretation of the two dreams? How did interpreting these dreams change Joseph's life forever (**vv. 41:25-34**)? What principle can we learn and apply to our lives from **verse 34**?

6. God had Joseph at the right place at just the right time to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. How would history have changed if Joseph's initial request to the chief butler to be released had been granted? Has there ever been a time in your life that you can look back on and see God delayed your desire for a reason?

7. How did the famine affect Joseph's family in Canaan? (See **Gen. 42:1-2**) Did Joseph's brothers recognize him when they arrived in Egypt looking for help? (See **Gen. 42:6-8**) Did Joseph recognize his brothers? Why do you think the brothers didn't recognize Joseph? How did Joseph treat his brothers when they approached him (**vv. 9, 17, 22-24**)? What demand did Joseph make of them if Simeon was to be released (**vs. 34**)? How did Jacob respond to Joseph's demand (**vv. 42:36; 43:1-13**)?

8. How did Joseph react when he saw his younger brother Benjamin in person (**vv. 43:26-31**)? What emotional event took place in **Gen. 45:1-11, 14-15**? What kind of a reunion did Joseph have with his father after being separated for so long (**vv. 46:26-30**)? Have you ever been restored to a relationship you thought was lost? How did it feel?

Part III: Following Jacob's death, panic set in among Joseph's brothers (Gen. 50:15-22)

1. How did Joseph's brothers react to the death of their father Jacob (**vs. 50:15**)? Why do you think they reacted this way? Have you ever doubted that God will forgive your sins? If so, why? (See **1 John 1:9**) Why is doubting God's promise an insult to Him?
2. What did the brothers do in their fear (**vv. 16-17**)? Why do you think they sent a messenger instead of going to face Joseph themselves? Did Jacob really say the words in **verses 16 & 17**, or did the brothers just make it up to protect themselves? What caused Joseph to weep (**vs. 17**)?
3. What did the brothers do after sending the message to Joseph (**vs. 18**)? Why do you think they did this? How did this fulfill **Gen. 37:5-7**? How did Joseph respond to his brothers' mistrust (**vs. 19**)? After all his kindness, do you think Joseph was wounded by their fear that he would seek revenge and kill them now that their father was gone?
4. **Verse 20** is the classic Old Testament Scripture regarding the providence of God over history. What can we learn about Joseph's "*coat of many colors*" from **Gen. 50:20**? What are some ways that you see God's providence at work in the life of Joseph?
5. What did Joseph promise his brothers in **verse 21**? Was he faithful in keeping his word? According to **verse 22**, how many years did Joseph live before he died? How did that relate to the other patriarchs? Note: Joseph appears to be the first of the 12 brothers to pass away.
6. Why do bad things happen to good people? Are there any truly good people? (See **Mark 10:17-18; Rom. 3:10-12; 8:28**) If this is the case, how can a sinner become righteous today? (See **John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21**)

7. What act of faith does the writer of Hebrews remember Joseph for in **Heb. 11:22**? The Bible teaches us that Joseph lived and died in faith, how are you doing in your walk of faith? What are some principles in Joseph's life that you can apply to your own life?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Similarities between Joseph and Jesus!*

- Joseph was beloved by his father.
- He was obedient to his father's will.
- He was hated and rejected by his own brothers.
- He was sold as a slave for twenty pieces of silver.
- He was falsely accused.
- He was unjustly punished.
- He was elevated from the grave (symbolically) to the throne.
- He forgave his brothers of their sin.
- He was able to save his people from death.